

2025-26 Annual Report

UVIC | Centre for Studies in Religion and Society

The Critical Muslim Studies (CMS) Hub is a collaborative initiative hosted at UVic's Centre for Studies in Religion and Society that brings together faculty, students, and community partners working on, or interested in, Muslim Studies across disciplines. We gratefully acknowledge and respect the Lək̓ʷəŋən (Songhees and Xʷsepsəm/Esquimalt) Peoples on whose territory the university stands, and the Lək̓ʷəŋən and W̱SÁNEĆ Peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day. As a guiding principle and form of practice, our work at the CMS Hub begins with critical reflexivity on Muslim-ness and global and locals forms of (de)colonisation, including considering our positionalities and responsibilities on Turtle Island and Coast Salish territory.



Our Purpose





CMS provides an exciting and innovative intellectual space for thinking about how mobilities and identities interact in societies around the world today.
-Zaheera Jinnah

The CMS hub creates an exciting opportunity to further nuance relationships between identity, politics, culture, and connection, and acts as a reminder to hold onto the joys that parallel often cited harms and traumas.
-Shemine Gulamhusein

DIRECTORS' REPORT

Zaheera Jinnah and Shemine Gulamhusein

This inaugural message on the Critical Muslim Studies (CMS) Hub, a three-year initiative (2025-8) in conjunction with the Centre for Studies in Religion and Society (CSRS), celebrates new beginnings and an exciting vision for the future. Our goal for the CMS Hub was to bring together existing and future scholarship and initiatives on Islam and Muslims at UVic into a visible and coherent intellectual project while making space for conversations and curiosity. Over the last year, we built community among faculty, staff and students, forged new partnerships beyond UVic, and hosted several events that furthered dialogue, and debate on decolonisation, Muslims and Islam. A special thanks to our dedicated steering committee, talented research assistant, Suad Ahmed, co-conspirator and gracious host, CSRS director Rachel Brown, and to our faithful administrative officer, Scott Dolff, for his help keeping the train moving forward.

We launched the Critical Muslim Studies Reading Collective, led by and aimed at graduate students who are working on, or curious about Muslim studies. As a collective, it offers a space to think and work together in unentangling empire and coloniality from our intellectual traditions and practices. Suad Ahmed has done incredible work in bringing conversations and curiosities around embodied scholarship, researcher positionality, and the politics of being Muslim in the academy to the centre of the work we do.

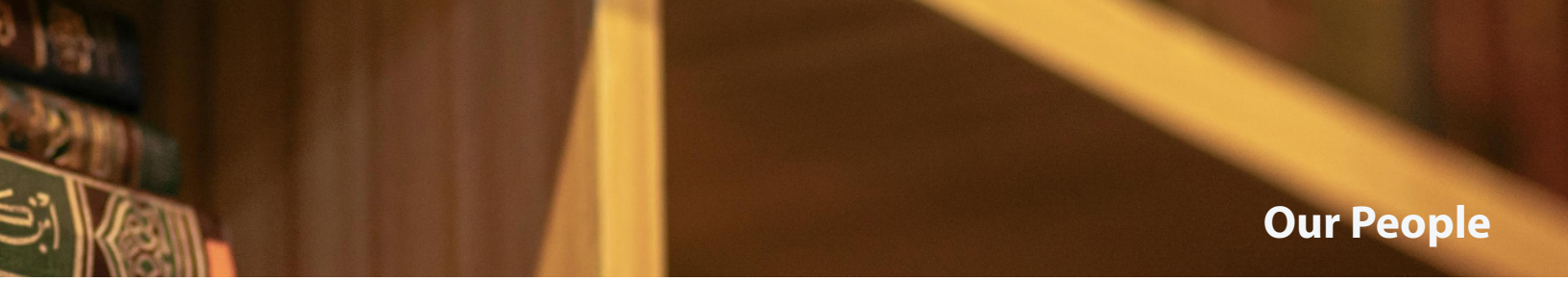
In acknowledging the ongoing genocide in Gaza, CMS co-Director Shemine Gulamhusein moderated the book launch of *When Genocide Wasn't News: How Canadian media covered up the destruction of Gaza* with one of the editors, Martin Lukacs, an award-winning journalist, author, and managing editor of *The Breach*. The CMS Hub also co-sponsored the Edward Said memorial lecture with the Centre for Comparative Muslim Studies (CCMS) at SFU featuring Professor Noura Erakat, who spoke on "Building the World Anew".

Working within a national and regional context in which anti-Muslim hate remains an everyday reality, and concerned about the surveillance, and targeting of Muslim and Palestinian students and faculty, we partnered with the BC Islamophobia Hotline to host an "Understanding Islamophobia" workshop, the first of its kind, during UVic's 5 Days of Action.

Looking forward to 2026/7, we will be launching the Critique and Care Seminar series. This flagship program of the CMS Hub offers scholarship rooted in community, accountability, storytelling while attending to ethical and epistemological conditions through which knowledge, belonging, and more just worlds become possible. We have an exciting line up of speakers from UVic and beyond, including Dr. Salman Sayyid, who will present the Distinguished Lecture in Islam, co-hosted with the CSRS.

What is Critical Muslim Studies?

Critical Muslim Studies is an emerging subject in the global north drawing on traditional textual based Islamic studies, but distinguished from it in three ways: first, using a multidisciplinary and critical approach it explores complex and contemporary topics related and relevant to Muslim societies and cultures that touch on the social sciences, health, business, law, the arts, and environment; second, it has an intentional focus on methods, reflexivity and the embodiment of research and knowledge; and finally, it is rooted in anti-racism and decolonial principles.



Our People

The CMS vision and programming is shaped and guided by an engaged and passionate group of scholars:

Steering Committee



Rachel Brown (co-chair)
(UVic, Anthropology and Religion, Culture and Society; Director, Centre for Studies in Religion and Society)

Rachel's research explores the food practices of Muslim migrants in France and Quebec, and the ways that food practices can act as decolonial and antiracist action for minoritized communities.



Shemine Gulamhusein (co-chair)
(UVic. School of Child and Youth Care)

Shemine's work is situated at the intersection of Muslim identities, recreational engagement, and migration.



Zaheera Jinnah (co-chair)
(UVic, School of Social Work)

Zaheera works in the field of migration studies.



Farouk Mitha
(UVic, Research Affiliate)

Farouk's research areas include Medieval Muslim intellectual history, examining expressions of and responses to Islamophobia, and illuminating the challenges facing contemporary Muslim communities in the West.



Mehmoona Moosa-Mitha
(UVic, School of Social Work)

Mehmoona's research interests include decolonial analysis of trauma and pain as experienced by marginal communities in Canada, as well as transnational analysis of Mental Health and coloniality.



Elena Pnevmonidou
(UVic, German and Slavic Studies)

Elena's research focuses on the intersection between romantic aesthetic theory and romantic conceptualizations of the "other," be it the other gender or the cultural other, such as the Orient.

Elder



Terrie Barnhard
(Songhees First Nation)

Research Assistant



Suad Ahmed
(York University, Education)
Research Assistant

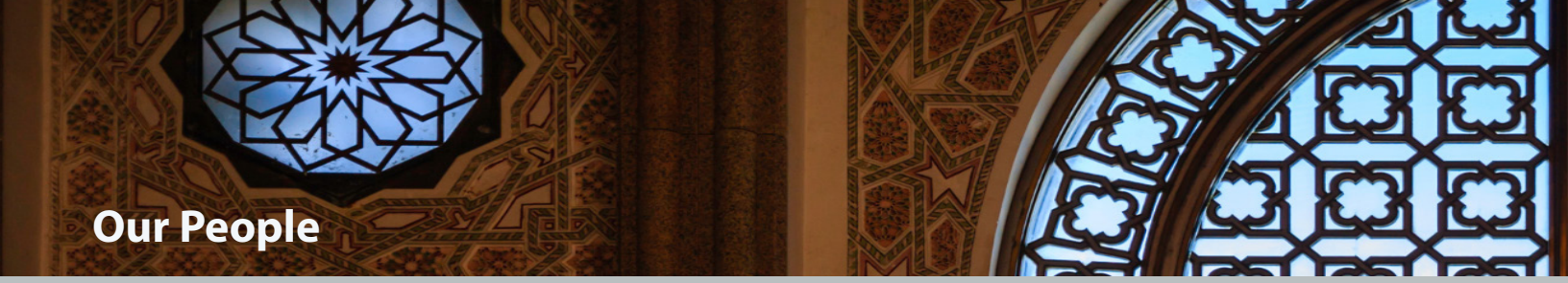
Staff



Scott Dolff
(UVic, Centre for Studies in Religion and Society)
Administrative Officer



"I am thrilled to see the CMS Hub push back at the often siloed nature of academic work and act as a space that brings scholars from across campus together in community."
-Rachel Brown



Our People

CMS Elder Terrie Barnhard

Elder **Terrie Barnhard** is a proud ***Lək̓ʷəŋən*** woman and member of the Songhees First Nation.

A Sixties Scoop Survivor, Terrie was born on ***Lək̓ʷəŋən*** territory but grew up in Edmonton, disconnected from her birth family, community, and culture. She is a strong mother of two and returned to ***Lək̓ʷəŋən*** territory in 1993. Inspired by her daughters and grandchildren, she is on the lifelong journey of reclaiming her roots and ancestral teachings, disrupted by genocide and the settler colonial system.

Terrie is also working to relearn ***Lək̓ʷəŋən***, her People's language, with the Language Revitalization Program at the Songhees Nation. This is essential work because due to colonization, there is only one first-speaker of ***Lək̓ʷəŋən*** left.

Terrie now supports the First People's House at the University of Victoria as a keeper of ***Lək̓ʷəŋən*** knowledge, culture, and traditions. While welcoming people and events to ***Lək̓ʷəŋən*** territory, Terrie educates settlers and other visitors about the traditional keepers of the land now called "Victoria." She approaches this work with humility, mentored by family Knowledge Keepers Uncles Butch and Skip Dick, and cousin Yuxwelupton Bradley Dick.



Elder Terrie Barnhard

Research Assistant Reflections

Suad Ahmed

My time as a Research Assistant with the Critical Muslim Studies Hub has been a meaningful opportunity for me to grow as a researcher but also to think about what it means to build intellectual community. One of the parts of my role that I valued most was helping to develop and facilitate the Critical Muslim Studies Graduate Reading Collective which brought together graduate students and researchers affiliated with the Centre for Studies in Religion and Society (CSRS) who were interested in thinking through CMS as an emerging field. Throughout the year, we read together and convened conversations around orientalism and power, centering Islamic epistemologies, Blackness and gender, everyday Islamophobia, decolonial thought, and much more. We were also fortunate to have scholars join us, including Dr. Zulfikar Hirji and Dr. Farouk Mitha, who shared their work and joined us in conversation. Truly, what I appreciated about these discussions was that CMS gave us a way to think beyond simply studying Muslims or Muslim identities but instead opened larger questions about how knowledge is produced, whose knowledge is taken seriously, and how colonial histories continue to shape the ways we understand Islam and Muslims today. Perhaps what I will carry with me most from this RA experience was the importance of having spaces where people can simply think, imagine, and heal together. Bringing people from different disciplines, research areas, and lived experiences into the same room made it so that our conversations were richer and often took us in directions none of us had not anticipated. Indeed, this experience reminded me that learning and knowledge production does not have to be something we do alone but that some of our most interesting thinking can emerge through conversation, through relationships, and through the communities we build through our work.



Suad Ahmed



Scholarship and Community Building

The CMS Hub aims to deepen space for existing and new scholarship across a range of research themes and methods on Muslim Studies at UVic. From September 2025 to August 2026, we convened, supported or participated in numerous public events, both on and off campus, that highlighted aspects of Muslim life and experience, including:

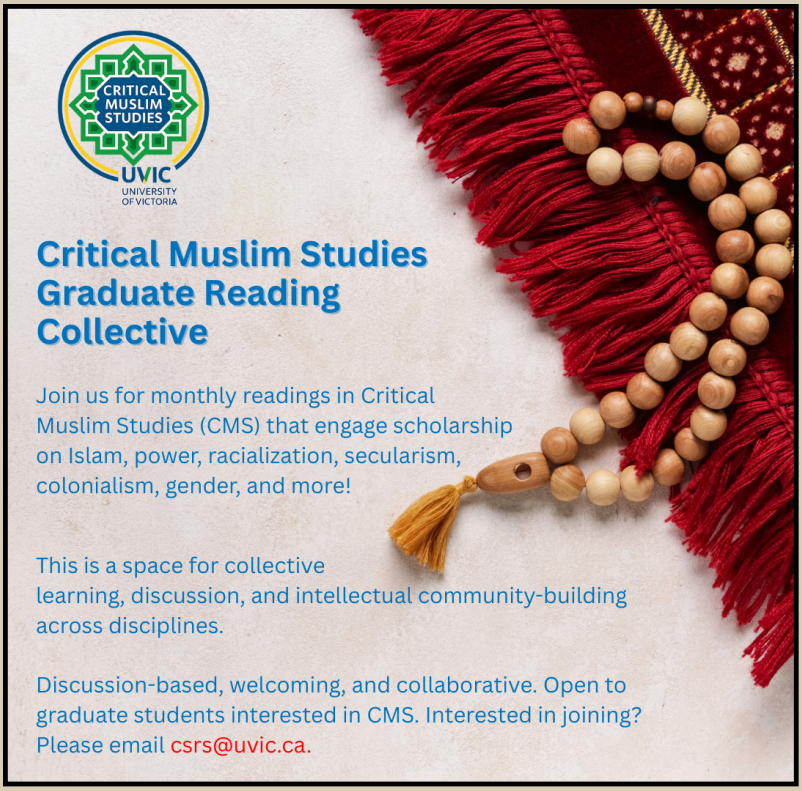
Sept. 18, 2025	**Rachel Brown**	Beyond Food Fights: Religion, Food, Power, and Politics
Oct. 16, 2025	**Shemine Gulamhusein**	Navigating Muslimhood in Sport and Recreational Spaces
Oct. 23, 2025	**Matt Sheedy**	Muslims in North American Popular Culture
Oct. 23, 2025	**Martin Lukacs and Shemine Gulamhusein**	When Genocide Wasn't News: How Canadian media covered up the destruction of Gaza
Dec. 12, 2025	**Shemine Gulamhusein and Zaheera Jinnah**	Critical Muslim Studies: An Introduction
Jan. 22, 2026	**Bouchra Mossmann**	North of Ordinary: Muslim Lives in the Canadian Arctic
Feb.5, 2026	**Youssef Benzouine**	Muslim Masculinities in Quebec
Feb.24, 2026	**Shemine Gulamhusein**	Critical [insert word of choice] Studies
March 5, 2026	**Shemine Gulamhusein and Zaheera Jinnah**	Between Critique and Care: Conversations on Critical Muslim Studies at UVic
March 12, 2026	**Suad Ahmed**	Through Our Eyes: The Social and Emotional Lives of Somali Muslim Youth
March 19, 2026	**Zulfikar Hirji**	Hidden Heritage: Decorated Qur'ans from Coastal East Africa
May 1, 2026	**Shemine Gulamhusein**	When Belonging Isn't a Given: Disrupting Narratives of Inclusion in Recreation
May 2, 2026	**Bouchra Mossmann**	Muslim Solidarities and Everyday Global-Local Connections in Northern Canada
May 2, 2026	**Zaheera Jinnah, et al**	Towers of Ivory and Steel: Israeli universities complicity in the occupation and genocide
May 9, 2026	**Zaheera Jinnah and Shemine Gulamhusein**	Reclaiming Our Narratives - Community Conversation with Islamic Legal Assistance Hotline
July 3, 2026	**Suad Ahmed and Youssef Benzouine**	Investigating Muslim Identities
July 20, 2026	**Zaheera Jinnah**	Geographies and Tapestries of Muslims in Africa
Aug. 12, 2026	**Suad Ahmed**	Promises, Possibilities, and Pitfalls: Participatory Methodologies and the Politics of Knowing with Somali Muslim Youth





Our Programs

Graduate Student Reading Collective



There is a rich range of academic scholarship in Islamic Studies and on Muslim societies being produced by UVic faculty members. CMS offers an institutional hub for these faculty members to meet and collaborate. This is a timely initiative in light of the rising tide of Islamophobia, which is fueled by politics of polarization and the lack of critically informed perspectives.

-Farouk Mitha

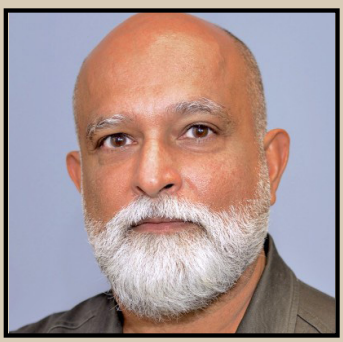


The 2025-26 Graduate Reading Collective met monthly to discuss a diverse set of topics across a number of disciplines, often with distinguished and challenging guest speakers. Time and space was always allotted for group discussion as peers, apart from faculty.

February, 2026	Foundations: Orientalism & Power
March, 2026	Islamic Ways of Knowing, Qur'an & Worldmaking
April, 2026	Gender, Blackness,& Muslim Womanhood
May, 2026	Everyday Islamophobia & Lived Experience
June, 2026	Decolonial Knowledge & Critical Muslim Studies
July, 2026	Islam, Empire & Global Power
August, 2026	Ethical Futures

I am excited about the work of the hub as it represents the possibility of further developing critical analysis and reflection on Muslim diasporic communities in Canada.

-Mehmoona Moosa-Mitha



Distinguished Lecture in Islam

Anthropologist and social historian **Zulfikar Hirji** of York University gave the CSRS Distinguished Lecture in Islam in March 2026. His talk, "Hidden Heritage: Decorated Qur'ans from Coastal East Africa" shone a light on the neglected history, artistry, and global significance of decorated and handwritten Qur'an manuscripts produced by local scribes and artists in coastal East Africa between the 18th and 19th centuries. Zulfikar was generous with his time beyond the lecture, meeting on various occasions for discussion with UVic faculty and graduate students. A highlight for the CMS graduate reading collective was the afternoon spent in discussion with Zulfikar on "Islamic Ways of Knowing, Qur'an and Worldmaking."

Community Conversations



The CMS Hub aims to create meaningful public engagement that furthers understandings and shapes public discourse and dialogue on contemporary Muslim identities, societies, and cultures. Toward that end, we hosted or co-hosted a number of important community conversations in 2025-26.

Our first public event welcomed community members to share their lived experiences as Muslims living on Turtle Island (Spring 2025). In the Fall of 2025 we hosted a book launch at Camas Books & Infoshop on the newly released *When Genocide Wasn't News: How Canadian media covered up the destruction of Gaza*, edited by Martin Lukacs, Dania Majid, and Jason Toney. Later in the Fall, CMS co-hosted the webinar "The History of Islamophobia in Canada" featuring Hassam Munir, with the BC Islamophobia Hotline, Islamophobia Legal Assistance Hotline, and SFU's Centre for Comparative Muslim Studies (CCMS). In March 2026 we gathered interested UVic faculty and graduate students across multiple disciplines for our inaugural on-campus roundtable discussion: "Between Critique and Care: Conversations on Critical Muslim Studies at UVic". In the Spring of 2026 CMS co-sponsored the Edward W. Said Memorial Lecture "Building the World Anew", featuring respected professor, award-winning author, human rights lawyer, and activist Noura Erakat. Summer 2026 saw the launch of our Critique and Care seminar series. CMS reseach assistant Suad Ahmed started us off on right foot in front of a large, appreciative audience with her lecture, "Promises, Possibilities, and Pitfalls: Participatory Methodologies and the Politics of Knowing with Somali Muslim Youth."







Looking Ahead

Bouchra Mossmann
2026-2027 CMS Research Assistant

We are excited to welcome **Bouchra Mossmann** as the 2026-2027 CMS Research Assistant. Bouchra is an associate fellow at the Centre for Studies in Religion and Society at UVic and recently earned her PhD from the University of Southern Denmark for research on Muslim communities in Northern Canada. Her work sits at the intersection of lived religion, belonging, and migration, expanding into Critical Muslim Studies, Indigenous research methodologies, and settler colonialism. She is particularly interested in how Muslims negotiate intersecting identities in relation to faith and place, especially in Indigenous contexts and settler colonial states, and increasingly studies issues of class and embodied practice. Attentive to the possibilities of empathy and embodied solidarity, she brings decolonial and ethnographic approaches to the study of Muslim subjectivities.



Bouchra Mossmann

Events

In the 2026-2027 academic year, the CMS Hub will host, co-host, and help organize a number of events, including the Middle Eastern and Islamic Consortium (MEICON) Student Conference, the Distinguished Lecture in Islam, and the CMS Critique and Care Lecture Series (schedule below--hold the dates!)

October 20, 2026	**Zaheera Jinnah and Shemine Gulamhusein**	Palestine Photo Exhibit
January 19, 2027	**Shamma Boyarin**	"The Quran of the Arabs" and Hebrew poetics in Ibn Ezra
March 16, 2027	**Salman Sayyid**	What's Islam Got to Do with It?
May 18, 2027	**Sohod Khadum**	Storytelling, Care and Resistance



Salman Sayyid is a Professor of Social Theory and Decolonial Thought and the Head of the School of Sociology and Social Policy at the University of Leeds. Sayyid is a political theorist whose work has pioneered Critical Muslim Studies. His research interests include decolonial studies, global history, the study of Islamophobia and racism. His major publications include *A Fundamental Fear* (a book now in its third edition, despite being banned by the Malaysian government) and *Recalling the Caliphate*. He is the founding editor of *ReOrient* and the editor of the Pluto Press series: Decolonial Studies, Postcolonial Horizons. His lecture will provide a helpful historical and global context to CMS and offer imaginative ways for this field to take shape at UVic.

Centre for Studies in Religion and Society
University of Victoria
PO Box 1700, STN CSC,
Victoria, BC
Canada V8W 2Y2

Phone: 250-721-6325
Email: csrs@uvic.ca
Bluesky: @csrs-uvic.bsky.social
Instagram: instagram.com/cmshubuvic/
Facebook: facebook.com/uvic.csrs
Web: www.uvic.ca/csrs/cms

Creative by Heidelberg