



Office of Public Relations
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April 4, 2008

**“Alien Ancestries: Theology and Historicism in Early Islam”
Molloy College Theology Lecture**

The Theology and Religious Studies Department at Molloy College welcomes Caroline Sawyer, Ph.D., to campus on Sunday, April 13, 2008, to discuss the complexities of the Islam religion. This insightful lecture will be held from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m., in the Multipurpose Room, Wilbur Arts Center. This event is free and open to the public.

The presentation entitled "Alien Ancestries: Theology and Historicism in Early Islam" will examine the ways Muslims have looked at the history of Arabs, Jews, and Christians before Islam. The traditional Muslim view of Arab beliefs and practices prior to Islam is sweepingly negative. "Jahiliyah," meaning "willful ignorance [of God]" is applied to almost the whole of Arab society, apart from the Prophet Muhammad and his immediate family, before the message of the Qur'an began to be revealed in 632 C.E. An historical approach, however, yields a more complex picture, pointing to continuities as well as differences between Islam and these cultural precedents. Following an overview of the current state of knowledge of the social history of the Arabian Peninsula of Islam, the impact of this dichotomy of perspectives in modern-day Islamic thought will be explored.

Dr. Caroline Sawyer is an Associate Professor at SUNY College at Old Westbury. She earned her Ph.D. at Columbia University's Department of Middle East and Asian Languages and Cultures.

For further information, please contact the Office of Public Relations at 516.678.5000 ext. 6020.

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