Course title: RS-542: Islam and Human Rights
Instructor: Seyfeddin Kara

Course description:
There has been a tension between Islam and Human Rights theory as both present themselves as value systems that are applicable universally. This course will try to understand the nature of the tension through examining various debates on the subject, and explore the possibility of reconciliation of Islam and Human Rights theory. Upon examining the theoretical issues, the course will focus on some of the Sunni and Shi’i legal concepts that may provide a framework for reconciliation between Islam and Human Rights. Finally, it will focus on some practical issues such as ḥudūd (fixed Islamic punishments), women’s rights, minority rights, and religious freedom. The readings (excluding Conor Gearty’s Can Human Rights Survive?) will be provided by the instructor so no need to purchase any texts.

Course Structure:
The class will run for an intensive period of seven weeks. All the work for the course will be due during the seven weeks of study; no assignments will be due after the course concludes. Some of the course readings will be possible to complete before the start of the course, but other than that, all work will be assigned and completed during the seven weeks of the course.

None of the assignments and study materials for the course will require participants to log into the system at a specific time of day. However, students will have specific days of the week when assignments of a particular kind are due. The schedule for the class will provide a repeating, weekly pattern. Students who may need to interrupt the pattern for travel or other commitments will need to make specific arrangements with the instructors.
Assignments and Assessments:
There will be two main kinds of assignments, both of which will bring students into interactions with each other and with the instructor:

The first assignment, the “Weekly Reaction Paper” will require students to write a short essay of 700 words in reaction to the material for the week. The assignment will also require students to engage substantively two fellow students. Interaction with other students is compulsory.

The second assignment, the final paper will require students to write a 2000-word essay and submit it on the last day of the course.

Grading:
Weekly Reaction Paper: 50%
Final Paper: 50%

Required Texts:

Marie Juul Petersen, “Islam and human rights: Clash or compatibility?”
http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/religionpublicsphere/2016/10/islam-and-human-rights-clash-or-compatibility/

Note: Students should read these texts before the start of the course.
Week 1: Are Islam and human rights compatible?
- Mohammad Saeed Bahmanpour, “Religion of Human Rights and Other Religions Are They Compatible?”

Week 2: The Clash of Universalisms
- Abdulaziz Sachedina, Islam and the Challenge of Human Rights pp. 3-41

Suggested Reading

Week 3: Muslim Reaction to Human Rights
Readings:

Suggested Readings:
Week 4: Islamic Law and Human Rights
  - David L. Johnston, “Maqāṣid al-Shari‘a: Epistemology and Hermeneutics of Muslim Theologies of Human Rights”

Week 5: Fixed Islamic punishments
- Elizabeth Peiffer, “The Death Penalty in Traditional Islamic Law and as Interpreted in Saudi Arabia and Nigeria”

Week 6: Women’s rights

Week 7: Minority rights, and religious freedom
  - Abdulaziz Sachedina, Islam and the Challenge of Human Rights, pp.185-209