

**Final Report for the “Contextualizing the War on Terror and Anti-Muslim Racism”
Speaker Series
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June 2023**

Project Overview

As stated in my proposal, the purpose of the “Contextualizing the War on Terror and Anti-Muslim Racism” Speaker Series was to contextualize the United States longest war in history and to raise awareness of the ways the war on terror has impacted Muslims both at home and abroad. The best estimates of civilian casualties in Iraq, Afghanistan, Yemen, Syria, and Pakistan from the global war on terror range from [335,000](#) to [507,000](#) and “the US federal price tag for the post-9/11 wars is over [\\$8 trillion](#)” ([Costs of War Project](#)). From this context, I originally proposed a semester-long speaker series to host four public events during the Fall 2022 semester. However, I am pleased to share that I was able to invite an additional speaker in Spring 2023 within the grant budget, \$4,700 because I was able to scale back on food money. All the events were held in-person as well as virtually.

Summary of the Public Lectures

The speaker series began on September 13, 2022, with a public lecture by Dr. [Deepa Kumar](#), an award-winning scholar and activist, whose work contextualizes the war on terror and the politics of empire. Dr. Kumar’s talk was titled: “Terrorcraft: Race, Empire, and the Legacy of the War on Terror.” Adapting Fields and Fields’ concept of racecraft, Dr. Kumar argued that “the production of a racialized terrorist threat or “terrorcraft” is rooted in the crisis of US imperialism in the late 1960s and early 1970s. 9/11 served to amplify this construction and bolster the project of an unbounded, endless War on Terror that continues in a variety of different forms from intrusive surveillance to drone warfare. Quotidian slogans and billboards like ‘see something, say something’ serve to naturalize militarism and securitization making drone warfare inevitable. To go beyond the War on Terror, beyond militarism, it is important not only to debunk the over-exaggerated threat of terrorism and to expose terrorcraft as an imperial tactic, but to organize global social movements that set as their goal the dismantling of the empire.”

Capitalizing on WCU resources, the second event (September 19, 2022) of the speaker series was a lecture by Dr. [Robert J. Kodosky](#), who chairs the history department where he teaches courses in American military and diplomatic history including History of United States Involvement in the Middle East (HIS 380). He additionally serves as the faculty advisor for the Student Veterans Group (SVG) on campus. His article on the history of the War in Afghanistan and its impact on the Philadelphia region appears in *The Encyclopedia of Greater Philadelphia*. Dr. Kodosky’s talk was titled: “American foreign policy in the Middle East: A playbook for insanity.” This lecture put the post-9/11 events into a historical context and helped the audience to understand the political motivations and gains of the government of the United States as it waged wars in Afghanistan and in the Middle East.

[Elizabeth Urban](#), another WCU History faculty, was the third speaker, and the lecture was held on October 3, 2022. Dr. Urban specializes in early Islamic history (7th and 8th centuries CE) and teaches a wide range of courses focusing on the area conventionally known as the Middle East. Her talk was titled: “Contextualizing 9-11 in a historical framework.” In her lecture, Dr. Urban discussed some of the misconceptions about Islam and Muslim cultures as developed by European

and Western scholars historically and what impact they have in the post-9/11 contemporary America. Dr. Urban also discussed some Qur'anic and Biblical verses to show the complexity of interpreting these scriptures and how to avoid problematic narratives about Islam as a violent religion.

The fourth event was a workshop (October 13, 2022) on anti-Muslim racism and liberal Islamophobia by [PARCEO](#), a resource and education center that works with groups to strengthen their research, curricula, and organizing for social change. The workshop was led by Donna Nevel, a community psychologist and educator, and Nina Mehta, a community educator and researcher, who are the co-directors of PARCEO. Their workshop was titled: "Islamophobia Post 9/11: What it looks like; Who Funds It; Who Promotes It." According to the title, this workshop provided information about some persons and organizations that support Islamophobia and helped the audience to understand their wide-ranging impacts. The workshop also offered some strategies on how to combat Islamophobia at personal and societal levels.

The last event of the speaker series was held on February 16, 2023, where [Dr. Nazia Kazi](#), an Associate Professor of Anthropology at Stockton University, presented a talk on "the legacy of the war on terror in American classrooms." Dr. Kazi serves on the Union's executive board and as faculty advisor to the Muslim Student Association and the campus chapter of the Democratic Socialists of America. Her first book, "Islamophobia, Race, and Global Politics," is now available in an updated second edition from Rowman & Littlefield. At Stockton, she teaches classes on migration, racism, and the War on Terror. In her talk, she argued that "In the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks in 2001, the classroom-at both the K-12 and university level-became a unique site in which the War on Terror unfolded. Anti-imperialist Muslim scholars faced academic repression, state legislatures passed measures enshrining nationalist curricula, and schools partnered with the defense industry to fund their science and math programs." To that end, in her presentation, Dr. Kazi considered "how the War on Terror and its racial and political logics have left indelible traces on the US classroom and the implications for pedagogy in the so-called post-War on Terror USA."

Program Goals and Outcomes

I stated in the proposal that the speaker series would provide everyone, including myself and our students, the opportunity to practice our analytic and critical skills in listening to the experts in the field. In particular, students would be able to articulate a well reasoned understanding of the war on terror and how it has impacted Muslims both at home and abroad as the audience would learn about the US foreign policies in relation to the dominant Western narratives in the post-9/11 era. To that end, I listed the following goals that corresponded well with the IDIG goals:

1. Build local and global awareness of Islam and Muslims.
2. Cultivate and develop cross-cultural competencies in reference to Islam and Muslims.
3. Think critically and analytically about the interrelatedness of local, national, international, and intercultural issues as they relate to Islam and Muslims.
4. Respond thoughtfully to diversity, including how one's own culture and history affect one's worldview and expectations in reference to Islam and Muslim discourses.
5. Develop a critical approach to the dominant narratives and discourses about Islam and Muslims, considering historical and political contexts to understand why the media and political actors choose them.

6. Cultivate and develop an ethical and non-ethnocentric attitude to address xenophobia and Islamophobia.
7. Demonstrate the capacity and efficacy of an empathetic leadership disposition in personal and professional life as it relates to Islam and Muslims.

Considering the above description of the lectures, it is evident that the speaker series fulfilled these outcomes very well. There were six faculty from different departments (Journalism, Philosophy, Political Science, and Women's and Gender Studies) who brought their classes to the events in addition to many other students who attended the events either in-person or virtually. In total, about 250 individuals attended the speaker series. The series thus was relevant to multiple disciplines and attracted many individuals. Not only were the lectures well attended, but as many students asked very impressive questions during the Q&A, it was a sign of their interest, curiosity, and engagement. Since this is the purpose of higher education, it shows the success of the series. Thank you for your support.