SYED RAZA

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ACADEMIC APPOINTMENT

Kenyon College 2026–present
Visiting Assistant Professor of Sociology

EDUCATION

PhD in Sociology, University of Texas at Austin 2026
Dissertation: *Divine Dollars: Classificatory Struggles of Islamic Finance in Chicago*
Dissertation advisor: Javier Auyero.
Drawing on fourteen months of participant observation and semi-structured interviews, this dissertation examines how religious experts, financial intermediaries, and community members negotiate the legitimacy of financial practices in Chicago.
Selected quantitative training: demography and quantitative methods.

MPH in Sociomedical Sciences, Columbia University 2017
Selected quantitative training: biostatistics, epidemiology, and GIS.

BS in Kinesiology, University of Kentucky 2013

RESEARCH INTERESTS

Economic sociology; sociology of religion; expertise and institutional authority; race, ethnicity, and social inequality; science and technology studies; social theory; South Asia and its diasporas.

JOURNAL PUBLICATIONS

Raza, Syed. 2026. "Halal Enough? Authority, Authenticity, and Accountability in American Islamic Finance." *Contemporary Islam*. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11562-026-00636-0

MANUSCRIPTS UNDER REVIEW

Raza, Syed. "Calibrated Worldliness: Islamic Finance and the Weberian Problem of the Economic Sphere." *Theory and Society*.

Raza, Syed. "Global Business, Cultural Authority, and the Common Good." Journal of Business Ethics.

BOOK REVIEWS

Raza, Syed. 2019. "Science as Social Struggle." *Science for the People* 22(1).

Raza, Syed. 2015. "Fossil Fuels: Manna from Heaven or Magma from Hell?" *Journal of International Affairs* 69(1):217–219.

GRANTS AND HONORS

2026 Course Enhancement Grants, Center for the Study of American Democracy (CSAD), Kenyon College. Awarded for *Sociology of Religion* ($1,050) and *Contesting India* ($1,050).

2025–2026 Robert L. Hardgrave Jr. Fellowship for Outstanding Graduate Student in the Social Science, South Asia Institute, University of Texas at Austin.

2023–2025 Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) Fellowship.

2021 Comprehensive examination, passed with honors. Fields: *Political Sociology* and *Science and Technology Studies*, University of Texas at Austin.

2015 Scholarship, Mailman School of Public Health, Columbia University ($35,000).

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Kenyon College
Visiting Assistant Professor of Sociology

Current courses

Sociology of Religion — Fall 2026
Contesting India (*Cross-listed in Sociology and Asian and Middle East Studies*) — Fall 2026

Scheduled courses

Sociology of Science and Technology — Spring 2027
Institutions and Inequality — Spring 2027
Sociology of Morality — Spring 2027

Design and teach undergraduate sociology courses at a liberal arts college, emphasizing critical inquiry, discussion, and analytical writing. Mentor students through staged research and writing assignments, providing individualized feedback to support independent inquiry and the development of sociological arguments.

Huston–Tillotson University
Adjunct Lecturer

Economy, Technology, and Faith in Modern India — Spring 2026
Religions of South Asia — Spring 2025
Introduction to Urdu Language — Fall 2024; Spring 2025
Heritage and History through Humanities — Spring 2024

Designed and taught four undergraduate courses across four semesters at a historically Black liberal arts university. Mentored first-generation and multilingual students in reading, writing, and research.

University of Texas at Austin
Assistant Instructor

Rich and Poor in America — Spring 2024; Fall 2025

Sole instructor; designed and taught a course on inequality and public policy, supervised a teaching assistant, and mentored students in sociological research and analytical writing.

Teaching Assistant

Introduction to the Study of Society
Six Semesters (Fall 2019; Spring and Fall 2023; Fall 2024; Spring 2025; Spring 2026)
Sociology of Criminal Justice (web-based) — Summer 2025

Led discussion sections, supported sociological reasoning and writing, graded assessments, provided academic advising, and recorded lecture videos.

Columbia University
Lead Teaching Assistant

Core Foundations of Public Health — Fall 2016

Facilitated discussion sections, graded analytical writing, and mentored students.

TEACHING INTERESTS

Qualitative and Quantitative Research Methods; Interdisciplinary Research Methods; Undergraduate Research and Internship Capstones; Introductory Statistics and Data Analysis; Introduction to Sociology; Sociological Theory; Economic Sociology; Political Sociology; Sociology of Religion; Sociology of Science and Technology; Social Inequality; Race, Ethnicity, and Immigration; Medical Sociology and Public Health.

RESEARCH AND PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

University of Texas at Austin, Moody College of Communication Spring 2020–Spring 2021
Graduate Research Assistant
Research on economic transformations and moral regulation in coworking spaces across the United States.

University of Texas at Austin, SHIFT Initiative Spring 2020
Ethnographic Researcher
Trained undergraduate researchers in ethnographic research and analysis for a study of substance use and antisocial behavior, including alcohol consumption and harassment.

New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene 2017–2019
Research Scientist; Special Assistant to Assistant Commissioner
Bureau of Early Intervention
Coordinated early-intervention services across boroughs for children with developmental delays. Conducted qualitative research, including focus groups with parents and service coordinators, to evaluate program implementation, access, and equity.

Columbia University, Center for the Study of Social Difference 2016–2017
Associate Fellow, Precision Medicine Initiative
Contributed to interdisciplinary working groups and public programming on race, inequality, disability, genomics, and health disparities.

CONFERENCES AND INVITED TALKS

2027 "After Certification: The Moral Work of Compliance in Islamic Investment Markets." International Sociological Association XXI World Congress of Sociology, Gwangju, Korea. (Under review).

2024 "Secularism and Sociological Theory." American Sociological Association Annual Meeting, Montreal, Canada. (Accepted for presentation; unable to attend).

2024 "Divine Dollars: The Dynamics of Islamic Finance in the United States." WISLI Student Conference, Madison, Wisconsin.

2024 "Narratives of Indianness: What Does It Mean to Be Indian?" University of Texas Education Learning Community, Austin, Texas.

2017 "The Opioid Epidemic in Central Appalachia." GIS poster presentation, Mailman School of Public Health, Columbia University, New York, New York.

SERVICE, MENTORSHIP AND ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP

Rise Research Scholars 2026–present
Research Mentor
Mentor students in developing independent social science and interdisciplinary research projects. Provide individualized guidance on research design, literature reviews, qualitative and quantitative methods, data analysis, research ethics, and scholarly writing.

Kenyon College, Kenyon Keys Washington, D.C. Program October 2026
Selected Faculty Participant
Selected through a faculty proposal process. Designed and led educational programming at the Anacostia Community Museum on public memory, race and ethnicity, and national belonging.

University of Texas at Austin, South Asia Institute Graduate Conference 2025–2026
Organizer
Helped develop the conference theme, coordinate panels and logistics, and support invited-speaker programming, including events connected to Akeel Bilgrami's visit.

LANGUAGES AND RESEARCH SKILLS

Languages: English (native); Hindi (native); Urdu (advanced proficiency); Arabic (beginner).

Qualitative methods: Ethnography; semi-structured interviews; focus groups; qualitative coding; archival, documentary, and textual analysis.

Quantitative methods: Survey research; statistical data analysis; demography; epidemiology; geographic information systems (GIS).

Software: ATLAS.ti; Dedoose; Stata; QGIS; R; Python.