Neslihan Çevik  Studies social change and development, focusing on how religions respond to global-modernity. In a current book project, she examines contemporary engagements between Islam and modernity in Turkey. This work identifies the emergence of a new type of Islamic orthodoxy that, challenging conventional approaches, neither rejects nor fully conforms to modernity. Terming it Muslimism, Çevik, demonstrates that this new form, engages aspects of modern life while submitting them to a sacred, moral order. Muslimism is manifested through new everyday institutions from Islamic fashion shows to pro-Islamic human rights formations that articulate the universalistic language of human rights with Islamic theological concepts and values. It subsequently moved into politics becoming coded in the discourse and party program of the Justice and Development Party. Extensions of this work include a project on Muslimist women’s role in theological reform and exploring non-Islamic contexts for similar religious formations. Çevik has published in academic and policy journals as well as major papers in the US and Turkey. She is currently a post-doctoral fellow at the Institute for Advanced Studies in Culture, University of Virginia.

What is the "Turkish Model"? Muslimism in Turkey and Beyond

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Tuesday November 13, NOON – 1:30 
WEST HALL – 135

Since the pro-Islamic AKP came to power in 2002, Turkey has been aspiring to regional leadership. With the power vacuums created in the Middle East after the Arab Spring, many have increasingly turned to Turkey wondering if the “Turkish model of Muslim-democracy” might be a viable solution. Discussions on transferability of this model already began, but we still lack a solid understanding of what it really is and where it comes from. People were too quick to interpret Turkish engagements with democracy as ‘moderate Islamism’–a vaguely defined concept unable to capture deep theological reform and practices. Moreover, scholars view this engagement as a mere product of Islamic political actors, the AKP. Using interview data, Dr. Çevik unpacks the particular content and features of what she terms Muslimism and the historical conditions that produced it. By introducing this concept (of Muslimism) Dr. Çevik shows that the Turkish model is a product of broader social changes that cannot be reduced to political interests or to ‘moderate Islamism’.

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