

# Welcome to the **Fall 2016 Speaker Series** of the **Indian Ocean World Centre**

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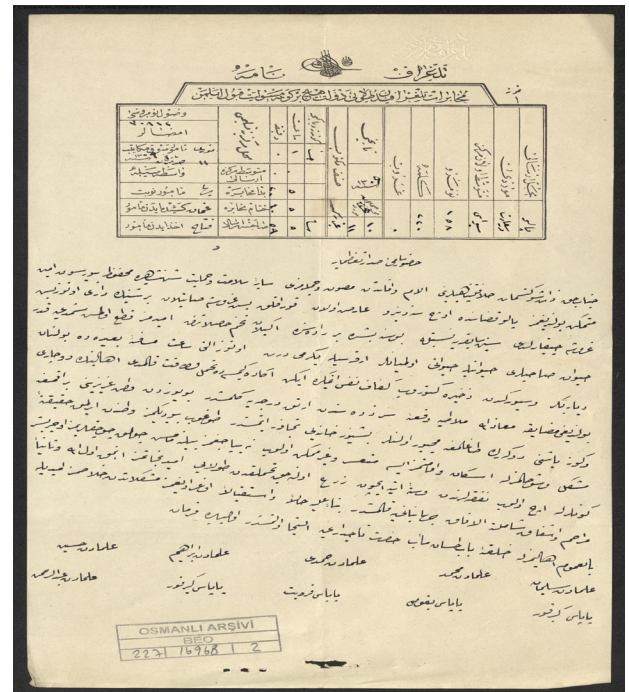
McGill University

20 October 2016

5:45 pm Arts Building Room 230

## ***Climate Crises and The Rise of the Tanzimat State 1840 - 1890***

During the nineteenth century, climatic anomalies posed a growing problem for the Ottoman Empire. Archival records point in particular to episodes of drought, crop failure, and locusts in the late 1800s when, from Kurdistan to Iraq, Syria and Anatolia, people and their animals starved. This paper examines the nature of the Ottoman government's interventions to bring relief to areas of Ottoman Kurdistan from 1840s to 1890s. The notion that officials in the region, or in Istanbul, intervened in any meaningful manner to alleviate the impact of such climatic disasters contradicts the received wisdom about late Ottoman governance. Foreign observers at the time painted a picture of a negligent imperial state that did little or nothing to help populations that were suffering from droughts and famines. Indeed, many scholars continue to argue that the Ottoman state either ignored deteriorating environmental and climatic conditions, and disasters, or failed to deal with them effectively. This paper, drawing from Ottoman and British archival sources, challenges these assumptions and makes the argument that the Ottoman state did implement substantial relief measures to communities affected by such adverse environmental factors.



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