

**CENTRE FOR STUDIES IN SOCIAL SCIENCES, CALCUTTA,
R-1 BAISHNABGHATA PATULI,
KOLKATA 700094**

GENERAL SEMINAR

Justin Jones
Associate Professor in the Study of Religion,
University of Oxford

will give a talk titled:

‘A World of Free-flowing Fatwas’: Reflections on Islamic Edicts in Modern India”

The *fatwa* (legal decision or judgement, as issued by an Islamic scholar) has often been misunderstood in academic work. Sometimes, it has been assessed as a means of modernising Islamic law and adapting it to new circumstances; in other instances, it has been understood as a non-judicial pronouncement which threatens contemporary social or legal conventions. Based upon a survey of *fatwa*-compilations from nineteenth and twentieth century north India, this paper asserts the long-term importance of the *fatwa* in South Asian Islam, and explores what we can learn from *fatwas* as historical sources. It will survey a number of questions, among them, the importance of *fatwa* compilations in modern South Asia; the relevance of *fatwas* as sources for exploring Muslim social history; and what the *fatwa* can tell us about the character and authority of the issuing scholar (*mufti*). Moreover, focusing especially upon the importance of the *fatwa* in colonial and postcolonial contexts in which it carried no prescribed value for the formal judiciary, this paper asks how the *fatwa* may have related to the handling of Islamic legal questions within government courts. Did the issuing of *fatwas* present an alternative system of legality existing outside of the state, or instead, did it engage with the contemporary realities of government legislation and legal practice?

Date: Friday, 6th January, 2017 Time: 3 – 5 pm.
Venue: CSSSC’s Seminar Room, Patuli Campus.

Trina Nileena Banerjee
(Convener, Seminar Committee)
All are welcome to attend.