



**University
of Victoria**

Graduate Studies

**Notice of the Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of Master of Arts**

of

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**“Western Foreign Fighters in the Conflict in Syria and Iraq: A Critical Reflection
on the Role of Muslims’ Identity and Integration in the West”**

Department of Political Science

Wednesday, April 13, 2016

1:00pm

David Turpin Building

Room A357

Supervisory Committee:

Dr. Scott Watson, Department of Political Science, University of Victoria (Supervisor)

Dr. Andrew Wender, Department of Political Science, UVic (Member)

External Examiner:

Dr. Martin Bunton, Department of History, UVic

Chair of Oral Examination:

Dr. Lianne McLarty, Department of Art History and Visual Studies, UVic

Dr. David Capson, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies

Abstract

The current conflict in Syria and Iraq has attracted a large number of foreign fighters (FFs) from Western countries. The main question of this thesis is why these countries do not have a similar pattern for their proportions of FFs. This thesis explores this question in nine Western countries with varying proportions of FFs: Finland, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, England, Canada, Australia, and America. Through a case study of Islamic State's online FF recruitment campaign, it will be shown that common religious identity is the main part the group's recruitment message. However, comparing the identified countries on factors related to Muslims' identity and integration uncovers that common Muslim identity itself is not capable of answering the question; instead, it is Muslims' integration into their surrounding societies that correlates with proportions of FFs from identified countries.