Panel 1 Muslim Women and Sport

- Dr. Samaya Samie (Centre of Sport, Peace & Society at the University of Tennessee)  
  “Strange, Incompetent and Out of Place: Mediated Representations of Muslim Sports  
  Women during the London 2012 Games”
- Dr. Haifa Tlili (Paris Descartes University, France)  
  “Health and Body Construction of Maghrebian Women in France, Montreal and Tunisia”
- Sertaç Sehlikoglu (PhD Candidate, Social Anthropology, University of Cambridge)  
  “Boundaries of a veiled female body: Women’s Islamic reflections on Sporting Bodies,  
  Women and Islam”
- Sanaa Qureshi (MSc Birmingham University)  
  “Does participation in sport empower women in Pakistan to be able to challenge gender  
  roles? What is the impact, if any, of religion on this?”
Panel 2 Islamophobia, Identity and Integration

- Dr. Nasya Bahfan (University of New South Wales, Australia)
  “Embracing Footy: The Sporting Dimensions Of Australian Muslim Identity In Western Sydney”

- Omar Salha (PhD Candidate, SOAS, University of London)
  “Islamic Diplomacy and Sport: Peace-building, identity and integration”

- Kaleem Hussain (Research Associate at the Foundation of Science, Technology & Civilisation, FSTC, UK).
  “How has Islamophobia and/or multiculturalism affected the role of sport for Muslims and Muslim societies and cultures—both locally and/or internationally?”

Panel 3 Muslims of the Balkans

- Dr. Kenneth Morrison (Reader in Modern Southeast History, De Montfort University, Leicester)
  “Sport, Politics and Identity in the Sandzak Region: The Case of the Sandzak Games 1954-2013”

- Penny Munden (Independent researcher, Albanian and Greek interpreter)
  “The Changing Fortunes of Sport in Albania”

ABSTRACTS

Panel 1 Muslim Women and Sports

1. Strange, Incompetent and Out of Place: Mediated Representations of Muslim Sports Women during the London 2012 Games

Dr. Samaya Samie (Centre of Sport, Peace and Society at the University of Tennessee)

At London 2012 Muslim women from 28 countries competed in over 20 different Olympic sporting events. In this paper, we critique international newspaper and media accounts of sporting Muslim women who competed at the Games to determine what was considered newsworthy in relation to Muslim sportswomen, and to make sense of the dominant portrayal and re/presentation of these women athletes. We explore print media and radio commentary produced before and during the 2012 Olympics as they took place in, what is commonly referred to as “the West”, referring to North America and Europe as the most recent case. Findings broaden and diversify initial discussions about the media accounts of Muslim women’s participation in the Olympics (see Amara, 2012). They highlight, in particular, the extent to which discourses considered ‘newsworthy’ hijacked the veiled Muslim ‘Arab’ athlete as the only legitimate representation of Muslim females at the Games; (b) represented sporting Muslim women through an ‘ontology of out-of-placeness’ which hyper-sensationalized their sense of a physicality and incompetence, whilst simultaneously fetishizing their hidden bodies; and (c) further reinforced the notion of ‘West as Best'
Co-author: Sehlikoglu, Sertaç (University of Cambridge)

Bio: Dr. Samaya Samie is a post-colonial writer on issues of gender, 'race' and ethnicity as it relates to the self/body politics of Muslims living in diaspora. She is currently an affiliate scholar at the Centre of Sport, Peace and Society at the University of Tennessee and a project consult to Global Sports Partners and the US Department of State where she coordinates educational workshops to empower women and girls through sport.

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2. Health and Body Construction of Maghrebian Women in France, Montreal and Tunisia

Dr. Haifa Tlili, Paris Descartes University, France

Using a poststructuralist perspective, we are interested in understanding power and the ways in which differences are constructed and maintained within discursive strategies. Our use of the term construction reflects the poststructuralist notion that reality is made and not found. Young women construct “reality” through language and cultural practices. Our study is based on participant-centred conversations with young women immigrating from the Maghreb who live in Montreal (2009-2011), Paris (2011-2012); and a third population of women who live in Tunisia (2012-2013). The participants were French-speaking young women between 18 and 45 years of age. We used a poststructuralist discourse analysis to investigate the recorded narratives. Our analysis focused on how these young women construct and experience the body and health, the role obesity discourse plays therein, and the ways in which young women’s meanings and experiences about the body and health are constructed in specific cultural circumstances. In Montreal, we found that these women constructed their immigration experience as a breath of fresh air that enables them to live rich bodily experiences. Most participants reproduced dominant Canadian discourses on obesity (equating health with thinness, having a mechanistic view of the body) and individual responsibility for health. The participants, in their conversation about health and the body, constructed themselves as hybrid subjects: modern women living in Canada but keeping strong Maghreb references around the body, food as well as cultural and religious practices. A few women manifested resistances toward both Canadian and Maghreb discourses and norms around bodily practices. Cultural and religious discourses are less used in France and Tunisia. In Tunisia, it’s essentially the patriarchal discourse around the beauty which structures their health definition. We will discuss how women use religious discourses in connection with political, social context and the definition of integration (France, Montreal).

Bio: Dr Tlili completed her Ph.D. in Sociology at Paris Descartes-Sorbonne University (2008) centered on a comparative analysis of bodily and movement issues among women of Arabic-Muslim culture involved in departments of sport and physical education in France and Tunisia. Dr Tlili is a recipient of Postdoctoral Fellowship with Genevieve Rail at the Simone de Beauvoir Institute, Montreal Canada (2009). I am looking into how young women who emigrated from the Maghreb discursively construct their body and their health. She recently works on a research project on Sport/Women in French poor area with a particular look to Muslim women who wear the hijab.

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3. “Boundaries of a veiled female body: Women’s Islamic reflections on Sporting Bodies, Women and Islam”

Sertaç Sehlikoglu, PhD Candidate, Social Anthropology, University of Cambridge

Any work on Muslim sportswomen inevitably needs to examine the (growing) debates in the Muslim world and in the social sciences concerning Muslim women’s public visibility and public sexuality. In order to have a better understanding of the debates on Muslim sportswomen, one needs to keep two points in mind: The first one is the Islamic point that sports requires body movements that trouble the perceptions on women’s public visibility and public sexuality. The second point however is linked to a broader question on the boundaries between the masculine and the feminine; which are perceived to be physically yet discursively trespassed by professional sportswomen, who are therefore considered as troubling subjects.

In particular, the paper builds on the responses received from sporting Muslim women themselves during semi-structured in-depth interviews in Istanbul. Forty female members of women-only gyms were interviewed, as part of an ethnographic fieldwork conducted in 2011-2012, on their involvement in sports and how their involvement is shaped or constrained by any third parties. Women prefer such homosocial spaces simply because they do not feel “comfortable”, as they put it, when they can be seen by men, while doing exercise.

Bio: Sertaç Sehlikoglu has completed her field research in Istanbul, Turkey on self-formation and subjectification of sporting Muslim women for her PhD in Social Anthropology at the University of Cambridge, William-Wyse Prof Henrietta L. Moore. Sehlikoglu’s academic interests are leisure, sports, body, agency, subject formation and female normativity. Sehlikoglu is also an active user of the new media tools and the owner of the blog www.muslimwomeninsports.blogspot.com

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4. Does participation in sport empower women in Pakistan to be able to challenge gender roles? What is the impact, if any, of religion on this?

Sanaa Qureshi (MSc Birmingham University)

This research project aims to explore the relationship between young women in Pakistan participating in sport and empowerment and the effect this has on challenging gender roles within their lives and then the wider community. It also attempts to understand the impact of religion on the participation of women in sport and the broader effect this then had on gender roles. The project uses qualitative data to understand the role that participating in sports had on the individual lives of a group of young women who were involved with two different sports activities - a gender-focused sports development project run by an NGO and a professional women’s football team. The paper aims to analyze the impact of religion was assessed to better understand its role in the lives of the women, their participation in sport and their bargaining power. It successfully allowed participants to negotiate for safe spaces and flexible clothing choices, all of which positively affected their agency. Conversely, the NGO programme forced some young women to choose between their multiple identities as sports participants and Muslim women in order to adhere to norms regarding mixed-sex
sports activities. The paper demonstrates that sport can be empowering for Muslim women in Pakistan if they are able to participate on their own terms while critically analyzes effect of contemporary gender roles within their domestic lives in relation to sports.

**Bio:** Sanaa currently works in Corporate Social Responsibility but maintains a personal and academic interest in the impact of sport on the lives of young people. She conducted her Masters research in Pakistan on the relationship between sports participation and changing gender roles.

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### Panel 2 Islamophobia, Identity and Integration

5. *Embracing Footy: The Sporting Dimensions Of Australian Muslim Identity In Western Sydney*

**Dr. Nasya Bahfan, University of New South Wales**

What role does sport play in the formation of Muslim identity, in the largest city of a country known for its near religious devotion to sport, in the early 21st century? Australia’s most popular spectator sport is Aussie Rules football, administered by the Australian Football League or AFL. The 2012 debut of a professional Aussie Rules team for a growing and culturally diverse part of Sydney represents the culmination of efforts by the AFL to make inroads into the rugby league-obsessed, poor and predominantly refugee and migrant neighbourhoods on the ‘wrong’ side of the tracks in Australia’s largest city. In the months before the siren sounded on the Greater Western Sydney Giants’ first game, the researcher produced a long-form radio documentary for a religious affairs program on the Australian Broadcasting Corporation. It discussed how a religiously diverse part of Australia juggles its negative reputation with a growing, strategically important population, which the sport of Aussie Rules is trying to reach out to, but whose identity is wrapped up in the “rival” football code of rugby league. In this paper a practice-based methodological approach is outlined and applied to the purposes of analyzing a creative artifact (the researcher’s industry work in the form of the radio documentary). The documentary’s findings are that affiliation with a sport or team is fluid and thought of as a component of Australian Muslim identity; that it reflects attempts by existing power structures to connect with the shifting demographics of the region that is the focus of the documentary; and it reflects failure or success on-field. These findings will be of interest to media researchers interested in practice-based approaches, along with sports historians and researchers looking at cultural and religious dimensions to sporting involvement.

**Bio:** Dr Nasya Bahfen teaches journalism and media at the University of New South Wales and is a multicultural community ambassador for the Australian Football League. She previously taught in media and communication at RMIT and Deakin University in Melbourne; and worked as a radio journalist for the Australian Broadcasting Corporation.
6. Islamic Diplomacy and Sport: Peace-building, identity and integration

Omar Salha (PhD Candidate, SOAS, University of London)

In our global community, the need for cross-cultural dialogue and exchange has never been more apparent. A decade after the UN's Global Development Compact, it is time once again to examine and build ties involving the integration and contribution of future leaders in our societies. Football, the world’s global game, is capable as a passion, an experience and a language to transcend socio-cultural-religious boundaries and act as a shared medium through which to achieve dialogue, understanding and knowledge of the ‘other’. My proposed thesis, which analyses the relationship of Sports and Muslims, works within this agenda. It is hoped through this study that the wider community will be able to recognize and appreciate the value of contributions made to British, European and global sport and society. This will allow Muslims to reframe British and European sport in a way that takes into account their heritage and faith, thus making it once more enriching and relevant.

Bio: Omar Salha holds a Masters degree in International Studies and Diplomacy at SOAS and will soon start his PhD in the same department. Omar’s research interests are in the Politics of the Lebanon, Turkey and the Levant, Orientalism, the Middle-East and Islamic Studies, the role of Sports & youth-work in strengthening community relations and Public Diplomacy. Twitter: @o_salha

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7. How has Islamophobia and/or multiculturalism affected the role of sport for Muslims and Muslim societies and cultures—both locally and/or internationally?

Kaleem Hussain, Research Associate at the Foundation of Science, Technology & Civilisation, FSTC, UK

This paper traces the emergence of Islamophobia and how Islamophobia has affected sports men and women when aiming to compete at the highest professional level. The paper then traces how Muslims have been proactive pioneers in the area of sports throughout the ages and how this heritage is being neglected in contemporary discourse. The paper then examines how sports and sports media has become a multi-billion dollar industry and highlights some of the leading contemporary Muslims who have been and still continue to compete at the highest professional level. The paper touches on issues of radicalisation and extremism at a national and international level and how leading Muslim sports men and women can act as torchbearers of light, inspiration and role models in the quest to de-radicalise susceptible individuals. The paper then goes on to comment on the future of sport for Muslims at a national and International level and the impact that sport can have in building bridges on many different fronts. A brief analysis of recent political events in the U.S. and UK and the resurgence of Islamophobic attacks will also be touched on.

Bio: Kaleem Hussain is a Research Associate at FSTC. He has hosted a Muslim Heritage Radio show and conducted various research projects for FSTC including the Muslim Heritage Interview Series. He has worked on community cohesion and preventing extremism research projects in local government and wider projects for central government. He is currently working on the theme of Sports and Muslim Heritage at FSTC. He has a background in Law, International Economic Law from Warwick University and Government
Studies from Warwick Business School. He has a keen interest in contemporary Muslim affairs and regularly writes on topics of common interest in journals and various print media.

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Panel 3 Muslims of the Balkans

8. Sport, Politics and Identity in the Sandzak Region: The Case of the Sandzak Games 1954-2013

Dr. Kenneth Morrison, Reader in Modern Southeast European History, De Montfort University, Leicester

Abstract To be announced

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9. The Changing Fortunes of Sport in Albania

Penny Munden, Independent researcher

Penny will provide an overview the origins of modern sports in Muslim majority Albania: the communist period, the post-communist era, and the Albanian sporting diaspora.

Penny will explain the popularity of volley and basketball, the opening of gyms and all-weather football pitches, gender and jogging, and cycling. Her presentation will focus upon the regions of Gjirokastër and Erseka, southern Albania.

Furthermore, the Peace Park story will be discussed which links Albania, Montenegro, and Kosova. Penny’s presentation includes visual material, a number of her photographs from the country and explaining what they mean in a social and sporting context for young people, communities and professional sportspeople.

Bio Penny’s career includes work as an English language teacher in Greece, a Protestant Christian missionary in Albania - and currently is employed as an interpreter in public services for Albanian and Greek-Cypriots living in the United Kingdom. She has been travelling and researching Albania, Greece and the former Yugoslavia for over 20 years.

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