

## Call for Papers

# *Islam and the Media*

January 7-10, 2010

The Center for Media, Religion and Culture

School of Journalism and Mass Communication, University of Colorado, Boulder  
[www.colorado.edu/journalism/cmrc](http://www.colorado.edu/journalism/cmrc)

The events of September 11, 2001 have unleashed an unprecedented period of global re-thinking of issues in media and religion. Islam has emerged as a major focus of inquiry and debate, but the interaction between contemporary Islam and the media has rarely been addressed. This conference will thus engage a set of questions on the place of Islam within global, regional, national and local media.

If we believe the torrent of popular headlines on Islam today, it seems that only Muslim extremists are talking about their religion, pursuing a project that claims to defend it from “secularized” Western culture. From Bin Laden’s call to jihad to the angry reaction of Muslims to the Danish cartoons of the prophet Muhammad, Muslims are portrayed in the media as irrational followers of a religion adamantly out of step with modernity. In the face of this, and perhaps in order to balance their coverage of Islam, Western journalists, pundits, and others have been asking “where are the moderate Muslims?” But few true moderates have emerged. Instead, some Western media have turned to another extreme: Muslim secularists or “Muslim non-believers”--voices which deserve media attention, but which arguably stand at the opposite fringe, rather than nearer the center of how Islam is lived and understood today.

Muslims, both in the Muslim world and in the diaspora, have found themselves compelled to speak for the ‘real’ Islam and explain its relevance in modernity both to themselves and to non-Muslims. This process is at the same time generating divergent discourses that arguably are already coming to challenge the religious authority of clerical Islam. Today, Muslim men and women, young and old, secularists and Islamists, Westerners and Easterners, gay and straight, rappers and comedians, journalists and scholars, bloggers and televangelists, are changing the conventional pathways of religious discourse and disintegrating the old centers of knowledge production within Islam. In fact, Muslims around the world are taking advantage of new media platforms like the Internet and other forms of conventional media like satellite television, music and film to articulate an arguably ‘pure’ or ‘modern’ Islam. These media have become prime discursive spaces in which Islamic knowledge is contested, reinterpreted, and popularly re-mediated. Given the unprecedented amplification of this inner struggle within Islam, it is imperative to ask questions such as: who speaks for Islam today using what original platforms? Does the pluralization of Muslim voices lead necessarily to innovations in the core of Islamic teachings or is it merely a shift in method to reaffirm a message of orthodoxy? Are these new voices accessible to large numbers of Muslims? And how are

contemporary media deployed to facilitate this shift in Islamic knowledge production? Thus, a range of questions dealing with the mediation of Islam and other religions are also coming to the fore.

This international conference will bring together scholars on Islam and contemporary media, media professionals, activists and NGOs to reflect on the implications of these developments. Papers and panels may address, but should not be limited to, the following topics:

- The representation of Islam in global media
- Journalism and Islam
- Images of Islam in Western entertainment media
- Muslim voices in Western media
- Media and the “clash of civilizations”
- Contemporary Islamic media and the transformation of religious knowledge
- The impact of new Muslim media on patterns of religious learning and practice
- The proliferation of Islamic websites and Islamic discourse on the Internet
- The weakening of traditional Islamic institutions
- Articulations of Islam in popular culture
- The intersections of Islam and consumer culture
- The impact of mediated transnational Islam on the Ummah and nation
- The role of Muslim diasporas in the new Islam
- The role of women in shaping the teachings of new Islam
- Muslim minorities’ use of media globally, regionally, and locally
- The impact of new media on social and cultural patterns in Muslim societies
- Representations of contemporary Islam in Muslim and Western media
- New Muslim media, public sphere and democracy
- Islam, globalization, and religious identity
- Contemporary Islamic thought and new mediations of Islamic heritage
- Methodologies: how to study Islam in the media age
- Methodologies: social-scientific, humanistic, and “theological” analyses
- Media and the making of Islamic religious “celebrity”

#### Confirmed Keynote Speakers

Charles Hirschkind: University of California, Berkeley- author of *The Ethical Soundscape: Cassette Sermons and Islamic Counterpublics*.

Zarqa Nawaz: filmmaker and the writer of the critically-acclaimed TV series *A Little Mosque on the Prairie*.

Gary Bunt: University of Wales- author of *iMuslims: Rewiring the House of Islam*

## Deadline

A detailed conference Website will be available shortly. Please send a 300-word abstract by June 30, 2009 to Nabil Echchaibi [nabil.echchaibi@colorado.edu](mailto:nabil.echchaibi@colorado.edu)

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