



# *the* **Abrahamic Moment**

Lubar Institute for the Study of the Abrahamic Religions  
at the University of Wisconsin-Madison

## **LISAR to Host 7th Annual Conference**

*Fall Events also feature Thering Fellow Charlotte Gordon*

On October 3 and 4, LISAR is proud to host a conference entitled “Politics, Political Thought, and Political Theology in the Abrahamic Traditions,” the second conference held in partnership with the Faculty of Theology of Oxford University. The gathering will feature an international panel of scholars discussing how Jewish, Christian and Islamic approaches to political thought and theology have developed from antiquity through the modern era.

LISAR’s Assistant Director, Ulrich Rosenhagen, will participate in the opening panel, “Perspectives on the field on the Abrahamic Religions,” which explores the rationale behind and perspectives on the emerging field of Abrahamic studies. Approaching these issues as a Lutheran theologian and pastor, he plans to re-read biblical sources against certain currents in contemporary Christian

theology to demonstrate that the Abrahamic religions all acknowledge the same God, a finding that allows for a theology of the “Abrahamic” other.

Guy Stroumsa, Professor of Abrahamic Religions at Oxford, and Charles Cohen, LISAR’s director, expect to produce a book of articles from the conference. That volume, along with a prospective third conference on religion and culture, should provide a foundation on which future explorations into Abrahamic studies can emerge.

In short order, LISAR will collaborate with the In the Memory of Sister Rose Thering Foundation to welcome award-winning writer Charlotte Gordon, PhD, author of *The Woman Who Named God: Abraham’s Dilemma and the Birth of Three Faiths* (Little, Brown, 2009), as our Fifth Annual Sister Rose Thering Fellow.

As part of her fellowship, Ms. Gordon will deliver a



*Thering Fellow, Charlotte Gordon*

public lecture, “In Her Steps: Following Hagar to Abraham,” on Oct. 22 at 7:30 p.m. in the Fluno Center Auditorium, as well as meeting with a small group over lunch earlier in the day. She will also speak with LISAR Fellows and members of the Institute’s Student Forum. Her visit affords a rare opportunity to obtain an informed perspective on the importance of Sarah and Hagar in the stories about Abraham. Visit the LISAR website to learn more about attending the lunchtime conversation.

[lisar.lss.wisc.edu](http://lisar.lss.wisc.edu)

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**The Lubar Institute  
for the Study  
of Abrahamic  
Religions (LISAR)**

opened in July,  
2005, testimony  
to the vision and  
benefactions  
of Sheldon and  
Marianne Lubar  
of Milwaukee,  
Wisconsin.

The Institute's  
mission is to create  
better understanding  
of the Abrahamic  
traditions and their  
interrelationships by  
encouraging ongoing  
discussion of these  
traditions among  
scholars, members of  
those traditions, and  
the general public.



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# Community Forum Update

*LISAR Program Manager Brad Klingele reflects, looks ahead*



In my second year as program manager here at LISAR, I will move from spearheading the White House Interfaith Initiative to attempting the impossible: following Rohany Nayan's leadership in the local interfaith group that we call the Community Forum. Each year, people from the Madison area meet about four times per year to build relationships and share their experiences as members of each of the Abrahamic traditions. Rohany was the perfect model of joy, warmth, knowledge about her own tradition of Islam, and gracious dialogue. She was the best bridge-builder I have ever met, and I have learned a great deal from her.

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My wife and I came back to my native Madison three years ago. We have six children at home; our oldest daughter is entering high school and our son just began walking. Upon our return to Madison, I began looking for models of serious religious discourse when I happened upon the Lubar Institute. What is often missing from faith is an essential relational quality between people and God, and between people and each other. LISAR has discovered the key to honest and candid engagement, and Rohany embodied this by her care for each person and her desire to open the lines of communication and care between people.

I completed my degree in education at UW-Madison, with a great deal of course-work in art and psychology. I also have a master's in systematic theology from Notre Dame. I have spent the past eighteen years working to build small faith communities and help lay people to walk with Jesus in the Catholic Church. These experiences have convinced me that getting folks together in a trusting environment in which they begin to build relationships is the key to knowing God, ourselves, and each other. Interreligious dialogue requires a space where we mutually discern how to go about getting to know each other, our similarities, our differences, and our experiences of God. 

## Graduate Student Ariana Horn Reflects on her LISAR Experience

When asked to write an article for the Fall Newsletter about what I have learned since 2010 when I became the LISAR Graduate Student Project Assistant, my first reaction was to think, “piece of cake, no sweat.” On the contrary, words continued to fail me, because how I feel about the Institute, the people who work there, and how it relates to my own work is far more involved and meaningful than how I feel about cake, or sweat for that matter. I began my graduate career as a medieval historian only to drastically change my area and time period of concentration at the doctoral level because it was important for me to me study material that could be used to understand, and possibly improve, present-day circumstances.

I find myself in 2012 being able to do just that; for my dissertation, I am studying women’s interfaith and interracial activities in twentieth-century Milwaukee. At the same time, I facilitate Abrahamic dialogue and understanding through the Lubar Institute. Much of my job at LISAR consists of event-planning, project-coordinating, task-delegation, and operational bits and bops, yet the most important thing I have

learned from my time at LISAR is that there are truly sincere, thoughtful, and compassionate



people in the world. I was attracted to LISAR initially because of the Institute’s mission, but I work as hard as I do because I care about the people who make up the Institute. Through organizing all the conferences, panels, and lectures, we, a diverse group belonging to a range of traditions, have created a working and supportive community. I had been committed to the pursuit of interfaith cooperation and understanding as an academic exercise, but LISAR has given me the opportunity to practice Abrahamic values meaningfully in everyday life. 

## Supporting the LISAR mission

Gifts to the LISAR Fund provide vital support for student and community forums, public lectures, conferences and other activities of the Institute.

Donations enable us to bring together Jewish, Christian and Muslim students for thoughtful discussions, as well as provide workshops for secondary- and elementary-level teachers on the Abrahamic traditions. Your gift can make a meaningful difference!

The campaign for LISAR, like the Institute itself, is unique; it could happen only at a public institution with a long tradition of civic involvement like UW-Madison. We invite you to become a part of this unprecedented enterprise. You can easily make an online donation to the Lubar Institute via secure server, or you can make a gift by mail by contacting our UW Foundation representative.

### **Making a gift online:**

If you would like to make an online donation to the Lubar Institute via secure server, please visit <http://lisar.lss.wisc.edu/welcome/giving.html>

### **Making a gift by mail:**

For assistance in making a gift by mail, or to discuss further giving opportunities, please contact our UW Foundation representative:

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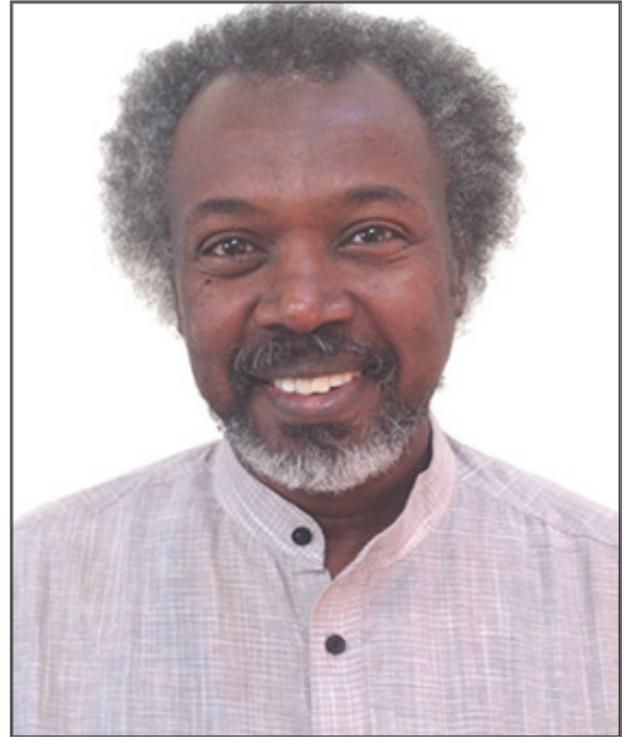
# Ibrahim Saeed Joins LISAR Team, serving as Academic Fellow

Ibrahim Saeed, senior instrumentation specialist and lead analyst in the Soil and Plant Analysis Lab in the Department of Soil Science at UW-Madison, has joined the LISAR staff as Academic Fellow. President of the Board of Trustees of the Islamic Center of Madison (ICM), he will have particular responsibilities for bringing Islamic perspectives to the Institute's planning and programming.

He fills a vacancy opened by the departure of Rohany Nayan, the Institute's most recent Graduate Fellow, who has joined the academic community of St. John's University in New York City along with her husband, Professor Michael Thomas, a former member of LISAR's Faculty Steering Committee. Like Nayan, Saeed will provide expertise information about Islamic belief and practice to the campus, media, and wider community, a role in which he has already distinguished himself at ICM.

In pursuing its policy of involving scholars from throughout the University, LISAR has customarily recruited members from the sciences as well as the humanities and social sciences. Saeed thus joins Adel Talaat, Associate Professor of Microbiology in

the Department of Pathobiological Sciences; Jeffrey Hardin, Professor of Zoology (and former Chair of the Zoology Department), and Ken Schreibman, Professor of Radiology—all members of the Faculty Steering Committee.



## Save the Date: Wisconsin Book Festival Hosts Authors Ayad Akhtar and Amitabh Pal



*Ayad Akhtar*



*Amitabh Pal*

Ayad Akhtar, author of *American Dervish*, and Amitabh Pal, author of *Islam Means Peace: Understanding the Principle of Nonviolence Today*, will speak at the Wisconsin Book Festival on Nov. 7, 5:30-7:00, in the Promenade Hall at the Overture Center. LISAR is sponsoring their panel, entitled "Being Muslim: Living and Learning," which Director Charles Cohen will moderate.

For more information about the Wisconsin Book Festival, visit [www.wisconsinbookfestival.org](http://www.wisconsinbookfestival.org).