Religion, State and Secularism in Eurasia… and Beyond

Thursday, February 19, 2015
4:00pm-6:00pm
Conference Room 505
1957 E Street, NW, Fifth Floor

This seminar will explore state-sponsored secularism in the Eurasian continent, and how the authorities use the concept of the separation of state and religion to consolidate authoritarian policies. It looks at Russia, Central Asia and China, comparing them with the Middle-East. In the name of state secularism, Islamic communities are prohibited from interfering in politics, while the state strictly monitors religious activities, and interactions with the rest of the Ummah are looked upon with suspicion.

4:00pm Presentations

Nader Hashemi (University of Denver)
Islam, Secularism and the State: The Case of Egypt and Iran in Comparative Perspective

Alexei Malashenko (Carnegie, Moscow)
Central Asia – Russia: “Islamic connections

Sean Roberts (George Washington University)
Secular and Religious Modernities in China’s Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region

5:15pm Moderated Discussion: Sebastien Peyrouse
Biographies

Nader Hashemi is the Director of the Center for Middle East Studies and an Associate Professor of Middle East and Islamic Politics at the Josef Korbel School of International Studies at the University of Denver. He obtained his doctorate from the Department of Political Science at the University of Toronto and previously was an Andrew W. Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow at Northwestern University and a Visiting Assistant Professor at the UCLA Global Institute. His intellectual and research interests lie at the intersection of comparative politics and political theory, in particular debates on religion and democracy, secularism and its discontents, Middle East and Islamic politics, democratic and human rights struggles in non-Western societies and Islam-West relations. He is the author of *Islam, Secularism and Liberal Democracy: Toward a Democratic Theory for Muslim Societies* (Oxford University Press, 2009) and co-editor of *The People Reloaded: The Green Movement and the Struggle for Iran’s Future* (Melville House, 2011) and most recently *The Syria Dilemma* (MIT Press, 2013). He is also the co-editor of The Middle East Today book series with Fawaz Gerges (LSE) at Palgrave Macmillan. He is frequently interviewed by PBS, NPR, CNN, Al Jazeera, Pacifica Radio and the BBC and his writings have appeared in *the New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *The Globe and Mail* (Toronto) among other media outlets.

Alexey Malashenko is the chair of the Carnegie Moscow Center’s Religion, Society, and Security Program. Malashenko is a professor of political science as well as a member of the RIA Novosti advisory council. He serves on the editorial boards of the journals *Central Asia and the Caucasus* and *Acta Eurasica* and the newsletter *Russia and the Muslim World* and is a board member of the International Federation for Peace and Conciliation. Malashenko is the author and editor of about twenty books in Russian, English, French, and Arabic, including: *Islam in Central Asia* (Garnet Publishing, 1994), *Russia’s Restless Frontier* (with Dmitri Trenin; Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2004), *The Islamic Alternative and the Islamist Project* (Carnegie Moscow Center and Ves Mir, 2006), *Russia and Islam* (Carnegie Moscow Center and ROSSPEN, 2007), and *My Islam* (ROSSPEN, 2010).

Sean Roberts joined the Elliott School in 2008 as the Director of the International Development Studies program. Sean Roberts is a cultural anthropologist with extensive applied experience in international development work. Having conducted ethnographic fieldwork among the Uyghur people of Central Asia and China during the 1990s, he has published extensively on this community in scholarly journals and in collected volumes. In addition, he produced a documentary film on the community entitled *Waiting for Uighurstan* (1996). In 1998-2000 and 2002-2006, he worked at the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in Central Asia on democracy programs, designing and managing projects in civil society development, political party assistance, community development, independent media strengthening, and elections assistance. During the 2006-07 and 2007-08 academic years, Dr. Roberts was a post-doctoral fellow in Central Asian Affairs at Georgetown University. At the same time, he continued to work on development projects for a variety of NGOs and served as a Senior Program Officer at the Center for Civil Society and Governance at the Academy for Educational Development where he managed a peace-building project in Darfur, Sudan and an anti-corruption project in Moldova.