

**The Center for Arab & Middle Eastern Studies
Sheikh Zayed Chair for Arabic and Islamic Studies
American University of Beirut**

Cordially invites you to a hybrid lecture

**Millennial Muslims in the UAE:
Thinking Critically about Islam after the Revival**

Talk is in English with a summary in Arabic - discussion in English and Arabic

Speaker

Joud Alkorani

**Assistant Professor of Islam Studies
Radboud University - The Netherlands**

Wednesday March 16 | 3-5 PM (GMT+2)

IFI Seminar Room- 4th floor (Green Oval), AUB

Attendance on campus is restricted to AUB faculty, students and staff

You can also join us on this Zoom link:

<https://zoom.us/j/96823218920?pwd=ZVZ5cXJ0UExWMnJYUkMrRlhLeWRUdz09>

Abstract

In this lecture, I explore the “afterlife” of the Islamic Revival (1970s onward) in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) by exploring the private and apolitical forms of Islam popular among Muslim millennials today. I foreground coming-of-age narratives shared by middle-class, migrant Muslim women raised within families that took Islam as a guiding ethical framework. In their descriptions of religious transformation, women describe their American university education as a pivotal site of self-reflection, underscoring how the “critical thinking” skills developed during this time inspired them to interrogate the Islams of their upbringing. I illustrate how, rather than leave their parent’s Islam behind (though some certainly do), Dubai’s millennials rethink and rework its practices and principles in novel ways.

Shaped by their liberal American education and the UAE’s post-Arab Spring push towards new modes of religious governance, the various orientations towards Islam that women embrace are undergirded by two features. Firstly, they presume a notion of religious commitment premised upon personal choice. Seeking truth – and seeking God – is depicted as an individual endeavor, which must remain as such to maintain the *niyya* (pure intention) and sincerity of the believer. In this rendition, religion is private and interior, in contrast to the public and embodied character of *da’wa* during the Islamic Revival. Secondly, and relatedly, the iterations of Islam predominant among these women are apolitical. Undoing the public and political character of religion enshrined during the Islamic Revival, the kinds of Islam which emerge in the UAE today sever any potential associations between politics and piety. Through a critical analysis of one woman’s intellectual and religious trajectory, I shed light on wider societal shifts in religiosity and a post-Revival turn particularly visible in the UAE’s cosmopolitan landscape.

Biography



Joud Alkorani is an anthropologist with a background in Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies. After completing her MA and PhD at the University of Toronto, she joined Radboud University as an Assistant Professor of Islam Studies. Broadly speaking, Joud's research explores how changing political, economic, and sociohistorical conditions transform Muslims' beliefs and practices. In particular, she is interested in the forms Muslim piety takes after the Islamic Revival and the Arab Spring. Joud is currently a visiting postdoctoral fellow at the Orient-Institut Beirut, where she is developing her dissertation into a book manuscript and organizing a workshop on divine-human relations after the Arab Spring.