

*Dates:* August 1-3, 2017

*Location:* Richmond, Virginia

*Cost:* \$149 (with scholarships available)

*Understanding and Engaging our Muslim Neighbors:*

*A Continuing Education Course on Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*

Rarely a week goes by without a major news story about Islam and Muslims themselves. These events often come with important theological and scriptural questions about God, the Qur'an, justice, violence, diversity, the law, and hospitality. On the more local level, migration and globalization means that our communities are increasingly diverse. Muslims are not far off in another part of the global, but are our neighbors, teachers, doctors, political representatives, or just the stranger across the street.

Often Christians and church communities feel unsure how to respond to these new realities. These uncertainly is also compounded by fear and a lack of education and knowledge about Islam and Muslims. How might Christians better understand the Islamic tradition, relate well to their Muslims neighbors, and interpret the various public opinions online and in the news about Islam, the Qur'an, Muhammad, Muslims, and Shari'a? Are Islam and Christians locked in an endless rivalry? How do Christian claims about God, Jesus, and the Gospel relate to Islamic notions of God, Muhammad, and the Qur'an? Is it be possible to be both deeply committed to one's own theological and scriptural tradition and also open toward inter-religious learning and even friendship? What does Christian-Muslim engagement look like in our fractured and contentious 21<sup>st</sup> Century?

To being to address these questions, the University of Edinburgh's Global Network for Christian-Muslim Studies in partnership with Union Presbyterian Seminary, will host a three day continuing education course on Islam and Christian-Muslim relations. Taught primarily by the Christian theologian Dr. Joshua Ralston (formerly of Union Presbyterian Seminary) and the Muslim intellectual Prof. Mona Siddiqui, the continuing education course aims to offer a basic introduction to key ideas in the Islamic traditions, explore theological and scriptural frameworks for Christian approaches to Islam, and consider models for local, national, and global Christian-Muslim engagement.

Through the course, students will gain an understanding of major ideas, debates, practices, and figures in the history of Islam and will be equipped for further study of Islam. Throughout, we will consider what it means to reflect and engage theologically and scripturally as Christians with Islam, considering points of overlap, disagreement, and resonance between the traditions. Finally, the course will provide concrete models and opportunities for local, congregational, and even national and global Christian-Muslim friendship and partnership.

Students will have the opportunity to prepare for the course with selected pre-readings on Islam and Christian engagement with Islam. The three-day intensive course will include the following:

### Day 1: Asking the right questions in Christian-Muslim dialogue

- Presentation of key themes, events, and ideas in Islam
- Q & A on selected pre-readings
- Break-out sessions to discuss Christian-Muslim engagement in the 21<sup>st</sup> century
- Working dinner with faith leaders from local Christian and Muslim communities

### Day 2: Exploring key flashpoints in interfaith engagement

- A study of various Christian and Muslim approaches to inter-religious encounters
- A mix of lectures and working sessions; topics include: The nature of God and Jesus, revelation, theology, Muhammad, law, gender, and ethics
- Evening lecture on Reframing Christian-Muslim Relations with discussion open to the public

### Day 3: Christian-Muslim engagement in local practice

- Site visits to nearby churches and mosques
- Exploring models for practical engagement from interfaith leaders in Richmond
- Roundtable discussion with local Christian and Muslim leaders
- Models for local, congregational, and national engagement

Presenters have a range of religious backgrounds and experience with Christian-Muslim engagement from the local and national level:

- Dr. Joshua Ralston - Lecturer in Muslim-Christian Relations at the School of Divinity, University of Edinburgh
  - Director of the Global Network for Christian-Muslim Studies
- Professor Mona Siddiqui - Professor in Islamic Studies and Christian-Muslim Relations at the School of Divinity, University of Edinburgh
  - Dean International, Middle East at the University of Edinburgh
- Professor Jonathan A.C. Brown - Alwaleed bin Talal Chair of Islamic at Georgetown University
  - Director of the Alwaleed bin Talal Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding at Georgetown University

Operating with support from the Henry Luce Fund for Theological Education, the GNCMS at the University of Edinburgh School of Divinity works to bridge the gap between academia and the public sphere in the growing conversation between Christianity and Islam.