

Islamic Summer Intensive Course 2023

Human Rights and Right Humans

Course Descriptions

The Absoluteness of Truth and the Relativity of Modern Human Rights

Instructor: Shuja Ali Mirza

Duration: 5 sessions

Introduction: The idea and concept of *ḥaqq* essentially refers to “reality” and “subsisting existence.” As such, it is also related to and even equated with the ideas of “truth” and “right.” In understanding what “rights” are, it becomes clear that they must be founded upon and derive from truth and reality, in particular from *al-Ḥaqq*—the Truth, the Real. This is what gives “rights” cognitive substance, actual relevance, and any semblance of absoluteness. When “rights” are not based on *al-Ḥaqq*, they become relative, insubstantial, and irrelevant. This means that, on the plane of humanity, “human rights” become significant only when they are sourced in the relatively-absolute originality and universality of the innate and inspired *Human Nature* in man—the *Fiṭrah of Allāh* upon which humanity was created, as per the Qur’ānic verse,

فَأَقِمْ وَجْهَكَ لِلدِّينِ حَنِيفًا فِطْرَةَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا
لَا تَبْدِيلَ لِخَلْقِ اللَّهِ ذَلِكَ الدِّينُ الْقَيِّمُ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

So set right your face upon the primordial religion, the origination of Allah according to which He originated mankind; There is no altering Allah’s creation, that is the upright religion, but most people do not know. (*Sūrah al-Rūm, āyah 30*)

Insān - The Bearer of the Burden of Rights

Instructor: Asad Sajjad

Duration: 4 sessions

Introduction: Modern man now stands in opposition to the Divine. Fundamental truths pertaining to his origin, his return, and his purpose have all but become lost. Those whose horizons of rationality go no further than the physical dimension skirt on the periphery, always alienated from the centre. It is in this state of alienation, still being man, he plays God and seeks to give everything its right. This promethean being is the great parody of the perfect man. The former seeks to lay fire to all, while the latter serves both as water and the ark. It is the perfect man who in his integral comprehensiveness synthesizes all things, serving as the guardian, custodian, and pontifex.

Insights from I. Ali (a)'s Letter to Mālik Ashtar

Instructor: Muhammad Hasnain

Duration: 2 sessions

Introduction:

“This is what Allah’s servant, Ali, the Commander of the Faithful, has ordered Mālik ibn al-Ḥārith al-Ashtar in his pledge to him when he made him Governor of Egypt for the collection of its revenues, fighting against its enemies, seeking the good of its people, and making its cities prosperous.”

So begins the famous letter of Imam Ali (a) to his governor in Egypt, which is recorded by Sayyid Raḍī in the *Nahj al-balāgha* as Letter 53. It is a manifesto on how to govern people as a servant of Allah (swt). In this course, we will attempt to gain insights from its many beautiful passages and tie it in with the topic of human rights in Islam.

Foundation of Rights and Responsibilities in Islam: A Qur'anic and Hadith-based Investigation

Instructor: Hasan Doagoo

Duration: 4 sessions

Introduction: This course aims to explore the foundation of rights and responsibilities in Islam by addressing fundamental inquiries about the philosophy of rights within the Islamic framework. Key questions include the origin of rights from an Islamic perspective, the intended purpose behind adhering to these rights, and the means of identifying them. By delving into these aspects, we seek to provide a better understanding of the philosophy of rights in Islam.

The course will elucidate rights’ meaning, origin, and purpose, elaborating on the scriptural and traditional foundations of rights in Islamic thought. Additionally, it will provide a concise overview of the primary categories and principles of rights as indicated in the Qur’an and Sunnah, and explore whether certain categories or principles hold precedence over others.

Furthermore, we will engage in a discussion on the term *ḥaqq* in Arabic, which signifies the concept of right, investigating its literal meaning, its usage in the Qur’an, and the correlation between its literary and technical implications. Various categories of rights will also be examined, followed by a particular discussion on the impact of the Islamic perspective on human nature in defining human rights. Moreover, we will explore the role of the intellect and revelation in the identification of these rights.

Children's Rights and the LGBTQ Agenda

Instructor: Ibrahim Janabi

Duration: 2 sessions

Introduction: This course will discuss traditional views on children's rights and the changes to those rights brought about by the LGBTQ agenda. In particular, the implications of changing the family structure will be explored as well as the negative effects this has on children's upbringing.

Weaponizing Rights and Weaponized Might

Instructor: Ali Jafri

Duration: 2 sessions (online)

Introduction: In this two-part course, we will attempt to evaluate how the discourse on human rights has been abused by secular-liberal democracies. In our first session, entitled 'Weaponizing Rights', we will attempt to answer the following question: why has the interest in "human rights" exponentially grown in the modern West? In this session, we will examine when, why, and how, human rights are weaponized domestically and abroad, and will discuss relevant lessons through a Tawhīdī lens. In the second session, entitled 'Weaponized Might', we will look at how the Prison Industrial Complex exploits millions and exposes the hollow claim to authority emanating from the modern West.

Risālāh al-Ḥuqūq and the Servant's Many Responsibilities

Instructor: Muhammad Mahdi Kassamali

Duration: 3 sessions (online)

Introduction: The *Risālāh al-ḥuqūq* is a unique treatise authored by Imam al-Sajjād (peace be upon him) in which fifty divine rights are beautifully articulated. It serves as a poignant reminder of how servitude to Allah encompasses all aspects of our lives. In addition to some introductory points about Shī'ah hadith, the course will focus on a few specific responsibilities as mentioned in the treatise, pertaining to our social interactions and our worship.

Man in the Qur'an and His Rights

Instructor: Zain Ahmed

Duration: 4 sessions

Introduction: This course will discuss the Qur'anic view of man's place in God's created system. Questions such as "what is man's created nature?", "what is his potential?", "who are the ones that have actualized this potential?" will be addressed in this course. Finally, human rights that result from the Qur'anic understanding of man will be discussed.

Rooting Rights in the Good: Intellectual and Secular Bases of Rights

Instructor: Rizwan Rashid

Duration: 4 sessions

Introduction:

وَعَسَىٰ أَنْ تَكْرَهُوا شَيْئًا وَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ وَعَسَىٰ أَنْ تُحِبُّوا شَيْئًا وَهُوَ شَرٌّ لَّكُمْ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

... it may be that you dislike something, which is good for you, and it may be that you love something, which is bad for you, and Allah knows and you do not know. (*Sūrah al-Baqarah, āyah 216*)

Classical Greek philosophers did not speak of inalienable human rights as we do today. But they did speak about justice. Justice, as inferred from the writings of Plato, was to put things in their right places. What was the right place of each thing? It was what was good for each thing. In this module, we will investigate the notion of the Good according to classical Greek and Islamic philosophers. This will lead us to examine various ethical frameworks—both classical and contemporary—and to situate the modern notion of human rights within them. Through this process, we may begin to appreciate the need to ground the idea of rights within an ethical framework that acknowledges an objective notion of the Good. It is this notion which gives direction and provides justification for all the sciences that fall within practical wisdom in Islam.

Unjust Perceptions regarding Just Islamic Laws

Instructor: Ali Imran

Duration: 2 sessions

Introduction: Justice is one of the fundamental premises in the Islamic legal system, especially given the role of the Islamic legal system in establishing justice within individual and communal life. Yet, at times, we find certain individuals today who consider particular laws as unjust, such as the laws of apostasy, male & female inheritance or court testimonies, the obligatory veil for women, gender roles, etc. In this brief discussion, we will first establish through the Quran that Islamic laws are indeed based on justice, followed by an investigation into the origins of false perceptions of certain people, the role and relevance of social customs in determining instances of justice, and the jurisdiction of the Prophet (p) in presenting a re-evaluation of certain societal perceptions of justice.

The Ḥaqq of Ḥaqīqah: The Rightful Right of Reality

Instructor: Assad Dharsi

Duration: 4 sessions

Introduction: Does God have rights over His creation? To what extent does He grant others rights upon Himself? How best can we uphold His Right within our contemporary understanding of 'rights'?

Using a scriptural-analytical approach delving into the Qur'ānic tafsīr, Ḥadīth literature, and the theological underpinnings of 'rights' alongside a contextual approach to legal language, we will discuss how in the postmodern era of flawed 'fluidity' we can seek refuge in the firm 'stability' of the Haqq.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Respective Muslim Responses

Instructor: Salaam Al-Attar

Duration: 1 session

Introduction: While "human rights" is a widely used phrase, it is perhaps among the least understood by the masses, including proponents thereof. In this humble effort, we attempt to further understand human rights by way of evaluating the United Nations' Declaration of Human Rights in contrast with the Islamic Declaration of Human Rights, from the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

We intend to particularly address the following:

1. Origins and history of the development of the declarations.
2. Language type and implications thereof.
3. Can we have "human rights" without religion?
4. An international outlook on rights from an Islamic perspective.