

Visiting Speaker Series

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

Assoc Prof Ali-Asghar Seyed-Gohrab, Leiden University

"Love and Longing: Depictions of Layla in Medieval Persian Romances"

Wednesday, 1 February 2017, 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 – no registration required.



I will talk about the romance of Layla and Majnun, which has become a source of inspiration for generations of poets since the 7th century, crossing the boundaries of languages, cultures and religions. The romance lives on in pop songs, novels, poetry and the visual and material arts, showing people's fascination with the mystery of love, poetry, faithfulness and the madness that creates art. The romance deals with various aspects of love, showing how love ennobles but can also degrade. I will particularly focus on Layla, showing how different poets have depicted

her character, her relationship with Majnun, with her imposed husband, and with her parents. Questions such as the following will be discussed: is Layla a mere instrument for Majnun to achieve a spiritual union? Why does she remain a virgin? Why do several poets characterize her as a martyr of love?

Ali-Asghar Seyed-Gohrab is Associate Professor at Leiden University. He is the founding general editor of the Iranian Studies Series at Leiden University Press and the Modern Persian Poetry Series in Dutch.