ARAB 370: Justice in the Islamic Tradition

Felicitas Opwis
Spring 2012
Friday: 9:30–12:00
Location: Walsh 492
Office Hours: Thursday 1:00–2:30pm or by appointment
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Course Description:
What is justice and how do Muslim intellectuals articulate their vision of justice throughout the ages? These questions are a common thread in this course which introduces students to various types of literature from the Islamic tradition that address issues of justice, including political, legal, historical, and literary texts. The course explores the theoretical and practical dimension of how to achieve justice, looks at the way conceptions of justice may change over time, and what factors drive changes in the articulation of justice. The course and readings are in English.

This seminar is a 4 credit course and is part of the Berkley Center Doyle Undergraduate Fellows project. The class meets once per week as a normal seminar and includes a substantial collaborative research component (see course requirements on syllabus). 75% of your grade will be based on the seminar work. The final 25% of the grade will consist in research and writing contributions for a printed report. Each student will work collaboratively with classmates in the research and interview process as well as the writing and editing of the report. There will be additional, mandatory meetings scheduled throughout the semester for the completion of group tasks and for other meetings with professionals, scholars, and thought leaders about this topic.

Course Requirements:
It is required that the student has read, thought about, and is able to discuss the weekly readings prior to coming to class.

- Attendance and participation in class discussions (15% of grade)
- Posting discussion questions on the assigned readings at least 24 hours prior to class every week (5% of grade)
- Presentation (in class) of weekly readings (at minimum 2 times per semester); write-up of the presentation to be handed in on day of presentation (10% of grade)
- Midterm exam (February 24, 2012) (20% of grade)
- Final paper (due May 5, 2012) (25% of grade)
- Collaborative work, interviews, and report production
25% of a student’s grade will consist in contributions to the collaborative production of a printed report (the equivalent of 1 credit).

- **Content of report:**
  - The report will detail background issues about justice in the Islamic tradition (issues we will explore in seminar readings);
  - The report will analyze interviews conducted with theorists and practitioners who share their views on justice in the Islamic tradition.
  - Web-based resources will also be produced based on material from the course and the printed report.

- **Group collaboration:**
  - Each student will work collaboratively in smaller groups to lead the writing and editing of various sections of the report.
  - Individual student papers may be adapted for portions of the report.
  - There will be additional, mandatory meetings scheduled throughout the semester for the completion of group tasks. These sessions will generally be student-led and may involve the course TA or professor.
  - Throughout the semester, students may be invited by the professor to participate in meetings (both formal interviews and informal discussions) with scholars and professionals to discuss issues related to the course. Each student should avail him/herself of each of these opportunities.

- **Scope of student contributions:**
  - Each student will conduct a minimum of 2 interviews with a scholar or practitioner working on the topic of the class (by email, or phone, or in person)
  - A write-up of each interview will be completed and submitted in a timely manner
  - Each student will contribute to the drafting of the “background” sections of the report
  - Each student will be responsible for conducting a thorough review and edit of the penultimate draft
Books Available at Georgetown University campus bookstore:


All other course readings (except for encyclopedia entries) are available on Blackboard

Syllabus

Week 1: January 13, 2012: Introduction to the Course and “Shopkeeping”

Week 2: January 20, 2012: Theories of Justice I

Readings:


Week 3: January, 27, 2012: Theories of Justice II

Readings:


Week 4: February 3, 2012: Justice in Islam

Readings:


“ʿAdl,” in Encyclopaedia of Islam². (available on-line through library)

“Ẓulm,” in Encyclopaedia of Islam². (available on-line through library)

“Justice and Injustice,” in Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān. (available on-line through library)


Week 5: February 10, 2012: Justice as Reflected in Mirrors for Princes I

Readings:
Boyce, Mary. The Letter of Tansar (Rome: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1968), pp. 26–70


Week 6: February 17, 2012: Justice as Reflected in Mirrors for Princes II

Readings:


Week 7: February, 24, 2012: in–class Midterm exam

Week 8: March 2, 2012: Justice in Politico–Historical and Ethical–Religious Writings

Readings:


Week 9: March 16, 2012: Ethico–Religious Writings

Readings:


Week 10: March 23, 2012: Legal Justice I

Readings:


Week 11: March 30, 2012: Legal Justice II

Readings:


Week 12: April 13, 2012: Philosophical Justice

Readings:


Week 13: April 20, 2012: Social Justice

Readings:

Week 14: April 27, 2012: Students present synopsis of their paper topics