

UCR International Scholars Monthly Newsletter September 2026

Upcoming ISS Events

Scholar Coffee Hours

Meet and chat with other scholars – bring your own beverage and make some friends!

Where: Outside of The Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf

When: Fridays 11:00 AM - Noon

September Meet & Greet

Please come meet our new scholars!

As always, we will provide lunch.

Where: HUB 265

When: 09/30/2026, Noon – 1:00 pm

Thank you so much to
Dr. Bohan Ye for
speaking about her
journey at the Meet &
Greet on August 26th.
Our Guest Speaker this
month will be Dr.
Muhamad Ali, of the
Religious Studies
Department!

Contents

**Important D/S
Update (Page 2)**

**Meet & Greet
Speaker M. Ali (Page
3-5)**

**Scholar Photo
Request and Photo
Feature (Page 6-7)**

**August-September
Event Overview
(Page 8)**

Cultural Conversation Class is back!

If you or your dependents are interested, please participate in the Cultural Conversation Class to help improve your English and to meet new friends. Thank you to the regular attendees who help make CCC successful!

Please check your email for weekly updates.

Update from the ISS Office

Scholars who are already at UC Riverside are advised to avoid international travel unless absolutely necessary.

H-1B visa holders seeking a new visa are currently subject to increased social media vetting, which may result in significant delays in visa processing.

Important Update Regarding D/S Rule and ISS Town Hall Registration

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) published its Final Rule on the Elimination of D/S on 17 July 2026.

The Final Rule will replace duration of status (D/S) with a specified end date on the I-94 for Exchange Visitors in F and J status. The rule will also modify certain regulations pertaining to those visitors, such as extension of stay.

Should you have questions regarding the changes to duration of status, please reach out to the scholars team via our email (internationalscholars@ucr.edu)

UCR ISS International Scholar Picnic

The Scholar Picnic is a voluntary event for exchange scholars and their dependents to experience a traditional American BBQ picnic and activities. This year, like the previous year, the event will be held in the Student Success Center Conference Room 123.

More details: <https://events.ucr.edu/event/ucr-faculty-staff-picnic>

When: 10/09/2026

11:30 AM - 1:30 PM

Where: SSC 123 Conference Room

Contact us at: internationalscholars@ucr.edu

MUHAMAD ALI

PROFESSOR, DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Q&A WITH
SEPTEMBER
MEET &
GREET
GUEST
SPEAKER

Learn
about his
story



Dr. Ali will be speaking at the International Scholar Meet & Greet on September 30th! Learn more about his story below.

Please tell us about your background.

I was born and raised in Jakarta, Indonesia, to a Batavian mother and a Bantenese father. I am proud to be the first generation in my family to receive a college education. My early education took place in a modern madrasah and a pesantren in West Java, which eventually led me to the State Institute for Islamic Studies, specializing in Qur'anic interpretation (tafsir) and hadith. To broaden my perspective on global history, I pursued an MSc in Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies at Edinburgh University in Scotland, and later moved to the United States to complete my PhD in History at the University of Hawaii at Manoa with the East-West Center graduate fellowship.

What is your role at UCR?

I joined UCR in 2007, and I currently serve as an Associate Professor in the Department for the Study of Religion. I am the former Director of the Middle East and Islamic Studies program. My daily role involves teaching a variety of courses ranging from Reading the Qur'an and Modern Islam to Southeast Asian Religions and the intersection of religion and politics. Beyond the classroom, my research focuses on modern Islam, interfaith relations, and religious authority, particularly in Indonesia and Malaysia.

How did you get into your field?

Growing up in Indonesia, religion was deeply embedded in the social and political fabric of everyday life. While my early studies in tafsir and hadith fascinated me, I wanted to understand these texts through a wider, comparative historical lens. Studying in Scotland and Hawaii allowed me to step outside my own cultural context and examine how Islam adapted to different regions especially Southeast Asia and how colonialism and modern politics shaped religious identity over time.

What are some of your favorite memories at UCR?

Having been at UCR for nearly two decades, my favorite memories center on the incredibly diverse student body and the collaborative spirit of our faculty. I have greatly enjoyed organizing cross-cultural and interdisciplinary events, such as hosting the campus wide Conversation of the Muslim Ban and co-chairing the "Israel & Palestine, Possible Futures" talks with my colleagues. It is deeply rewarding to engage with students who, like me, are often the first in their families to attend college, and to see them grappling with complex historical and religious questions in our seminars and forums.

Do you have any advice for incoming international scholars?

As someone who has navigated being an international student and scholar across multiple continents, my best advice is to step out of your academic bubble. UCR and Southern California offer a vibrant, multicultural community. Do not hesitate to engage with interdisciplinary programs outside your home department. Connect with the International Scholars office when you feel overwhelmed navigating a new educational system is challenging, but you bring invaluable global perspectives that our campus desperately needs.

Wedding Update!

**Congratulations to the newlyweds Prince and Gwladys.
From the Scholar Staff, we wish you a happy and
prosperous future!**



I am delighted to share that Prince and I officially got married in August 2026! Our story started right here at UCR when we both arrived in the summer of 2023—Prince in June, and myself in July. After first meeting at a campus meet-and-greet, our constant connections during Coffee Hours built a truly solid bond. We are so grateful to Makbule and Zach for creating such wonderful events to bring international scholars together! Even after Prince moved to UCLA while I stayed at UCR, our connection grew even stronger, guiding us to our wedding day. Thank you all for being part of our journey!

Scholar Photo Request

Hello, scholars!

Have you taken any wonderful photos lately?

The ISS Office is seeking photograph contributions. We would love to feature the adventures of our active scholars in a new section of the monthly scholar newsletter.

**Please email photographs you would like us to highlight.
internationalscholars@ucr.edu**



RIVERSIDE

International Affairs

Contact us at: internationalscholars@ucr.edu

Events in Riverside

UCR ISS International Scholar Picnic

The Scholar Picnic is a voluntary event for exchange scholars and their dependents to experience a traditional American BBQ picnic and activities.

When: 10/09/2026

11:30 AM - 1:30 PM

Where: SSC 123 Conference Room

Womens Soccer Vs. UC Irvine

Start spooky season off right by watching the Highlanders take on UC Irvine!

When: October 3rd

7:00 PM

UCR Soccer Stadium

Frequently Asked Questions

I need to leave the U.S. and ISS has not signed my DS-2019 document! Is that OK?

Please know that you do not need a travel signature on your DS-2019 document to either remain in or to depart the U.S. You do need a valid travel signature to return to the U.S. in J-1 status. A valid travel signature must be no more than twelve months old on the date that you return to the U.S.

If you are departing the U.S. soon and know that your travel signature will expire by the time you expect to return to the U.S., please contact our international scholar's office at internationalscholars@ucr.edu. If your DS-2019 is going to expire soon, please consult with your department to extend your stay and then contact our scholar advisor.

What will happen if I end my UCR appointment early and/or depart the United States and do not intend to return to the U.S. for my J program?

If you are a scholar and you depart the U.S. early (more than 15 days before your DS-2019 end date) and you do not intend to return to the U.S. for the remainder of your J program, please discuss this with your faculty sponsor. Please also email our advisors so that they can advise you on the steps and the visa implications of ending your program early.