

**American University of Beirut  
Department of Sociology, Anthropology & Media Studies**

Cordially invites you to a brownbag talk entitled

**Mystical Bodies: Sufi Ritual and Embodiment in  
Pre-War Aleppo**

By

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Professor of Anthropology  
Universidade Federal Fluminense, Niterói, Brazil**

**Wednesday, March 20, 12:30-2:00 pm  
Nicely 204**

**Abstract:** This lecture focuses on the role of Sufi forms of religiosity in shaping religious subjectivities and inscribing Islam in the urban landscape of pre-war Syria, analyzing ethnographic material gathered in Aleppo from 1999 to 2010. In Aleppo, Islamic values and practices often worked as cultural idioms that expressed local processes of construction of order, identity and meaning. A large part of the Sunni Muslim population of Aleppo was linked to Sufi forms of religiosity, having their moral subjectivities constructed through the embodiment of Islamic principles through the religious experiences induced in the ritual setting of Sufi communities. The expression of Sufi subjectivities in the public sphere was done through various forms of moral performance, i.e. the enactment of embodied religious principles as the framework for social practices. This continuous mobilization by the Sufis of embodied religious principles had the effect of inscribing them in the processes that shaped and constituted the urban identity of pre-war Aleppo.

Dr. Paulo Pinto is Professor of Anthropology at Universidade Federal Fluminense in Brazil, where he is also the director of the Center for Middle East Studies. He received his Ph.D. in Anthropology from Boston University. His areas of interest include embodiment and the construction of religious subjectivities, ethnicity and religious nationalism, and pilgrimage processes and the constitution of transnational religious arenas. He has done fieldwork in Syria, mainly in the Sufi communities in Aleppo and in the shrine of Sayda Zaynab, near Damascus, as well as in the in Muslim communities in Brazil. He has published many articles on Sufism, Kurdish ethnicity, and Shi'i pilgrimage in contemporary Syria, and is the author of *Árabes no Rio de Janeiro: Uma Identidade Plural* (Rio de Janeiro: Ed. Cidade Viva, 2010), *Islã: Religião e Civilização, Uma Abordagem Antropológica* (Aparecida: Ed. Santuário, 2010), and co-editor of *Over Another Horizon: Islam in Latin America, the Caribbean and Latino USA* (Austin : University of Texas Press, 2015) and *Ethnographies of Islam: Ritual Performances and Everyday Practices* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013).

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