

## New Muslim Studies Program Includes Tenure-Track Positions

Michigan State University is raising the profile of Muslim studies by establishing a full-fledged Muslim Studies Program within International Studies and Programs. The program, the newest of ISP's array of area studies and thematic centers and programs, builds on the Muslim Studies Initiative, which last year led to the establishment of the undergraduate Muslim Studies Specialization housed in James Madison College (JMC).

Aims of the program are to coordinate research and teaching about the Muslim world; aid in the development of courses relating to Muslim countries and region; hold conferences, workshops, and seminars on different parts and facets of the Muslim world; and actively engage in external fundraising to achieve these objectives. Mohammed Ayoob, University Distinguished Professor of International Relations in JMC, has been appointed coordinator of the program.

Serious consideration about developing the study of Muslim societies and politics began at MSU shortly after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Much of the initial impetus came from the strong interest and commitment of then-Provost Lou Anna K. Simon, with strong support from the deans of JMC, the College of Social Science (CSS), the College of Arts and Letters (CAL), and International Studies and Programs. Exposing students and faculty alike to dispassionate and objective analyses of Muslim societies in all their rich diversity and to the different strands of religious and political thinking in the Muslim world was deemed essential to correct distortions about Muslims and Islam that had become standard fare in the media in the aftermath of 9/11. Simultaneously, given the strategic importance of much of the Muslim world in U.S. policy, it was felt that Muslim societies and states

ought to be studied in their own right and from a long-term perspective.

Hiring new faculty is central to the success of the new program. Support from the provost and collaborative thinking in colleges and departments have resulted in decisions to hire four new Muslim studies faculty members specializing in anthropology, history, Islamic thought, and political science. Additional hires in the areas of French literature, geography, and sociology have also resulted in new faculty with interests related to Muslim studies. Funding for these positions resulted from strategic cooperation involving the deans of CAL, CSS, ISP, and JMC. The infusion of new personnel, combined with existing faculty engaged in teaching and researching different parts of the Muslim world, has created a critical mass for Muslim studies to take off this year.

MSU has also strengthened substantially its offerings of languages of the Muslim world. A second position has been created for a three-year period to teach Arabic in CAL. Courses in Swahili and Hausa as well as in Hebrew and Hindi (both Israel and India have substantial and politically significant Muslim populations) are routinely offered at MSU. Additionally, the Department of Linguistics and Languages has begun offering tutorial-style courses in Turkish and Persian. Instruction in two Turkic languages of Central Asia, Kazakh and Uzbek, are being added.

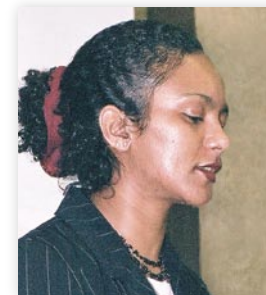
It is anticipated that funding for the Muslim Studies Program will be shared by the Office of the Provost, the Office of the Vice-President for Research and Graduate Studies, JMC, and International Studies and Programs.

More information regarding the Muslim Studies Program will soon be posted at [www.isp.msu.edu/muslimstudies](http://www.isp.msu.edu/muslimstudies)

—*Mohammed Ayoob*

## New Hires in Gender and Muslim Studies

Four new faculty members joined MSU in fall 2005 with expertise in gender and the Muslim world. These faculty have been an important addition not only to the Muslim Studies Program, but also to the Women and International Development (WID) Program, which facilitates collaboration among approximately 150 MSU faculty members with research and teaching interests in gender and global change.



**Safoi Babana-Hampton**, assistant professor, Department of French, Classics, and Italian, received her Ph.D. in modern French studies at the University of Maryland, College Park. Her research and teaching interests include Maghrebi literature of French expression; the twentieth-century French, English, Francophone, and postcolonial novel; discourses on modernity and postmodernity; the French intellectual tradition and cultural theory; cultural studies; and postcolonial literature and theory.



**Emine Evered**, assistant professor, Department of History, received her Ph.D. in history from the University of Arizona. Her research and teaching interests include global Islam, global feminism, education, women, and the history of Turkey, the Middle East, and the Ottoman Empire.



**Mara Leichtman**, assistant professor, Department of Anthropology, received her Ph.D. in anthropology from Brown University. Her research and teaching interests include Islam; religious and ethnic transformations through migration; community change; transnationalism, diasporas, and globalization; population studies, family systems, and gender relations; West Africa (Senegal), the Middle East, and North Africa; and Muslim institutions in Detroit, Michigan.



**Zakia Salime**, assistant professor, Department of Sociology, received her Ph.D. in sociology from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and a doctorate in the sociology of education at the University of Toulouse-Le Mirail, France. Her research and teaching interests include the state and religion in the Middle East and North Africa, transnational feminisms, gender and globalization, social movement theory, and women.

—*Kari Bergstrom Henquinet*

### MSU's Unique Vision of Muslim Studies:

- Emphasizes Muslims' "lived experiences" and not just scriptural and philosophical texts divorced from contexts
- Is concerned with the big questions facing Muslim societies in the contemporary era, while fully informed of the importance of history in shaping Muslim societies
- Is conceived as a truly cross-regional and comparative enterprise poised to build on the existing expertise at MSU on Asia and Africa while creating new capabilities on the Middle East and Eurasia
- Embraces the undergraduate Muslim studies specialization, emphasizing that MSU is as concerned with disseminating knowledge of the Muslim world to undergraduates across the university as it is with conducting high-quality research and graduate teaching