Yusuf Ünal is a Fulbright doctoral fellow in the Islamic Civilizations Studies program at Emory University. His research focuses on the Safavid conversion of Iran to Shi'i Islam by interrogating the meaning of conversion in an early modern context and its representation in multiple genres such as legal manuals, heresiographies, chronicles, and biographical dictionaries. His work also examines the legal warfare, religious polemics, and confessionalization animated by the prolonged, contentious rivalry between the Ottoman and Safavid empires.

His peer-reviewed research has been published by the Indiana and Edinburgh University presses, translated into Russian and Turkish, and featured in reports published by the American Foreign Policy Council, Hudson Institute, and Brookings Institution, among others.

During his fellowship at the Abdallah S. Kamel Center for the Study of Islamic Law and Civilization, he will complete his dissertation, "Becoming Shia: Conversion, Narrative, and Polemical Encounters in Early Modern Iran (1501-1722)," and prepare several article projects for publication.