

# Islamic Summer Intensive Course 2022

## Course Descriptions

### Poetical Technology

**Instructor:** Shuja Ali Mirza

**Duration:** 5+ sessions

**Introduction:** In Aristotle's division of science (*dianoia*) and wisdom into theoretical, practical, and poetical, the first pertains to the macrocosm and objective world, while the second and third pertain to the microcosm and subjective world of humanity. Technology as both the product and technique of human production and industry clearly falls into the third division of poetical wisdom. To properly understand technology and its role in the world it is quintessential to understand two significant points: First, the unity and hierarchy that informs the tripartite wisdom of traditional philosophy; second, the imperative of beauty in poetical wisdom or philosophy. The first situates technology and puts it in its proper place while emphasizing its inalienable connection and nexus with the superordinate level of practical philosophy and the latter's divisions of ethics, domestics, and civics. The second provides a principle, which is neither relative nor arbitrary, by which technology can be gauged and assessed. The paper expounds the above points and aims to delineate the foundation of a poetical technology that is conducive to humanity's existential experience and realization of truth, goodness, and beauty.

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### Lost in a Digital Haystack: The Internet and the Signs of the Times

**Instructor:** Rizwan Rashid

**Duration:** 5+ Sessions

**Introduction:** Despite its relatively recent origins, the Internet has become one of the most pervasive and certainly intrusive mediums of technology the world has ever seen. It has significantly changed the way we interact with each other and with the world around us. For many Internet users and developers, it offers a new and what may be called "postmodern hope" of breaking free from traditionally oppressive and restrictive means of control and an attempt to restructure the world in a manner that can benefit both the individual and humanity at large.

But there is a cost because the internet has affected our sense of place in the world. The geography of space and time has been redefined in virtual reality and despite all the advancements in digital navigation, hoping to locate a map of where we truly are in this digital haystack and, more importantly, where we need to go has become "virtually" impossible. We are lost in our own creation and our daily call to God to guide us on the path of those who are not lost takes on a whole new meaning.

In this course, we will begin by examining the nature of technology and its relationship to man as its creator. This will help answer the question: is technology really neutral. We will then explore the postmodern hope for the internet and the assumptions regarding identity, horizontality, space, and other factors that inform this particular vision. We will end by evaluating these assumptions from an Islamic and philosophical point of view and see what they say about the signs of the times.

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# Islam and Digital Man: from Divine Vicegerency to Subhuman Homo Technicus

**Instructor:** Asad Sajjad

**Duration:** 5+ Sessions

**Introduction:** Man, who is deeply entrenched in the matrix of technology, now finds himself at another paradigm shift, which may be defined as the germinal state of the merger between man and machine. It is the subversion of his true transcendence—the *Imago Dei* turned *Imago bini*—the very root of which is the extremity of Cartesian bifurcation. Binary man now seeks to achieve a nefarious and insidious unity called the singularity by erasing the boundary between man and machine. It is the ‘transcendence’ of man, not in the traditional sense of the word, but one that is devoid of all sacrality. It is in these tumultuous times, when man seeks to destroy himself, that he can rediscover his true Center and reclaim the *raison d’être* of his being—that is, the perfect manifestation of the Supreme Principle.

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## No Man is an Island; Ukhuwwah in a World of Digital Alienation and False Connectivity

**Instructor:** Shaan Abbas Rizvi

**Duration:** 4 Sessions

**Introduction:** This course will critically examine the role of technology in weakening the social ties in modern society. Specifically, we will give an overview of the concepts of *ukhuwwah* (brotherhood) and *wilāyah* (guardianship) in Islam as they are presented in the Holy Qur’an, the *ahādīth* of the Prophet and his family, and the writings of Islamic scholars. Thereafter, we will critically analyze the interplay between certain modern technologies (and the realities they engender) and the relations we are called to have toward each other as believers. Finally, time permitting, we will examine, in particular, the role of modern technology in weakening family bonds amongst believing families. For the first few sessions, participants are requested to bring a copy of the Holy Qur’an. For the final session, participants are requested to read beforehand and bring to class a copy of David Brooks’ article “The Nuclear Family was a Mistake.”

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## Preserving the Sanctity of Knowledge and Truth in a Digital World.

**Instructor:** Murtaza Bachoo

**Duration:** 5 Sessions

**Introduction:** In an increasingly digital world, the acquisition of knowledge and information occurs primarily within a digital medium. The world of Wikipedia and zoom promise to place information on our fingertips and bring learning into our homes. Like most technology however, the digital world has its own unintended consequences. Whilst we shape the digital world, it also in-turn shapes our lives and our thoughts in ways that we may not have predicted. The reduction of knowledge (*‘ilm*) to information, the simplification of profound truths to tweets, and the dehumanization of the learning process are but some of its unintended consequences. The course will look at some of the common techniques of misinformation and disinformation and compare it to the Qur’anic basis for discerning truth (*haqq*). The course will also introduce the Islamic concept of knowledge and understanding.

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## Keeping the ‘a’ in ‘teach’: Holistic Education and the Impact of Technology

**Instructor:** Assad Dharsi

**Duration:** 3 Sessions

**Introduction:** The rise of technology as a marker of human material growth has been of interest to civilization-watchers for centuries. In the ‘modern’ era, this has overtaken other criteria of human growth and development to be a single most prominent measure of progress. As we prepare our hearts, minds, families, and societies for the dawn of ultimate human progress, we must re-envision the basis on which we base the nurturing of the supporters of the Mahdawiyy civilization and the role of technology therein.

Using Qur’anic exegesis and eschatological foundations as well as theological, ethical, and practical principles, this course intends to explore the Islamic foundations of education in its most holistic framework and study the impact of technology—intended and unintended—on the fragile human soul that a child possesses, their families, and their holistic educational prospects.

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## Say: Each One Acts According to His Disposition

**Instructor:** M. Mahdi Kassamali

**Duration:** 3 Sessions

**Introduction:** The internet and technological devices such as smartphones are now an inseparable part of our lives. According to one report, the average Canadian spends 4.4 hours on mobile apps each day. What effect is this having on our bodies, our familial and social interactions, our intellects, and most importantly as believers, our hearts? In this course, we wish to briefly examine the addictive nature of technology vis-à-vis man’s ultimate goal of servitude to Allah. Practical advice of the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them) with regards to spirituality and self-building will be discussed in light of technology and modern man’s addiction to it.

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## Algorithms of Self-Worship: Technology & the Neo-Idolatry of the Post-Modern Age

**Instructor:** Ali Habash

**Duration:** 2 Sessions

**Introduction:** Standing at the precipice of trans-humanism, post-modern man not only seeks to redefine himself but to reengineer himself to the extent of becoming unrecognizable and utterly alienated from his own *fiṭrah*. In his ever-increasing dependency on technology and his promethean quest to be reborn at his own hands as a cyborg, the freedom he imagines he will attain in this process results in precisely the opposite: abject slavery. Hence, while undoubtedly man’s many technologies represent victories of sorts in domains such as medicine, communication, information, performance, and industry, they are poisoned victories, where he not only drinks from the chalice of that poison, but pours it onto the natural world that he depends on. This topic will seek to explore the reality and consequences of this neo-idolatry on man, by surveying various forms of his enslavement to technology and ultimately, to himself. It will seek to better understand these forms of enslavement in the light of the Islamic tradition.