



Please join us for a **Museums at Noon** presentation!

**Speaker:** Amanda Respass (PhD candidate, Anthropology and History)

**When:** 12:00 pm on Friday, November 17

**Where:** UM Museum of Art auditorium (lower level)

### **Narrative and Nationalism: Islamic Science in American Museum Practice**

Artifacts important to the history of science in Islamic societies occupy peculiar ground in American museums, often having trajectories in collections and exhibits that obscure, rather than clarify, their provenance and significance. Islamic societies from the eighth century to the early modern period authored scientific advancements in an astonishing number of fields, producing a multitude of objects now housed in museum collections around the world. These objects are, however, often conspicuously absent in American science museums; they are instead scattered among the collections of American art museums, where their scientific importance is often sidelined.

This talk, centered on a discussion of the Smithsonian, examines the historical context of the acquisition of these objects and their itineraries through American collections and exhibitions, which have offered a variety of narrative techniques used to assign them meanings while on display. What emerges from this analysis is a history of nation-building in American museums that tells a very particular story about the nature of science, and about who and what can be considered its legitimate stakeholders, or claim it as a cultural inheritance.