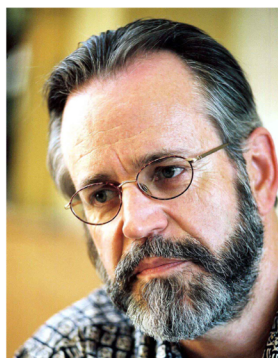


“Visiting Scholars on Islam”

Three Evenings this Spring

5:30 in Lane’s Center for Meeting and Learning



Carl Ernst Date: March 8, 2011

Title: *“Rethinking Islam in the Contemporary Era”*

Abstract:

This will provide an overall introduction to the subject of Islam using an historical approach that will also address certain key contemporary issues, including the historic presence of Muslims in Europe and America, and the significance of anti-Muslim prejudice today. Other topics will include basic features of Islamic law and ethics (shari’a), theologies, and relations with other religious traditions. The lecture will be followed by a moderated discussion. This and other lectures in the series will be free and open to the entire community.

Bio:

Carl W. Ernst is William R. Kenan, Jr., Distinguished Professor of Religious Studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and director of the Carolina Center for the Study of the Middle East and Muslim Civilizations. Ernst is a specialist on Islam in West and South Asia, and author of more than eight scholarly books, including the prizewinning work *Following Muhammad: Rethinking Islam in the Contemporary World* (UNC Press, 2003; also translated into six other

languages) and co-editor of a recent collection of essays entitled *Rethinking Islamic Studies: From Orientalism to Cosmopolitanism* (USC Press, 2010).

Stephen Shoemaker Date: April 7, 2011

Title: *“Reading the Qur’ān with Albert Schweitzer, or Jesus, Muhammad, and the End of the World,”*

Abstract:

For much of the past century, scholarship on the beginnings of Islam, particularly in English, has portrayed Muhammad primarily as a prophet of social justice and economic reform, often to the effect of marginalizing the powerful eschatological voice of the Qur’ān. While many of the earliest western scholars of Islamic origins saw the impending judgment of the Hour as the heart of Muhammad’s religious message, more recent scholarship has favored an understanding of Muhammad as interested more in reforming the world than heralding its imminent destruction. While this image of Muhammad may fit well with the much later traditions of the early Islamic biographies of Muhammad, it does not do justice to the forceful eschatological message of the Qur’ān.

Bio:

Stephen Shoemaker (Ph.D. ’97, Duke University) teaches courses on the Christian traditions. His primary interests lie in the ancient and early medieval Christian traditions, and more specifically in early Byzantine and Near Eastern Christianity. His research focuses on early devotion to the Virgin Mary, Christian apocryphal literature, and the relations between Near Eastern Christianity and formative Islam. Prof. Shoemaker is the author of *The Death of a Prophet: The End of Muhammad’s Life and the Beginnings of Islam* (Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), a study of the “historical Muhammad” that focuses on traditions about the end of his life. He has also published numerous studies on early Christian traditions about Mary (especially in apocrypha), including *The Ancient Traditions of the Virgin Mary’s Dormition and Assumption* (Oxford University Press, 2002), a study of the earliest traditions of the end of Mary’s life that combines archaeological, liturgical, and literary evidence. This volume also includes critical translations of many of the earliest narratives of Mary’s Dormition and Assumption, made from Ethiopic, Syriac, Georgian, Coptic, and Greek. Prof. Shoemaker has published a series of articles on the earliest Life of the Virgin, a pivotal if overlooked late ancient text that survives only in a Georgian translation. He has recently completed an English translation of this first Marian biography from Old Georgian (with substantial corrections to the edition) that will be published by Yale University Press. In addition, he is preparing a new critical edition of the early Syriac Dormition narratives. Prof. Shoemaker has been awarded research fellowships from the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, the American Council of Learned Societies, and the National Endowment for the Humanities.



Kambiz GhaneaBassiri Date: May 19, 2011

Title: *“American Muslims and the American Body Politic.”*

Abstract:

The controversy that arose last year around a proposed Muslim community center in Lower Manhattan was a reminder of the still unsettled place of Muslims in the American body politic. While Muslim belonging remains politically in question today, historically American Muslims have been active participants in American society for many decades. This lecture traces the history of American Muslim community and institution building in the past three decades to demonstrate the shortcoming of the contemporary political discourse on American Muslims, which has focused on the nature of Islam and its relation to American interests at the expense of Muslims’ actual historical experiences in the United States.

Bio:

Kambiz GhaneaBassiri is an Associate Professor of Religion and Humanities at Reed College. He received his bachelor’s degree in Religious Studies from Claremont McKenna College (1994) and completed his master’s and doctoral degrees in Islamic Studies in the Committee on the Study of Religion at Harvard University (2003). During 2006-2007, he served as the Interim Director of Academic Affairs at Dar Al Hadith Al Hassania, a prestigious, state-

sponsored Islamic seminary in Rabat, Morocco. He was selected as a Carnegie Scholar in 2006 for his recent book on *A History of Islam in America: From the New World to the New World Order* (Cambridge University Press, 2010). In addition to his work on the history of Islam in America, Dr. GhaneaBassiri specializes in classical and modern Islamic intellectual and social history in the Middle East.