Asian and Middle Eastern Seminar
November 11 • February 17 • March 17

Moderators: Devin Stewart, Courtney Freer, and Petra Creamer
Middle Eastern and South Asian Studies, Emory University

Thinking SWANA from the -stans: Armenia, Afghanistan, and Spivak’s Other Asias
Thomas Simsarian Dolan, MESAS

In the 1990s, students David Kazanjian and Anahid Kassabian asked, “Why is there no Armenian postcolonialism?” Nearly twenty years later, however—after Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak wrote “Will Postcolonialism Travel” and despite youthful activists’ investment in expansive and coalitional work inclusive of multiple SWANA (Southwest Asian and North African) peoples—Armenians were especially fraught subjects in the bitter fight over the 2020 California Ethnic Studies model curriculum. Despite Spivak’s call to theorize and imagine “Other Asias,” we must now ask a related question: Why is there no Armenian in Ethnic Studies?

A Forged Polemic from 16th-Century Iran
Devin J. Stewart, MESAS

The vast and complex body of Sunni-Shiite polemics in Islamic letters has appeared continuously from the eighth century until the present day but in the sixteenth century experienced a marked surge due to the ideological conflict between the Ottomans and Safavid Empires. It is argued here that The Treatise of John (Risalah-yi Yuhanna), which portrays an Egyptian Christian investigating other religions and finally converting to Twelver Shiism, was composed in sixteenth-century Iran, drawing on a tradition of forged polemics and employing their typical conventions.

This seminar will meet on the following Fridays during the fall and spring semesters: November 11th from 3pm-5pm; February 17th and March 17th from 11:30am-1:30pm at The Fox Center for Humanistic Inquiry. For more information, please contact Devin Stewart @ dstewar@emory.edu.

We are grateful to The National Endowment for the Humanities for its support of this program. Any views, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in these seminars do not necessarily reflect those of the National Endowment for the Humanities.