



Fall 2017 Colloquium  
Tuesdays, 12:30 – 2:00 PM  
223 Moses Hall

September 12

## ***Myths and Manuscripts: Rethinking the place of Timbuktu in the intellectual history of Muslim West Africa***

Bruce Hall

Associate Professor of History  
UC Berkeley

*The Malian town of Timbuktu is widely understood as the epicenter of Muslim intellectual history in West Africa. The ever-expanding numbers of Arabic manuscripts claimed as extant in Timbuktu has only further cemented the idea of the town as the font of a late-medieval high intellectual culture that rivaled other famous Muslim intellectual centers in Morocco and Egypt. Hall proposes a critical reevaluation of the place of Timbuktu in the intellectual history of Muslim West Africa by analyzing the extent to which other writings produced by Muslim scholars elsewhere in the West African region incorporated scholarly production in Timbuktu. For practical purposes, this work focuses on a selection of jurisprudential texts produced across the region between the 16th and early 20th centuries. He argue that the degree of the intertextuality in West African jurisprudential writing—in other words, how often West African writers cite other West African writers—is an indication of the influence, and the extent, of organic, interconnected reading communities historically. The evidence suggests Timbuktu, after its zenith in the 16th century, ceased to be an especially important site in the intellectual tradition centered in Mauritania. This work attempts to re-situate Timbuktu in the intellectual history of Muslim West Africa.*

