
Aaron Spevack

Department of Religious Studies, Loyola University New Orleans
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Fields of Specialization:

Islamic Intellectual History {Islamic Theology (*kalam*), Islamic Law (*fiqh, usul al-fiqh*), Islamic Mysticism (Sufism)}

Additional Areas of Research, Teaching, and Specialization:

Islamic History (Mid-East, Asia, North Africa), Islam in America, Arabic Language, Jazz Guitar and Composition, Arabic and Turkish Percussion.

Fellowships, Research and Post-Doctoral:

Mellon Foundation: Post-Doctoral Fellowship in the Humanities **2008-2010**
Post-Doctoral Fellow

Harvard University: Islamic Legal Studies Program **Summers 2008, 2010**
Visiting Research Fellow

Awards:

- University Professors Program Outstanding Dissertation Award
- Yosef A. Wosk Institute Fellowship Award for Outstanding Dissertation

Education:

Boston University: **PhD Awarded 2008**
PhD from the 'University Professors Program.'

- PhD in *Arabic and Islamic Intellectual History*.
- Extensive training in Arabic language, Islamic Law, History, Theology, and Sufism.
- Extensive translation of Medieval and Modern Arabic Legal, Theological, and Historical texts.
- **Dissertation Topic:** Ibrahim al-Bajuri (d. 1860), a 19th century rector of Egypt's Al-Azhar University and scholar of multiple sciences, including law, theology, and mysticism. My dissertation explores al-Bajuri as an archetypal and normative model of a pre-modern Sunni Muslim scholar who balances reason, revelation, mysticism, and law within an inclusive and broad methodological framework that causes us to rethink some of our current definitions of Sunni Islam.
- Passed Comprehensive/Qualifying Exams in the fields of:
 - Islamic Law
 - Islamic Theology
 - Sufism
 - Islamic and Middle Eastern History
 - Arabic Language
- Successfully Defended Dissertation February 19th, 2008.
- Advisors/Dissertation Committee:
 - Herbert Mason (Primary Advisor)
 - Merlin Swartz
 - Diana Lobel

Harvard University: Extension Division **BA Awarded 2003**
Bachelors of Liberal Arts in Extension Studies Cum Laude

- Concentration in Near/Mid East Studies (History, Language, Religion, Philosophy).
- Extensive class and private study of Classical Arabic Grammar, Morphology, and Syntax.

New England Conservatory of Music:

Undergraduate Coursework, 1992-1995

Jazz Studies Department

- Studied Jazz Guitar and Composition under Bob Moses, Hankus Netsky, George Russell, John McNeil, Randy Roose, and Bevan Manson.
- Studied Jazz Theory and Ear Training/Analysis under George Russell (*Lydian Chromatic Concept*), Hankus Netsky, and Bevan Manson.
- Studied Turkish Classical and Sufi (*ilahi*), Klezmer, and North and South Indian Classical styles under Bob Laberee and Hankus Netsky.
- Performed in Jazz Ensembles, Big Bands, and various World Music Ensembles.
- Studied Classical Theory, Harmony, Ear Training, and History in various courses.

Private Studies:

Islamic Sciences

- Studied Shafi'i Fiqh (Islamic Law) with Imad al-Din Abi Hijleh, Professor Ahmad Ahmad (UC Santa Barbara), Sam Khan, Hamza Karamali, and Najah Nadi. Texts used: *Fath al-Qarib*, *al-Fiqh al-Manhaji*, *Umdat al-Salik*, *al-Najum al-Lami'a*, *Hashiyat al-Bajuri*, etc.
- Studied Ash'ari/Maturidi Aqida (Theology) with Imad al-Din Abi Hijleh, Professor Ahmad Ahmad, Dr. Sait Ozervali, and others. Texts used: *Tuhfat al-Murid Sharh 'ala Jawharat al-Tawhid*, *Matn Ibn 'Ashir*, *al-Najum al-Lami'a*, etc.
- Studied Tafsir (Qur'anic Exegesis), Mantiq (Arabic Logic), and other sciences with Faraz Rabbani, Ahmad Talal Ahdeb, and Salih Yucel. Texts used: *al-Shamsiyyah* (and related commentaries), *Matn al-Akhdari*, *Tafsir al-Jalalayn*, etc.

Teaching Experience:

Loyola University New Orleans

2010-Present

Assistant Professor, Department of Religious Studies

- Teach courses in Islamic Studies and World Religions to undergraduate students.
- Design course content utilizing readings, translations, audio, video, and multi-media resources.
- Encourage critical engagement with the sources through small group work, weekly response papers, in-class projects and discussions.
- Courses Offered:
 - *Discovering Islam*: A survey of Islamic belief and practice from their origins in Arabia to their diverse manifestations in China, North Africa, India, and North America.
 - *Introduction to World Religions*: An introduction to the key concepts, figures, texts and practices of the World's Religions.
 - *Sufism: Islam and the Mystic Path*: An introduction to the key concepts, figures, texts and practices of Sufism (Islamic Mysticism), with an emphasis on hermeneutics.

Harvard University

Summer 2011

Assistant Professor, Summer School

- Teach an accelerated summer course (6-weeks) to undergraduate and graduate students.
- Design course content utilizing readings, translations, audio, video, and multi-media resources.
- Encourage critical engagement with the sources through small group work, weekly response papers, in-class projects and discussions.
- Courses Offered:
 - *Islam: Fundamentals of Thought and Practice*: A survey of Islamic belief and practice from their origins in Arabia to their diverse manifestations globally.

Hamilton College

2008-2010

Visiting Assistant Professor, Department of Religious Studies

Mellon Foundation Post-Doctoral Fellow in the Humanities

- Taught introductory and advanced courses in Islamic Studies to undergraduate students.
- Designed course content utilizing readings, translations, audio, video, and multi-media resources.
- Encouraged critical engagement with the sources through small group work, weekly response papers, in-class projects and discussions.
- Courses Taught:

- *Islam Around the Globe*: A survey of Islamic belief and practice from their origins in Arabia to their diverse manifestations in China, North Africa, India, and North America.
- *Sufism: Islam and the Mystic Path*: An introduction to the key concepts, figures, texts and practices of Sufism (Islamic Mysticism), with an emphasis on hermeneutics.
- *Seminar on Islamic Thought and Philosophy*: An intensive investigation into core concepts in Islamic theology (*kalam*), law (*fiqh, usul al-fiqh*), and Sufism through close readings and discussions of classical and secondary sources.
- *Islam in Asia*: A survey of the history, practice, and artistic and cultural output of Muslim societies in China, Tibet, India, and Turkey.

Boston University **2007-2008**

Teaching Fellow/Course Instructor: Arabic Level I

- Taught first year Arabic focusing on the four core language skills: reading, writing, listening, and speaking.
- Utilized my past experiences as both a teacher and a student of Arabic to bring my own unique perspective to the core curriculum.
- Encouraged students to use video and audio recording technology in various projects to enable them to practice original dialogs in Arabic.
- Produced a number of MP3 recordings, using other Arabic Language faculty as readers, to provide students with audio recordings of dialogs containing core vocabulary in order to facilitate ease of memorization.

Boston University **2004-2007**

Teaching Assistant: Arabic Levels I and II

- Assisted students of varying levels with reading and conversational skills.
- Ran a weekly grammar table.
- Co-taught Arabic grammar and assisted in ‘learner centered’ group work.

Ai, The New England Institute of Art **2004-2008**

Adjunct Instructor: Audio Department.

- Taught *Music Theory* and *Listening and Analysis* undergraduate courses.
- Designed course content and materials.

Brookline Center for Adult Education **2005-2006**

Arabic Language Instructor

- Taught Arabic to adult learners.

Massachusetts Institute of Technology **2006-2008**

IAP Intersession Instructor:

- Taught *Introduction to Islamic Doctrine, Islamic Spirituality, and Islamic Angeology* to MIT students and alumni during their intersession breaks.

Buckingham, Browne, and Nichols High School **1996 – 2004**

Guitar/Ensemble Instructor

- Private Guitar and Jazz Ensemble Instruction: Beginner to Advanced levels of Jazz, Rock, Folk, Funk, Blues, and various ethnic styles.
- Designed course materials, customized to each individual.
- Served as faculty advisor for the *Islamic Cultural Society of BB&N*, assisting students in event planning and guest lecturing on Islamic theology, art, music, and culture.

Music Maker Studios **1995-2007**

Guitar/Bass/Ensemble/Theory & Ear-training Instructor

- Private Guitar, Bass, Violin, and Mandolin Instruction: Beginner to Professional levels of Jazz, Rock, Folk, Funk, Blues, and various ethnic styles. Students’ ages ranged from 7 years to adult. Emphasis on analysis and improvisation at advanced beginner-intermediate levels.
- Theory and Ear Training.

- Ensemble Instruction: Taught high school students and adults Jazz/ Funk/ Rock music, stressing improvisation, original composition, theory/analysis, and teamwork. Also covered booking, publicity, graphic design, web page development, aspects of CD production and concert promotion. Ensembles performed professionally, recorded and promoted CDs, and wrote original compositions.
- Designed course materials, customized to each individual.

Publications:

- **Books:** (forthcoming)
 - **“The Forty Foundations of Religion”**. An annotated partial translation from the Arabic of al-Ghazali’s *al-‘Arba’in fi Usul al-Din*. Skylight Paths Publishing, Fall 2011 (forthcoming).
 - **“The Archetypal Sunni Scholar”**. Revision of my dissertation. Manuscript submitted to SUNY Press, July, 2010. Revisions requested from peer reviewer, with recommendation for publication, June 2011. Revisions in process.
- **Published Articles:**
 - **“Apples and Oranges: The Logic of the Early and Later Arabic Logicians”** in *The Journal of Islamic Law and Society*. 17:1 Edited by David Powers (Cornell) (Brill, 2010).
 - **“Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti”** in *Essays in Arabic Literary Biography, 1350-1850*, Joseph E. Lowry (U. Penn) and Devin J. Stewart (Emory) eds. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2009).
 - **“Al-Bajuri”** co-authored, in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam, Third Edition*. Edited by Gudrun Krämer, Denis Matringe, John Nawas and Everett Rowson (Brill, 2009).
 - **“Ahl Sunnah”** in *The Encyclopedia of Islam in the United States*. Edited by Jocelyne Cesari (Harvard) et al. (Greenwood Press, 2007).
 - Peer-reviewed: Editorial board consisted of top scholars in Islamic studies, including Wolfhart Heinrichs, Jane Smith, Amina Beverly McCloud, and others.
 - **“Al-Shadhili”** in *The Encyclopedia of Islam in the United States*. Edited by Jocelyne Cesari et al. (Greenwood Press, 2007).
 - **“Nuh Keller”** in *The Encyclopedia of Islam in the United States*. Edited by Jocelyne Cesari et al. (Greenwood Press, 2007).
 - **“Music”** co-authored, in *The Encyclopedia of Islam in the United States*. Edited by Jocelyne Cesari et al. (Greenwood Press, 2007).
 - **Various biographies** of Hadith Scholars in *The Content of Character: Ethical Sayings of the Prophet Muhammad*. Translation and Introduction by Hamza Yusuf. (Sandala, 2005).
 - **Various biographies** in *The Creed of Imam al-Tahawi*. Translation, Annotation, and Introduction by Hamza Yusuf. (Sandala: 2007).
- **Articles in progress:**
 - **“Disconnection and Doubt: Revisiting Shacht’s Theories of Islamic Law and Ijtihad.”**
 - Revising conference paper for *The Journal of Islamic Philosophy*.
 - **“Al-Bajuri and the Late Sunni Tradition”**
 - Revising conference paper for edited volume. (Edited by Ebrahim Moosa and Jonathon Brown)

Lectures and Conference Papers:

- **Loyola University New Orleans:** Yamuchi Lecture Series
 - “Islam and the American Dream”. April, 2011.
- **Duke University:**
 - “Contours of Late Sunni Traditionalism”; A two-day workshop of invited scholars. April 28-29, 2010.
 - Panel discussion and paper presentation.
 - Paper: “The Traditionalism of al-Bajuri.”
- **Hamilton College:** 2009[-2011] *Humanities Forum*
 - “The Secular Gaze: Humanistic Representations of the non-Secular”: A series of panel discussions and lectures, workshops, presentations, and guest speakers, exploring the problem of secular humanism in the modern academy.

- Panel Discussion: "Encountering the Cult of Progress: Abrahamic Traditions in the Secular Academy". December, 2009.
- **Harvard University:** *Harvard Islamic Legal Studies Program*
 - "Joseph Schacht Revisited": A two-day workshop hosted by the Islamic Legal Studies Program at Harvard Law School. April 5-6, 2008.
 - Panel discussion and paper presentation on Joseph Schacht's contributions to the study of early Islamic Law.
 - Paper: "Disconnection and Doubt: Revisiting Schacht's Theories of Origins, Authenticity, and *Ijtihād*."
- **Brandeis University:**
 - "Cosmology in Order: An examination of the ordering of proofs in the cosmological arguments of al-Sanusi and al-Bajuri"
 - A guest lecture delivered to Prof. Martin Ngyun's class "Introduction to Islamic Theology". April 1, 2008.
- **Boston University:**
 - "Al-Bajuri and 19th Century Egypt"
 - A guest lecture delivered to Prof. Kecia Ali's "Modern Islam Class". Fall 2007.
- **Boston University:** *Institute for the Study of Muslim Societies and Civilizations*
 - "Traditional Islamic Scholarship on the Brink of the Modern Era: The Life and Thought of al-Bajuri." October, 2006.
- **Harvard University:**
 - Islam In America Conference: 2003.
 - Presentation on Music in Islam.

Community Lectures:

- **Atlas Foundation (New Orleans):**
 - "Cognitive Dissonance, Culture Shock, and Cookies: Reflections on Best Practices in Interfaith and Intercultural Dialogue"
 - Lecture delivered to Dr. Alla Rosca's students from Tulane University, as well as people from the local community. Dr. Rasca also delivered a paper, and a joint question and answer session followed. April, 2011.
- **Trinity Church (New Orleans):**
 - Introduction to Islam lectures.

Academic Service:

- **Peer reviewer:**
 - Journal of Islamic Philosophy

Professional Organizations:

- American Academy of Religion

Languages

- Arabic: Classical and Modern Standard
 - Reading and spoken proficiency.
- French:
 - Dictionary assisted reading.
- German and Turkish
 - Basic, dictionary assisted reading.

Miscellaneous Experience:

The Bukhari Institute
Founder and Director

2001-Present

- Organize various Arabic language, Islamic Arts, and other classes and events.

- Event Planning: *In the Light of Islam: Annual Islamic Art and Music Events* at the Museum of Fine Arts, the Boston Architectural Center, MIT, Regis College, Harvard, BU etc. Bring artists and musicians from around the world to Boston, MA. for exhibits and performances.
- Taught various classes, including Arabic I, Islamic Theology, and Turkish Percussion.

Hamilton College: College Chaplaincy **2008-Present**

Faculty Advisor to Muslim Student Association

- Serve as faculty advisor and advocate for Muslim students.
- Participate in interfaith councils and events.
- Answer inquiries from colleagues and administration regarding Islamic practices.
- Assist students in organizing various events including annual Ramadan dinners, Islamic music concerts, and Islamic Art workshops.

Boston University: Marsh Chapel **2007-2008**

Faculty Advisor to Muslim Student Association

- (same as above)

Islamic Cultural Society of BB&N High School **2000-2004**

Faculty Advisor

- Served as faculty advocate and councilor to Muslim students.
- Taught workshops and guest-lectured in classes on various topics related to Islamic theology, practice, culture, and law.
- Assisted students in organizing various events including annual Ramadan dinners, Islamic music concerts, and Islamic Art workshops.

Research Assistant **2001-2002**

Research, writing, transcription

- Assisted Prof. Sunaina Maira (UC Davis) for her article “Planet Youth “ in *Asian American Studies After Critical Mass* By Kent A. Ono.
- Research paper on Islam in America.
- Transcription of interviews with Muslim, Sikh, and Hindu high school students regarding their experiences in post-9/11 America.

Freelance Guitarist/Producer/Engineer/ **1992-Present**

Performance/Recording/Composition/Arrangement

- Performed extensively at various venues, colleges, radio stations, and festivals throughout the North East.
- Won 2 consecutive WFNX Best Music Poll Awards and nominated for 3 Boston Music awards.
- Performed and recorded with various local Jazz, R+B, Funk, Rock, Folk, and World artists.
- Recorded several CDs of original music, and several as a member of other groups.

Freelance Arabic and Turkish Percussion **1998-Present**

Performance/Recording

- Perform and Record folk, classical, and Sufi styles with Moroccan and Turkish groups :
 - Nour Ensemble: A Moroccan Sufi Music group which has been performing extensively in the Boston area since 2006.
 - Cambridge Turkish Music Cemiyati: A Turkish classical and Sufi group, led by master musician, instrument builder, and paper marbler Feridun Ozgoren.

Sound Design **1996**

Sierra/Papyrus Design Group

- Designed Sound Effects for Sierra’s popular award winning *NASCAR Racing2* video game.