3H Anand Rampersad, University of the West Indies, Trinidad and Tobago; Fareena Alladin, University of the West Indies, Trinidad and Tobago & Safiyah Shah, University of the West Indies, Trinidad and Tobago
“The Social Construction of Sport and Physical Activity among Muslim Women in Trinidad and Tobago”

The study seeks to explore the social construction of sport and physical activity among members of Get Fit Muslimah TT by focusing on how members of this group view, interpret and make sense of sport and physical activity as part of their way of life. The study adopts a qualitative methodology utilizing semi-structured interviews. Participants will be asked about their current engagement in sport and physical activity, the definitions they have for these terms, the role of Islam in its construction, and other factors which are deemed critical to their conceptualization of and engagement in sport and physical activity. Interviews will be conducted at locations which are convenient to the participants, after which they will be transcribed and thematic analysis will be conducted. In addition to a critical insight into the experiences of Muslim women in constructing sport and physical activity, the element of a ‘safe space’, which is vital to Muslim women’s identity, will also be explored in its linkage to sport and physical activity.

3H Bahar Tajrobehkar, University of Toronto
“Islamic Feminism in Action: Can Women’s Advancement in Sports in Muslim Countries Be Achieved within an Islamic Framework?”

There is growing scholarly interest in Muslim women’s experiences, conditions and negotiations in sports. This is partly due to the overt tensions between (Western) sports and some Islamic doctrines and traditions, such as eating (fasting during Ramadan) and clothing (i.e., wearing the hijab for women) practices (Benn, 2011). Exploring the impact of Islamic doctrines and Muslimhood on women’s lives and status (be it in sports or within the broader culture) necessarily invokes the question of Islam’s relationship with feminism. The rights and freedoms of female athletes (and indeed all women wishing to participate in sport and physical activity) in Islamic countries, as well as the approach taken to improve and maximize these rights and freedoms are, on philosophical as well as tactical grounds, contingent on the relationship between Islam and feminism. Therefore, the examination of this relationship must be recognized as an important concern to sport sociologists. In this paper, I will examine the concept of Islamic feminism and its potential for liberating women in Islamic countries. I will explore the possibilities it offers to empower women in sport in Muslim countries, its effectiveness at accomplishing this, and the limits it poses for broader feminist endeavors in Muslim countries.

3H Moonkyue Shin, Seoul National University
“(Re)birth of a Football Player: Football Match as a Ritual and Pursuit of the Sacred”

This paper analyzes a football match as a ritual. This perspective does not concern a football match as a ritual that has religious functions in a certain context, but rather sees it as a ritual itself which is set to get ‘the sacred:’ ‘team as a community’ and ‘identity as a player.’ In the context of the lowest league of South Korean football, players who belong to this league experience social death and survival. It means that they are in a crisis of identity. Collecting data from fieldwork in this league, I analyzed the way that their identity as a player is constructed by a match or ritual. Their daily life is tightly knitted to prepare this ritual and, without it, their practices to be a ‘good player’ are nothing. As if a ritual consists of elements like a priest, believers, a chapel, ceremony and rules, a match has corresponding elements as well: referees, spectators, players, a stadium, laws, and ceremony. Especially as a performer, players are not only the sacrifice but also the sacred which is pursued through a ritual. Therefore, ‘the sacred’ as a player’s
identity is a purpose and an outcome of a ritual which has to be constantly made through a repeated match.

3H Stanley Thangaraj, City College of New York
“Race, Islamophobia, and Sporting Cultures: The Case of Immigrant and Refugee Southern U.S.”

As sport has often been problematically legitimated as a site structured only through meritocracy, the lives of the athletes and their experiences of marginalization, exclusion, and violence are glossed over. This talk derives from my book, Desi Hoop Dreams (New York University Press, 2015), and new ethnographic research on refugee (specifically Somalis and Kurds) communities in Nashville, Tennessee. Through the venue of basketball and soccer, I decipher the parameters of citizenship and racialized politics of exclusion. While these young men of various religious backgrounds are interpellated as “terrorists,” their lives on the sporting courts demonstrate their challenge to that stereotype, a challenge that claims citizenship and global belonging. For the South Asian American men, their commitment to basketball is part of their performance of American masculinity. Kurdish and Somali Americans have recently migrated communities whose performance of cultural citizenship involves sports like soccer that can give them a global language of belonging while also investing in basketball and American-ness. In a political climate of Islamophobia where their Muslim-ness is read as un-American, playing a variety of these sports are part of the process of performing citizenship.