

# Visiting Speaker Series

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

## Professor Lisa Wedeen University of Chicago

### *'Neoliberal Autocracy and its Unmaking in Syria'*

Wednesday, 16 March 2016, 5.15 pm

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



This presentation is part of a larger book project focusing on “neoliberal autocracy” and its unmaking in Syria. It charts changing power dynamics in the 2000s and early 2010s, but also provides a general theoretical account of ideological “interpellation” (to use Louis Althusser’s felicitous term) – the differentiated ways in which people are “hailed” or recruited into a system.

In this talk, Wedeen discusses the first year and a half of the Syrian uprising. She asks: Why, in Syria’s two major cities, Aleppo (the key commercial hub) and Damascus, did the population fail to mobilize in significant numbers even as inhabitants of many other areas did? Although this question may seem remote from the current horror, it is crucial to

understanding how compliance is secured and how it can become frayed; in this case, we see the neoliberal and the autocratic coalescing into forms of governance that were both seductive and fragile.

The rise of the Islamic state, to bring the narrative up to date, is to be understood both as a challenge to the specificities of the regime’s dissemination of the good life *and* a symptom of neoliberal autocracy more generally.

Lisa Wedeen is the Mary R Morton Professor of Political Science and the College and the Co- Director of the Chicago Centre for Contemporary Theory at the University of Chicago.