

# Visiting Speaker Series

The Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies is  
pleased to present a talk by esteemed academic

**Dr Vasileios Syros**

**Academy of Finland**

*'Palaces of Cards: Consultation and Good  
Government in Islamic and Italian Advice Literature'*

Wednesday 17 February 2016, 5.15pm

LT1, IAIS Building, Streatham Campus, Exeter, EX4 4ND,  
Tea & Coffee to be served from 4.30 pm in the Common Room,  
Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies.

**All are welcome – no registration required**



This presentation is a preliminary attempt to look at the evolution of early Islamic and Renaissance Italian advice literature in a comparative perspective, by focusing on some of the major works produced in the 8<sup>th</sup> century Abbasid Empire and 16<sup>th</sup> century Italy. I will undertake a comparative analysis of Ibn al-Muqaffa's (d. ca. 140/757) *Adab al-Kabir* and Baldassare Castiglione's (1478–1529) *Il Libro del cortegiano* (*The Book of the Courtier*) and canvass a shared set of themes that inform early Islamic and Renaissance Italian political discourse on the complex relationship between the ruler and his courtiers, the qualities of the ideal adviser, and the dynamics of the decision-making process and consultation. The presentation will also identify new modes of

exploring the development of Abbasid and Italian court cultures within a comparative framework and revisiting their relevance in the context of current debates on effective leadership and delegation of authority.

Vasileios Syros is a Senior Research Fellow at the Academy of Finland and Principal Investigator of the international research project "Political Power in the Early Modern European and Islamic Worlds." He previously taught at the University of Chicago, McGill University, and the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes. Syros recently launched the book series "Contestations and Reconfigurations" with Edinburgh University Press.