ISLA 581: Islamic Law and Human Rights

Ahmed Fekry Ibrahim

Winter 2017

Ahmed Fekry Ibrahim: Friday 11:35-2:25

Office Hours: Friday 2:30-3:30 or by appointment

Course Description

This course focuses on three main questions: Are human rights universal or culturally specific? What are some of the critiques of human rights discourses? What are some of the approaches that embraced these human rights discourses and sought to create overlapping consensus with liberal democracy? In order to think about these questions, we will discuss the Enlightenment origins of the human rights regime; colonialism; the instrumentalization of human rights discourses by colonial, postcolonial, and neo-colonial regimes; multiculturalism; international law and treaty obligations under the human rights regime; liberal democracy; and Islamic liberalism.

Course Requirements and Evaluation

15% Attendance

15% Participation

40% Oral presentations (with accompanying written reports to be assigned during the semester)

10% Reflection paper (400-500 words)

20% Final Paper (3000-3500 words)

- The paper should be roughly 3000-3500 words in length. Anything that exceeds or falls short of this word count by a significant margin will be penalized. Please write the paper’s word count at the top.
- Unlike your other assignments, you will be required to conduct your own original research for this paper. If you choose to cover a theme that we have discussed thoroughly in class (e.g. authenticity of hadith debate), you will be expected to go significantly beyond the class readings in your citations and address other dimensions of the debate.
- Only use academic secondary sources (i.e. peer reviewed journal articles and academic books). You can certainly refer to non-academic Muslim resources/websites etc, if these are the primary sources of your study. For example, if you are studying a particular Muslim community, you can cite their own publications in describing the object of your study.
- Please pay attention to accurate descriptions, proper grammar, and sentence structure.
- Make sure you have proper citations using a citation guide. We recommend Chicago Style, as it is the most common in the field, but any other will do (APA, MLA etc).
- For some good resources to help you get started, check out the online subject guide available on our Islamic studies website (click on the tabs above):  http://libraryguides.mcgill.ca/islamicandmiddleeast

Class Policies
• You should do all readings and be expected to lead discussions of them as assigned by the Professor.
• Extensions will be granted only in cases of genuine emergency.
• No incompletes will be given except in cases of genuine emergency.

**Required Books:**


**Week 1 (January 6): Introduction (Liberalism)**

Watch video in class and discuss it:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LBxYS_tvJDE&list=PLDo4SPvM4bVIKOc_uTW085oemhjANexgi

**Week 2 (Jan. 13): Universalism vs. Cultural Specificity** (70 Pages total)


Further readings:


**Week 3 (January 20): The Philosophical Basis of Human Rights**

**Discussant: Anne-Cecile Favory**


**Further readings:**


**Week 4 (January 27): Multiculturalism**

**Discussants: Samia Ahmed/Faisal Mairiga**


**Further readings:**


**Week 5 (Feb. 3): Overlapping Consensus: Child Rights**

**Discussants: Jessica Condemi/Conner Spencer**


**Further readings:**


**Week 6 (Feb. 10): Overlapping Consensus: Domestic Violence**

**Discussants: Shea Bellino/Nicki Siamaki**


**Week 7 (Feb. 17): Overlapping Consensus: Domestic Violence**

*Skype discussion with Professor Chaudhry*

Week 8 (Feb. 24): Overlapping Consensus: The Veil

Discussant: Shaden Sowan


Week 9 (March 10): Overlapping Consensus: The Veil

Professor is away for a talk.

Reflection paper on today’s readings, due today.


Further readings:


Week 10 (March 17): Is Critique Secular? The Danish Cartoons and Freedom of Speech

Discussant: Shivana Mohammed


Week 11 (March 24): Minority Rights: A Critique

Discussant: Tara Weinstein


Week 12 (March 31): Minority Rights: A Critique

Discussant: Omar Aziz


Week 13 (April 7): Minority Rights: A Critique

Final paper due today.
Professor is away for a talk.


Further readings:


University Honor System and Students’ Rights

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see [www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/](http://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/) for more information). L’université McGill attache une haute importance à l’honnêteté académique. Il incombe par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l’on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon le Code de conduite de l’étudiant et des procédures disciplinaires (pour de plus amples renseignements, veuillez consulter le site [www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/](http://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/)).

In accord with McGill University’s Charter of Students’ Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.

Conformément à la Charte des droits de l’étudiant de l’Université McGill, chaque étudiant a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être noté (sauf dans le cas des cours dont l’un des objets est la maîtrise d’une langue).