ET-655 Contemporary Islamic Ethics
Hartford Seminary, Fall 2018

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Course Description: For Muslims committed to living Islam as a way of life, contemporary society offers many challenges. A commitment to the common good exists in tension with the need to protect individual rights. The desire to uphold family values may conflict with the need to defend pluralism and civil liberties. In a world threatened with violence from many sources, self-defense and security take on new meaning. In this class, we will examine these tensions and the Islamic principles that can help Muslims live ethically and with integrity in contemporary society. After an introduction to the theoretical principles of Islamic ethics, the course will focus on these tensions as they exist in contemporary Islamic ethics.

Prerequisites: This is not an introductory class to Islamic studies; coursework in Islamic Studies at the graduate level is a prerequisite. Also, proficiency in the use of Blackboard is expected as we will be using it daily. Class readings, student writings, course announcements and other course information and materials will be posted there.

Communication with Instructor: The best way to contact me is through email (see above).

Attendance Policy: Attendance in all classes throughout the period of the day is required. Exceptions will only be granted in emergencies that are corroborated by proper medical documentation or other documentation that warrants an absence. Missing an entire class period without a proper excuse, will seriously compromise your grade.

Required Texts
None
(Notes by the instructor based on an in-progress book will be made available online)

Recommended Texts
- James G. Speth, *The Bridge at the Edge of the World*

Grade: 30% In class participation  70% Research paper
The research paper will consist of four parts. First, introduction to the research problem,
second, literature review, third, review of Islamic scriptural materials on the subject (this may overlap more or less with the first), fourth, critique and analysis and fifth, a list of recommendations for contemporary American Muslim counselors, educators, imams, and the community at large. The paper will be about 5000-6000 words, approximately 20-25 pages (double-spaced, 12 point).
More advanced students who wish to do so may consider publishing the paper in a suitable academic journal.

Course Schedule
(I reserve the right to make changes in this outline and/or assignments in the course as is line with general aims of the course.)

The class instruction time consists of three class weekend meetings separated by approximately 40 days: Sept 7-9, Oct 19-21, Nov 30-Dec 2.

First Meeting
1.1 Introduction to the course.
1.2 Islamicate Traditions of Ethics.
1.3 Islamic Prophetic Ethics.
1.4 Choosing your project.

Reading 1: Anjum, “Islamic Prophetic Ethics: Qur’an and Prophetic Practice” (online)

Interim period: Complete the readings for the first meeting as well the second meeting. Start discussing them online with the class. Start working on your projects/papers.

Reading 2: Anjum, “Introduction to Islamic Ethical Theory and Case for a Prophetic Ethics” (online)

Second Meeting
2.1 Islamic Ethical Theory.
2.2 Student presentation of work in progress.
2.3 Contemporary ethical dilemmas: An introduction to the theory of ethical clash.
2.4 Submit case studies of American Muslim ethical dilemmas to be discussed at length in the next meeting.

Interim Period: Finalize your papers, submit drafts two to three weeks before the
Third Meeting

3.1 Student final project presentations
3.2 Discuss five case studies of ethical dilemmas

Some Sample Issues for Contemporary Islamic Ethics Presentations and Research Papers (I encourage you to be creative and ask new and relevant questions):

Religious Pluralism and Interfaith Relations

- Apostasy in Muslim majority countries
- Evangelization, religious relief work, mission and da’wa
- Balancing religious beliefs with activism for universal human rights

Medical Ethics

- Abortion
- Organ transplantation
- Medical assisted suicide
- Medical marijuana

Family Life and Sexuality

- Adoption
- Polygamy
- Sexuality and the unmarried Muslim

Political Ethics

- Citizenship
- Military service
- Partisan politics (joining a political party)

Public Policy Issues: What Position Should Muslims Take?

- Health care
- Gay marriage
- Crime and punishment/rehabilitation
- Death penalty
- Taxation and/or another economic or financial issue

Ethics of War and Peace

- Prisoners of war; enemy combatants
Torture vs. lawful interrogation procedures
Means of warfare
Who has the right to declare war?

Environmental Ethics and Animal Rights
What makes food lawful?

Capitalism
Industrialization vs. environment in developing countries.
Bibliography


Michael Cook, Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong in Islamic Thought (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002).


Majid Fakhry, Ethical Theories in Islam (Leiden: Brill, 1994).

Richard Foltz, Animals in Islamic Tradition and Muslim Cultures (Oxford: Oneworld, 2006).


