

WINTER 2018 COLLOQUIUM SERIES

Date: Wednesday, January 24

Time: 3:15 – 5PM

Location: Social Sciences 1, room 261

Dr. Kabir Tambar

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Professions of Friendship:

Revisiting the Concept of the Political in the Middle East



This talk examines “professions of friendship”: efforts by populations who are targeted as enemies of the state to proclaim their historical fidelity to the state’s foundation and preservation. Such declarations often re-inscribe a rigid and often violently statist narrative of politics. The talk, and Tambar’s essay on the same topic, argue that the retrenchment of this narrative, when re-issued in the name of friendship, does not simply close down political options. It seeks to embolden sentiments of moral obligation across instituted lines of enmity. These solicitations of friendship are burdened by a particular historical task: to envision a past and a future of social cohabitation in a present where its possibilities have been violently undermined

and morally devalued. The essay centers on instances that bookend the past century: the first was delivered in Istanbul by an organization speaking on behalf of Armenians living in territories claimed by the Turkish nationalist movement in 1922; the second was issued by a Kurdish Peace Mother in Diyarbakir, as a plea for an end to state violence in late 2015.

Kabir Tambar is Assistant Professor in the Department of Anthropology at Stanford University. He is a sociocultural anthropologist, working at the intersections of political anthropology and the anthropology of religion. His first book, *The Reckoning of Pluralism: Political Belonging and the Demands of History in Turkey* (Stanford University Press, 2014), is a study of the politics of pluralism in contemporary Turkey, focusing on the ways that Alevi religious history is staged for public display. More generally, the book investigates how secular states govern religious differences through practices of cultural and aesthetic regulation. Tambar is currently working on a new project that examines the critique of state violence as a social practice and a public form.