

Semiha Topal, PhD

Education

2007-2012: Ph.D. in Religious Studies, School of Historical, Philosophical and Religious Studies, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ, USA
Dissertation: “Building a Pious Self in Secular Settings: Pious Women in Modern Turkey”

2005-2006: M.A. in Gender Studies and Religion, School of Oriental and African Studies- University of London, London, UK
Thesis: “Becoming Divine: Irigaray’s ‘Divine Women’ and Ibn Arabi’s ‘The Perfect Man’”

2001-2005: B.A. in English Language and Literature, Fatih University, Istanbul, Turkey

Administrative and Service Positions

Program Manager: John Carroll University, Tuohy Center for Interreligious Understanding, August 2023-continuing.

Chair: Fatih University, Department of Sociology, Jan 2015-Feb 2016.

Vice-chair: Fatih University, Department of Sociology, Sep 2013-Dec 2014.

Jury member: Peace Projects. Journalists and Writers Foundation, May 2014.

Judge: DC Muslim Interscholastic Tournament (MIST), Writing & Oratory category, March 2022, March 2023.

Teaching Experience

Visiting Assistant Professor: William & Mary, Department of Religious Studies, Williamsburg, VA, Aug. 2019-May 2023.

RELG 212-01 Introduction to Islam (Fall 2019-Spring 2020)

RELG 212-02 Introduction to Islam (Fall 2019-Spring 2020)

RELG 212-01-02 Introduction to Islam (Summer 2020)

RELG 317-01 Women in Islam (Fall 2019-Fall 2020)

RELG 308-12 Islam and Secularism (Spring 2020-Spring 2021)

RELG 212-01 Introduction to Islam (Fall 2021-Spring 2022)

RELG 212-02 Introduction to Islam (Fall 2021-Spring 2022)

RELG 317-01/GSWS 317-01 Women in Islam (Fall 2021-Fall 2022)

RELG 308-02 Islam and Secularism (Spring 2022)

RELG 212-02 Introduction to Islam (Summer 2022)

RELG 201-01 Religions of the World (Fall 2022)

RELG 212-01 Introduction to Islam (Fall 2022)

RELG 201-01 Religions of the World (Spring 2023)
RELG 212-01 Introduction to Islam (Spring 2023)
RELG 308-02 Islam and Secularism (Spring 2023)

Visiting Assistant Professor: Colgate University, Department of Religion, Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies Program, Hamilton, NY, Aug 2018-May 2019.

RELG 234 Women and Religious Traditions: Islam (Fall 2018)
CORE 183C The Middle East (Fall 2018)
CORE 183C The Middle East (Spring 2019)
RELG 101 The World's Religions (Spring 2019)

Assistant Professor: Fatih University, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Department of Sociology. Istanbul, Turkey, Sep. 2013-July 2016.

SOC/SOS 101 Introduction to Sociology (English & Turkish)
SOS 401 Religion and Society (Turkish)
SOC 341 Sociology of Family
SOC/SOS 422 Change in Contemporary Turkish Society (English & Turkish)
SOS 476 Gender and Society (Turkish)
SOC/SOS 411 Modernity and Postmodernity (English & Turkish)
SOS 314 Sociology of Knowledge (Turkish)
SOC/SOS 302 Readings in Sociology (English & Turkish)
SOC 520 Religion and Politics in Turkey (MA level)
HIST 105 Islamic History I
SOS 491 BA Thesis (Turkish)
SOC 599 MA Thesis

Guest Lecturer: Long Island University, Global College, Comparative Religions and Cultures Program. Istanbul, Turkey, April 2013, September 2014.

Gender and Religion in Contemporary Turkey (4 sessions)
Introduction to Islam (4 sessions)
Islam and Gender (2 sessions)

Faculty Associate: Arizona State University, School of Historical, Philosophical and Religious Studies, Tempe, AZ, Summer 2010- Spring 2011- Summer 2011.

REL 260 "Introduction to Islam." (Online)

Language Instructor: Arizona State University, School of International Letters and Cultures, Tempe, AZ, Fall 2008, Spring 2009.

SLC 101 Elementary Turkish I
SLC 102 Elementary Turkish II

Teaching Assistant: Arizona State University, School of Historical, Philosophical and Religious Studies, Tempe, AZ, Fall 2007-Spring 2012.

REL 100 Religions of the World (Fall 2007, Spring 2010)

REL 494 Islamic Civilization (Fall 2009)

REL 480 Religion and Global Politics (Spring 2012)

Language Instructor: Fatih University, English Preparatory School, Istanbul, Turkey, Sep 2006-July 2007

Elementary English (Grammar, Writing, Speaking and Listening)

Selected Publications

1. **“Rethinking Piety and the Veil under Political Islam: Unveiling Among Turkish Women After 2016,”** *American Journal of Qualitative Research*, Volume 6, Issue 3, (2022): 99-123
2. **“Female Muslim Subjectivity in Secular Public Sphere: Hijab and Ritual Prayer as Technologies of the Self,”** *Social Compass*, Vol 64, Issue 4, (2017): 582 - 596.
3. **“Everybody Wants Secularism –But Which One? Contesting Definitions of Secularism in Contemporary Turkey”** *The International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society*, Vol. 25: Iss. 1-3, (2012): 1-14.
4. **"Islamic Feminists and the Qur'an: Reading Liberty and Emancipation of Muslim Women in the Sacred Text"** *Ethica Themen: Sprachen heiliger Schriften und ihre Auslegung*, Eds. N. Rossmann, S. Kaessmayer and C. Wagnsonner, 73-111. Wien: Amtliche Publikation der Republik Österreich/Bundesminister für Landesverteidigung und Sport, 2015.
5. **“Pursuit of Piety in the Public Sphere: A Weberian Analysis of the Gulen Hizmet Movement”** *Understanding the Gulen Hizmet Movement: An Interdisciplinary Exploration of Circumspect Activism*, Ed. Tamer Balci and Christopher Miller, 189-201. London: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012.
6. Review of Vulnerability in Resistance, Eds. Judith Butler, Zeynep Gambetti, and Leticia Sabsay, *Hawwa*, Volume 15, Issue 1-2, (2017): 222 – 224.

Op-eds and Newspaper Articles

1. “To Be or Not to Be: That is Not the Question” *Virginia Gazette*, Sep 10, 2022.
2. “Amid Iran protests, W&M professor discusses significance of hijab.” Interview by Jennifer L. Williams, *William and Mary News*, Sep 28, 2022.

Seminars & Presentations

1. **“Feminism in Islam and Judaism.”** Jewish-Islamic Dialogue Society (JIDS) of Washington D.C., 1 May 2022. (virtual)
2. **“Muslim subjectivity and technologies of the self.”** Youth meeting on “Personal Development and Herd Mentality” by Attivismo Paziente, Rome, Italy. 31 October 2021. (virtual)
3. **“Muslim women and the Turkish state.”** CSW65 Parallel Event Women Leading Change: Intersection of Faith and Empowerment. United Nations Association-NCA, 18 March 2021. (virtual)
4. **“Stories of Deveiling in Post-2106 Turkey”** Middle East Studies Association 2020 Annual Meeting, 15 October 2020. (virtual)
5. **“In Search of a Non-Politicized Piety: Understanding De-Veiling of Pious Muslim Women in Turkey”** Keynote Speech at the Symposium on Gender, Religion, & Political Conflict, Religious Studies Student Society & Religious Studies Department, California State University-Long Beach, CA, 1 May 2019.
6. **“The Trend of De-Veiling Among Turkish Women: An Intersection of the Personal and the Political”** The Center for Women’s Studies Brown Bag Series, Colgate University, Hamilton, NY, 27 November 2018.
7. **“Protecting Democracy for Community Justice: Lessons from Turkey and the Middle East”** Local to Global Justice 16th Annual Forum & Festival, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ, 27 February 2017.
8. **“Religion and Gender Politics in Turkey: The Effect of Islamism on Turkey’s Gender Equality Performance, 2002-2015”**, Midwest Political Science Association 74th Annual Meeting, Chicago, IL, USA. 9 April 2016.
9. **“Becoming Pious and Modern: Muslim Women of Secular Turkey”**, invited speaker at the Department of Middle Eastern and South Asian Languages and Cultures, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA, USA. 5 April 2016.
10. **“Female Muslim Subjectivity in Secular Public Sphere: Hijab and Ritual Prayer as Technologies of the Self”** Political and Public Approaches to Gender, Secularism and Multiculturalism, Centre for Social Studies at the University of Coimbra, Lisbon, Portugal. 11 November 2015.
11. **“Islam and Women in Turkey: A Steep Path Towards Gender Equality”** Keynote Speech at LUSEEC 2015 International Conference: Perspectives on Gender in a Global World, Lumina - The University of South-East Europe, Bucharest, Romania. 15 May 2015.
12. **“Girls Education in Afghanistan: The Role of the Turkish Private Schools”** The 26th session of the Human Rights Council, Journalists and Writers Foundation Side

- Event Panel: Girls' Education in Afghanistan. UN Office in Geneva, Switzerland. 12 June 2014.
13. **"Girls Education in Afghanistan and the Turkish Private Schools"** 58th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, Journalists and Writers Foundation Side Event Panel: Girls' Education in Afghanistan: Achievements and Challenges. UN Headquarters, New York, USA. 18 March 2014.
 14. **"An Introduction to Islam: Believing in God"** The 6th Pro-Dialogue Meeting: The Life of the Believer in God: a Journey of Loyalty and Sacrifice. Franciscan Center for International Dialogue (CEFID), St. Anthony's Church, Istanbul, Turkey. 6 November 2013.
 15. **"Muslim Women (Re)Imagining Modern Life: Analysis of a Seminar Series on Women's Studies"**. Lecture to NYU Abu Dhabi Practicum Seminar, Fatih University, Istanbul, Turkey. 5 November 2013.
 16. **"Technologies of the Self: Headscarf and Ritual Prayer"** Middle East Studies Association 2013 Annual Meeting, New Orleans, Louisiana, USA. 13 October 2013.
 17. **"Religious Freedom from the Perspective of Faith Communities: A Muslim Perspective"** Edict of Milan Seminar: Religious Freedom Today –Emperor Constantine's Edict of Milan- 1700 Years Later, the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Istanbul. Conrad Hotel, Istanbul, Turkey. 17 May 2013.
 18. **"How Can Religion Be an Ally in Reducing Violence Against Women and Girls?"** 57th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, US Federation for Middle East Peace Side Event Panel: The Impact of Faith in Reducing Violence Against Women and Girls. UN Headquarters, New York, USA. 13 March 2013.
 19. **"Islam and Women: The Turkish Experience"** Muslim-Christian Dialog: Reflecting on Experience. Waterloo Lutheran Seminary. Waterloo, Canada. 27 September 2012.
 20. **"Building a Pious Self in Secular Settings: Pious Professional Women in Turkey"** Religious Studies Faculty Forum, School of Historical, Philosophical and Religious Studies, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ, USA. 23 February 2012.
 21. **"Pursuit of Piety in the Public Sphere: A Weberian Analysis of the Gulen Movement"** Peace Through Faith-Based Grassroots Organization? Exploring the Gulen Movement. Texas-Pan American University, Edinburg, TX, USA. 30 March 2010.
 22. **"Veiling and Agency: A Different Look at the Submission/Resistance Binary"** 7th International Humanities Conference, Fatih University, Istanbul, Turkey. 17 July 2008.
 23. **"The Rise of Islamism in Turkey after 1980"** American Academy of Religion Western Regional Meeting, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, CA, USA. 30 March 2008.

Awards

MESA Global Academy Fellowship, Middle East Studies Association of North America, 2023-2024.

Scientific Research Grant, Fatih University. Project title: "The Construction of Gender Identity in Non-Family Settings: The Case of Old Women Living in Nursing Homes"
Project supervisor. October 2013-April 2015.

Graduate College Dissertation Completion Fellowship, Arizona State University. Fall 2012.

Norton Grant for Women's Studies, Arizona State University. Fall 2011.

Religious Studies Doctoral Dissertation Fellowship, Arizona State University. Fall 2010.

Henry Luce Foundation Exchange Fellowship, Indonesian Consortium for Religious Studies at Gadjadara University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia. June-July 2010.

Hardt Graduate Fellowship in Religion, Peace and Conflict Studies, Center for the Study of Religion and Conflict, Arizona State University. Summer 2009.

Languages

Turkish – native language

English – speak fluently and read/write with high proficiency

German and Arabic – speak, read, and write with basic competence.

Institutional Affiliations

Member, American Academy of Religions

Member, Middle East Studies Association of North America

Member, North American Association for the Study of Religion

Fellow, European Center for Populism Studies