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Dr. Uriel Simonsohn is a historian of religions and societies. His research focuses on the three monotheistic religions in the Near East and Mediterranean Basin from Late Antiquity to the High Middle Ages. His book *A Common Justice* (2011) deals with the lives of Rabbanite Jews and Eastern Christians in the early Islamic period and presents a more nuanced and untidy picture of what has often been depicted in modern scholarship as a social setting neatly carved along religious lines.

At present he continues to explore interfaith encounters through two main research projects, one concerning the process of conversion to Islam in the early Islamic period, and the other focusing on the phenomenon of religiously-mixed families.

Dr. Simonsohn will talk about

The First Female Followers of Muhammad - A Gendered Analysis of Medieval Narratives

Abstract:

The choice of Arabian tribal members to follow Muhammad during the early phases of his career was one that entailed dramatic risks. These individuals were willing to leave behind their families and tribal communities, at the expense of their personal well-being, as they answered the call of a monotheistic prophet. More so was the risk taken by women who chose to join the young community of believers, left to their own device in a social setting that was governed by patriarchal arrangements. Yet their stories were put into writing only a century and half after their occurrence, thus rendering them highly susceptible to historical scepticism. Nonetheless, true or false, these stories, can offer some insights regarding the time of their writing, centuries after the events they claim to record. They speak of female protagonists whose biographies were to set an example for future generations of Muslim women, and were therefor crafted in a manner that would respond and be put to use in the context of the social realities of the time of their literary recording. The purpose of this talk is to asses these realities, by considering narrative representations of first generation female converts to Islam in a medieval context.

The lecture will take place on

Wednesday, December 5th, 2018 at 6 pm c.t., Cas. 1.801 (Renate von Metzler Hall), Campus Westend