

Critical Muslim and Northern Bridge Consortium

Collaborative Doctoral Award

The Making of *Critical Muslim*: founding a space for critical inquiry in the 21st century

Proposals are invited for a doctoral research project exploring the evolution of the quarterly magazine *Critical Muslim* from its inception to the present day.

Lead Institution: Teesside University

Partner Organisation: Critical Muslim

Critical Muslim, a project of London's Muslim Institute, is quarterly magazine devoted to examining issues within Islam and Muslim societies, providing a Muslim perspective on the great debates of contemporary times, and promoting dialogue, cooperation and collaboration between 'Islam' and other cultures, including 'the West.' It aims to provide a space for intra-Muslim debate, and for debate between Muslims and others, on religious, social, cultural and political issues concerning the Muslim world and Muslims in the world.

Established in 2012, *Critical Muslim* is a project of London's Muslim Institute. It is published by Hurst & Co in the UK, and is distributed in the US, thus reaching diverse global audiences. Its creators and contributors value its strong Muslim identity, but 'do not see "Islam" as a set of pieties and taboos'. Instead, they aim to challenge traditionalist, modernist, fundamentalist and apologetic versions of Islam, and to attempt to set out new readings of religion and culture with the potential for social, cultural and political transformation of the Muslim world. *Critical Muslim's* writers may define their Muslim belonging religiously, culturally or civilisationally, or may not necessarily define themselves as belonging to Islam at all. They present opposing viewpoints and debate controversial issues in ways intended to appeal both to academic and non-academic readerships, and to emphasise intellectual rigour, the challenge of ideas, and original thinking. In a contemporary context often frustrated by reductive thinking around Muslims and Islam, and animated diversity, plurality, interconnectedness and complexity, *Critical Muslim* sees itself as standing for "open and critical engagement in the best tradition of Muslim intellectual inquiry".

Website: <https://criticalmuslim.com/home>

Research Focus

This collaborative doctoral award (CDA) will explore *Critical Muslim's* evolution from its inception and inauguration to the present. It will consider how the magazine has endeavoured to frame and shape contemporary global debates about a range of questions, from religion and politics, to science, technology and culture, art and literature, philosophy and ethics, and histories and futures, from a critical, Muslim, perspective. It will also consider how, during this period, *Critical Muslim* has endeavoured to attract and engage diverse audiences through related events co-hosted by bookshops, libraries and galleries.

Critical Muslim maintains a largely digital archive dating back to 2010. This documents discussions leading to the creation of the magazine and its inaugural edition, entitled 'The Arabs are Alive' in spring 2012, a highly topical attempt to grasp the significance of the Arab Spring. It also includes a wealth of material relating to editorial conversations around the creation of subsequent editions, which have covered such topics as 'Pakistan?', 'Sects', 'Men in Islam', 'PostWest', 'Utopias', and – most recently – the potency of

'Narratives' both ancient and contemporary. It is anticipated that the successful applicant will draw on this valuable, and thus far largely untapped, resource for the purposes of their doctoral research project.

The exact shape and scope of the project is open to the successful applicant to propose and refine in conjunction with the supervisory team. However, research questions might include:

- What were the impetuses for the establishment of the magazine early in the second decade of the twenty-first century?
- What bearing has (western) Islamophobia, particularly in the wake of the attacks of 9/11, 7/7, and the rise of the Islamic State, had on the magazine's foundation and subsequent editions?
- How has its editorial approach evolved over time and in relation to key contemporary debates within Islam and beyond (for example "values" in a "post-truth" age, the dangers of "freethinking", or conceptions of nature)?
- In what ways has *Critical Muslim* sought to engage readers and involve them in the debates for which it endeavours to provide a space, not only within the UK, but also in India, Pakistan, and the US?
- What reception have editions received in majority Muslim, and non-Muslim countries?
- How in particular has *Critical Muslim* negotiated its necessary engagement with potentially challenging, sensitive and controversial issues?
- What future direction should it take as it seeks to continue its mission to cultivate "open and critical engagement in the best tradition of Muslim intellectual inquiry"?

Placement Opportunity

In addition to gaining access to the *Critical Muslim's* archives and to its Editorial team's expertise, the successful applicant would be invited to work alongside the magazine in the capacity of Associate Editor, with a view to participating in editorial decision-making and to contributing written content (a review, and a comment piece/article) to one or more of the magazine's editions. Strong editing skills and judgement, and the ability to produce high-quality written content appropriate both to academic and non-academic audiences, are therefore vital.

Supervision

Dr. Madeline Clements, Senior Lecturer/Research Lecturer, School of Social Sciences, Humanities and Law, Teesside University (m.a.c.clements@tees.ac.uk)

Ziauddin Sardar, Editor, *Critical Muslim* (info@musliminstitute.org)

Please direct enquiries/expressions of interest to Dr. Madeline Clements in the first instance. **These should be received by no later than 13 December.** Please note that the deadline for applications (made to the lead institution, Teesside University, in accordance with [Consortium](#) regulations) is **9 January 2019**. For further information about how to apply to the university, please see:

http://www.tees.ac.uk/sections/research/pg_research_opportunities.cfm or contact PGRAdmissions@tees.ac.uk.

