

LECTURE BY PROF. DR. LENA SALAYMEH**DECOLONIZING ISLAMIC LEGAL STUDIES**

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ABSTRACT

Decolonizing the academic study of Islamic law begins with recognizing that Islamic law is a legal tradition, not a “religious law.” Religion, generally, and religious law, specifically, are colonial notions. Accordingly, the conventional academic heuristics of religious studies reflect epistemic colonialism. This talk will outline how colonialism and epistemic colonialism converted Islamic law into a “religious law” and suggest decolonial heuristics for scholarship about Islamic law. Background reading for the talk include "[The 'good Orientalists'](#)", "[Decolonial translation](#)", and "[The beginnings of Islamic law](#)" (introduction).

SHORT BIOGRAPHY | PROF. DR. LENA SALAYMEH

[Lena Salaymeh](#) is Professor in the Department of Religious Studies of the École Pratique des Hautes Études (Paris Sciences et Lettres). Salaymeh is a lawyer and historian specializing in Islamic studies, Jewish studies, legal theory, and decolonial theory. Her research focuses on laws of war, as well as law and “religion.” She co-founded and co-directed the Decolonial Comparative Law Program at the Max-Planck-Institute for Comparative and Private International Law (Hamburg) from 2019-2023. She was previously British Academy Global Professor at the Oxford School of Global and Area Studies (University of Oxford, 2020-2024). She was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship and her first book was awarded the American Academy of Religion's Prize for Excellence in Textual Studies. She received her Juris Doctor (JD) from Harvard and her PhD in History from the University of California, Berkeley.

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