

Title: The Andalus of the Possible

Abstract:

In an interview with the French newspaper *Le Monde* in 1983, Palestinian poet Mahmud Darwish called Palestine “the Andalus of the possible.” Taking my cue from Darwish’s words, I will ask, in this talk: what has the memory of al-Andalus (Muslim Iberia) made possible for Palestinian writers and thinkers? In responding to this question, I will trace the varied uses and meanings of al-Andalus in Palestinian culture over the past century. Since the early twentieth century, several prominent Palestinian writers have turned to the memory of al-Andalus to reflect on the political plight of their homeland, to decry occupation and cultural erasure, and to imagine a future for Palestine—a future that is, to borrow Darwish’s words, “possible,” if not yet fully realized.

Drawing on examples from this long tradition of Palestinian writing about al-Andalus, I aim to map the intersection of two diasporic imaginaries that have crisscrossed the Mediterranean: the Andalusí imaginary and the Palestinian one. This talk will be based on material from my forthcoming book, *On Earth or in Poems: The Many Lives of al-Andalus*, which explores how the legacy of al-Andalus has shaped art and politics around the world, from New York and Cordoba to Cairo and the West Bank.

Bio: Eric Calderwood is an Associate Professor of Comparative Literature at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He is the author of [*On Earth or in Poems: The Many Lives of al-Andalus*](#) (Harvard University Press, 2023) and [*Colonial al-Andalus: Spain and the Making of Modern Moroccan Culture*](#) (The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2018).