



## ZMO-Kolloquium Summer 2011

Thursday, June 23rd, 2011, 6 p.m.

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### Challenges to Dominant European Representations of the 'Muslim Fundamentalist'

#### Lecture by Dr. Graham MacPhee

#### Venue:

Zentrum Moderner Orient  
Kirchweg 33

14129 Berlin

At the very moment when popular movements across North Africa and the Arab world are struggling for democratic rights, British Prime Minister David Cameron has chosen to follow Chancellor Merkel of Germany and President Sarkozy of France in condemning 'state multiculturalism' and demanding an increasingly security-based approach to Muslims living in Europe. Within the discourse shared by a variety of resurgent European nationalisms, Muslims are conceived as a population inherently susceptible to the ideology of 'Islamic extremism,' a susceptibility enabled by the 'host nations' themselves through what is now cast as the misguided project of multiculturalism.

Central to this new discourse therefore is the figure of the 'Muslim fundamentalist' or 'extremist,' a uniform and homogenous type whose apparent distance from Western norms of emotional and moral personality is extrapolated into an allegedly insurmountable antipathy to the modern discourse of politics and human rights. The construction of this figure involves a complex process of coding and recoding politics in terms of culture. Thus, while divergences from Western cultural norms are reified and used to supply the vocabulary of political conflict within European societies, the structures of political and economic power within non-European societies, and Western involvement in managing and maintaining them, are elided. This paper examines this paradigm of representation and looks at a number of counter-representations. For example, the work of the Sudanese-born novelist Leila Aboulela thematizes the social, economic, and political differences between urban life in Britain and in Khartoum, while also pointing to the involvement of the West in the construction of the figure of the 'Islamic fundamentalist.' This paper asks how challenges to existing European representations of Islam and Muslims might illuminate wider discussions about the relationship between the 'Islamic world' and the 'West.'

GEFÖRDERT VOM



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**Dr. Graham MacPhee** is Associate Professor of English at West Chester University, and will be an An Foras Feasa Visiting Fellow at the National University of Ireland, Maynooth in the summer of 2011. He is the author of *Postwar British Literature and Postcolonial Studies* (Edinburgh University Press, forthcoming 2011) and *The Architecture of the Visible* (Continuum, 2002), co-editor (with Prem Poddar) of *Empire and After: Englishness in Postcolonial Perspective* (Berghahn 2007/2010), and the editor of a recent journal special issue on *Arendt, Politics, and Culture* (2011). His research interests include national identity and the legacy of colonialism; transnational culture; literature and human rights; and 'state' and 'nation' as conceptual contexts for analyzing cultural representation.