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The Metaverse and its Premoderns: Islam in an Expanding Reality

Thursday

21

MARCH

🕒 4:30 PM

📍 STEPS 101

**FREE AND OPEN
TO THE PUBLIC**

In February 2022, Turkey's Directorate of Religious Affairs landed in the news when it announced that performing the pilgrimage to Mecca in the Metaverse does not count as a 'real *hajj*'. Mixed reactions to this declaration aside, this talk argues that, in the Metaverse era, the existence of a visible but immaterial realm is not just avant-garde, post-modern, or, worse, a 'blameworthy innovation'. Instead, today's Muslim imaginary world draws upon and finds echoes in premodern Islamic artworks, objects, and other forms of creative expression. Today's Metaverse also recalls the so-called 'realm of similitudes' (*alam al-mithal*) developed within Islamic dream thought, whose definitional contours and imagistic boundaries vary and enlarge over time. Such changes occur not only in the minds of spiritual sojourners, but also through technological interventions, all of which converge today to craft immersive worlds that reaffirm a historical past, play with forms in the present, and project creative visions of what might come next.

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