This paper will look at the role played by Ishtiaq Hussain Qureshi (1903-81) – Cambridge-trained historian of medieval India – in developing a master narrative for the history of Pakistan. The political exigencies of, first, demand for a separate homeland for Muslims and, later, the necessity of legitimizing the historical origins of the nation-state thus established, shaped much of Qureshi’s historical writings from 1940s onward. Ali Usman Qasmi will argue that Qureshi drew upon the representations of the Muslim past in popular history, academic works and poetical/literary invocations which had shaped a certain exclusivist worldview about Muslim community in the Indian sub-continent from late nineteenth century onward. The speaker will also trace the ideational processes whereby Qureshi constructed a master narrative which served the Statist purposes of ascribing a singular historical narrative to the evolution of Muslim community, emphasize the distinctness of Muslim identity and severe the links – geographical, civilizational and historical – which previously connected the regions comprising Pakistan and the rest of South Asia. This helped ensure that the history of Pakistan was not relegated to a subset of Indian history and to articulate the idea of Pakistan as the culminating point of a linear progression of Muslim community towards attainment of Statehood.

Ali Usman Qasmi is Assistant Professor (History) at LUMS. After a PhD from the South Asia Institute of Heidelberg University in 2009, he was a Newton Fellow for Post-Doctoral research at Royal Holloway College, University of London. As well as numerous academic articles, he is the author of *Questioning the Authority of the Past: The Ahl al-Qur’an Movements in the Punjab and The Ahmadis and the Politics of Religious Exclusion in Pakistan* (Karachi Literary Festival Peace Prize). Further publications included the co-editions of *Revisioning Iqbal as a Poet and Muslim Political Thinker* and *The Shi’a in Modern South Asia: History, Politics and Religion.*

**Tuesday 24th November**  
2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.  
Fellows’ Dining Room  
St Antony’s College

All are welcome