

# Two Stipends for Doctoral Students at the Berlin Graduate School Muslim Cultures and Societies

**Apply as a doctoral student at the Berlin Graduate School Muslim Cultures and Societies (BGSMS) until 15 October 2024**

We are very pleased to advertise 2 scholarships sponsored by the Einstein Foundation Berlin as part of the Einstein Visiting Fellowship for Prof. Mohammed Bamyeh!

Fachbereich Geschichts- und  
Kulturwissenschaften - Berlin Graduate School  
Muslim Cultures and Societies

2 stipends (m/f/d) limited to 4 years

Reference code: PhD Fellows Arab Sociology

Application Deadline: **15.10.2024**

The Berlin Graduate School Muslim Cultures and Societies investigates the plurality, changeability, and global connectedness of Muslim cultures and societies. The area of study includes Muslim societies in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia, as well as Muslim communities in Europe and North America. Our researchers examine, in a systematic and comparative way, concepts, practices, and institutions variously understood as Islamic.

## **Project description:**

BGSMS is seeking to appoint 2 doctoral fellows for four years (1.2.2025-31.1.2029). We are interested in attracting outstanding doctoral students who will contribute to and write their PhD theses in the framework of our project “The socio-cultural life of sociological concepts: Arab contributions to global theory”, funded by the Einstein Foundation Berlin.

The project addresses the problem that key concepts used in sociological analysis have different meanings and histories in different world regions. Central concepts that are often assumed to be applicable across various societies emerged to standardize ways of organizing social observations globally. This standardization often goes along with imposing concepts born in one specific time and place onto other regions. It moreover is underpinned by and perpetuates power asymmetries in the global production of knowledge.

Addressing these wider issues, the project more specifically explores how sociological concepts have been used in other times and places, and thus began to be understood in different ways. The project is designed to produce a critical, historically informed, and comparative lexicon of 60 key concepts as used in Arabic, English and French—focusing on the Arab World and the two main colonial languages of the region. The lexicon is conceived as one infrastructure of global knowledge production and theory. As such, the project will help those interested in global social theory to identify spectrums of meanings and establish thereby more saturated and nuanced conceptualizations and analyses.

The project is coordinated by the Einstein Visiting Fellow, Prof. Mohammed Bamyeh, the host, Prof. Florian Zemmin, and a postdoctoral researcher to be appointed yet. The two PhD fellows will be part of the project's events and be able to contribute to the project's publications. Their main contribution and allotted time will however be to writing their own PhD theses.

- 1) The first PhD project will address questions of historical genealogies of concepts. It is guided by concepts presently central in sociological theorizing. To trace the formation of these concepts, the PhD student will start by analyzing the relevant entries in the immensely rich anthologies of relevant coinages and usages of Arabic key terms between 1700 and 2000 (Dughaym 2000, al-'Ajm 2002, Jihami 2002). The PhD student will then, in accordance with their preliminary findings and own interests, select either a set of related concepts, authors, or publications for analysis in a doctoral thesis. The PhD student will have an MA in Islamic Studies, Sociology or a related discipline, and will have experience in working with historical Arabic texts and show affinity to conceptual analysis. In addition to English and Arabic as mandatory languages, knowledge of French is desirable.
- 2) The second PhD project will analyse conceptual usages in recent and contemporary Arabic sociology. In a first step, the PhD student will identify central theoretical references and concepts in introductory works to sociology. Attention will also be paid to the circulation and translation of theories and concepts, both from English and French publications to Arabic and from classical Arabic references to contemporary usages. The more specific research question to be elaborated with regard to the PhD student's interests can focus on such circulation of concepts and knowledge, but also on individual authors or publications from a more specific institutional environment. The PhD student will have an MA degree in Sociology, in Islamic and Middle East Studies or History with a sociological orientation. In addition to English and Arabic as mandatory languages, knowledge of French is desirable.

The two doctoral students will be part of BGSMS and are expected to participate in the Graduate School's curriculum. Their stipends consist of a sum to cover living costs plus travel expenses and, if applicable, child benefit, financed by the Einstein Foundation Berlin.

## **Requirements:**

### **1. Curriculum Vitae (CV / Resume) and motivation letter**

The CV should detail your educational career and list any relevant work experience. Your motivation letter should discuss why the BGSMS is the ideal institution to host your doctoral research project and explain your decision for one of the two research topics mentioned above and your corresponding previous experience.

### **2. Discipline**

Doctoral fellows at BGSMS are concurrently enrolled in Islamic Studies (*Islamwissenschaft*) at Freie Universität Berlin. This means that we can only accept doctoral researchers pursuing a degree in this discipline. Note that within *Islamwissenschaft*, next to historical and philological methods, sociological approaches are very much used and welcomed.

### **3. Reflections on your dissertation project**

While the elaborate outline of your dissertation project can still be developed in the first months after your starting in our project, we ask you to reflect on your envisioned PhD work and how it relates to the overarching project. To this end, please provide a concept of maximum 6 pages (without bibliography) which includes:

- Summary (max. ½ page)
- Research questions and objectives of your project
- Current state of research and your project's envisioned contribution to it
- Tentative theoretical framework and research methods
- Source material
- Relation of your dissertation project to the overarching project

Please note that you can upload an outline for one project only. Please format the outline properly and include your name and page numbers.

### **4. Letters of recommendation**

One letter of recommendation by an academic scholar (usually teaching at a university or college) is required. It is advisable to choose scholars who are familiar with your previous academic performance and/or your dissertation project. We do not accept Emails as recommendation letters.

### **5. Language skills**

As **English** is the primary language of instruction and communication at BGSMS, you are expected to have advanced English-language proficiency. A proof of your proficiency in English is a formal requirement for admission for PhD studies at Freie Universität Berlin. **Please note that only native speakers or applicants who have graduated from an English-speaking**

**university in a country with English as an official language are exempt from this requirement. There is no other exception, and this requirement is not negotiable.**

Please upload one of the following certificates as proof of proficiency in English:

- C1 CEFR (Common European Reference Frame)
- ETS TOEFL certificate (minimum score of 95);
- Cambridge Certificate of Proficiency in English, CPE (any grade);
- Cambridge Certificate in Advanced English, CAE (grade A or B);
- IELTS test (minimum level 7.0).

In addition, we ask you proof your Arabic skills. As proof of your proficiency, you may hand in a transcript of records from your university, a certificate from a language school or indicate to us that you are proficient because your research will be performed in your mother's tongue.

## **6. Certified copies of degrees**

You should submit original and certified scans of the following degrees:

- High school diploma (i.e. Abiturzeugnis, A-level, Baccalauréat or IB) or your country's equivalent document, qualifying for admission to university. A high school diploma is the last non-academic degree before a bachelor degree.
- Bachelor's certificate
- Master's certificate – if you cannot submit your MA degree with your application package either because you have not received the document yet but expect it to arrive shortly or because you are in the final stage of your exams or thesis, you may hand in your application anyway. The admission and grants committee will decide whether your (incomplete) application can be assessed as qualified. It is not possible to do a PhD in our programme without an M.A. degree.

Certified copies of your degrees can be issued by your university. If your certificates are issued in languages other than English or German, please submit English or German translations.

### **Further information:**

Applications should be sent by e-mail, together with all significant documents, indicating the **reference code**, in **PDF format as one document** to Professor Florian Zemmin: [application@bgsmcs.fu-berlin.de](mailto:application@bgsmcs.fu-berlin.de). We only accept applications in electronic form. Printed application will not be returned.

With an electronic application, you acknowledge that FU Berlin saves and processes your data. FU Berlin cannot guarantee the security of your personal data if you send your application over an unencrypted connection.

For further information please send an email to [application@bgsmcs.fu-berlin.de](mailto:application@bgsmcs.fu-berlin.de)

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