

RESEARCH SEMINAR

SRII, Thursday,

October 15, 2020,

14:00-16:00

Gülşah Torunoğlu (Ohio State University)

Comparative Secular-Islamic Patterns in the Egyptian and Ottoman, later Turkish, Feminist Discourse

Although historiography in Middle Eastern women's history has developed rapidly in the last decades, scholarship on the comparative history of feminism in the Middle East has been severely limited. Just as important, there is a century-long lacuna in the history of the women's movements in Turkey, with relatively few studies examining the period 1880-1980. Egypt and the Ottoman center (later Turkey) are well suited to a comparative examination of evolving feminist discourse, as their two centers of cultural production, Cairo and Istanbul, maintained a constant and mutual flow of local interaction during the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries. This talk offers a comparative analysis of secular and Islamic discourses, in relation to the articulation of feminism in the region, in these two cultural centers during the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries.

Ibrahim Mansour (University of California, Santa Barbara)

Islamic Mysticism in Medieval North Africa, Unbounded

This talk is an introduction to the intellectual and doctrinal history of the early Shadhili Sufi order, from the 13th until the 15th centuries. The Shadhili Sufi order derives its name from Abu al-Hasan al-Shadhili (d. 1258), who hailed from Morocco but who ultimately settled in Alexandria, Egypt. Among his earliest followers were learned scholars, eminent jurists, wealthy merchants, and powerful elites from the ruling classes, and in less than a generation his teachings were deeply embedded in the religious and social fabric of southern Spain, North Africa, Egypt, and the Levant.

This talk discusses how the order's earliest thinkers were engaging with the tradition which preceded them as well as with their own intellectual milieu, paying particular attention to the sociopolitical, cultural, and intellectual context of medieval mystics in the Muslim Mediterranean. The Arabic term *tadbīr* ("governance" or "management") serves the anchor for this examination of the early Shadhili order whose teachings revolved around the doctrine of *isqāt al-tadbīr*, or the "abandonment of *tadbīr*" – that is to say, the utter reliance upon God. *Tadbīr*, coincidentally, was a widely used term in the Islamic intellectual sphere at the time, allowing for an exploration of how the Shadhilis were interacting with the most thought-provoking discourses engrossing the intellectuals and scholars of the medieval Muslim world. This analysis of the intellectual and doctrinal history of the order both demonstrates the adaptability of Islamic spirituality and provides insight into the doctrinal mechanisms underlying that adaptability.