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Seminar Series on the Ideas, Identities and Decisional Processes that Affect Security

Fred M. Donner

"The Development of Early Islamic Political Vocabulary"

Tuesday, April 12, 2011

3:30 p.m.

Scott Lab E0125

201 W. 19th Ave., Columbus OH

Fred Donner is a professor of Near Eastern History and the director of the center for Middle Eastern Studies at The University of Chicago. His teaching focuses on early Islamic history, Islamic social history, and aspects of Islamic law. Donner, an eminent scholar of early Islamic history, will in his lecture discuss several stages of religious and political developments in the early Muslim community and how they shaped political concepts in Islam, which still dominate Islamic political thought.

Donner's first book, *The Early Islamic Conquests* (Princeton, 1981), examined the relationship between pastoral nomads and the state, as well as the more general processes of state-formation and state-expansion that, he thinks, were an integral part of the early Islamic conquests.

From there, Donner's close work with the sources for this early period of Islamic history, and the profound questions about the reliability of these sources raised by revisionist scholarship that has appeared since 1977, led him to a long-term examination of those sources. This resulted in several shorter studies and culminated in his book *Narratives of Islamic Origins: The Beginnings of Islamic Historical Writing* (Darwin Press, 1998).

Donner's interests then shifted to the intellectual or ideological factors that were at play in the early expansion of Islam, and to an effort to understand just what the movement was all about. He discussed this



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topic in his article “From Believers to Muslims: Confessional Self-Identity in the Early Islamic Community,” *Al-Abhath* 50-51 (2002-2003), 9-53, and more fully in his monograph *Muhammad and the Believers: at the origins of Islam* (Harvard University Press, 2010).

Donner received his B.A. from [Princeton University](#) (Oriental Studies) in 1968. He also received his Ph.D. from [Princeton University](#) in Near Eastern Studies (1975).

The event is co-sponsored by The Department of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures, Mershon Center for International Security & The Middle East Study Center at The Ohio State University. For questions about the event, please contact Georges Tamer at tamer.2@osu.edu.

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