

ISLAM AND HUMAN RIGHTS

SIS-519-008

Spring 2011

American University
School of International Service
Fall 2011
Thursdays: 2:10-4:50 PM
Room: Hurst 2

Professor Shadi Mokhtari
Office: 100 EQB (Old SIS Building)
Phone: (202) 885-6570
E-mail: mokhtari@american.edu
Office Hours: Mon. 2:00pm-4:30pm
& Tues. 1:00PM-4:30PM

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course examines the ways in which various invocations of Islam and notions of Human Rights converge in contemporary international affairs. In addition to an overview of the state of human rights in the Muslim world, the course examines the social and political dynamics which produce the view that Islam and human rights are at odds. The course also presents a sampling of Muslim perspectives on the international human rights framework and its applicability to the Muslim World. It concludes with several contemporary case studies.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- Gain a general understanding of prevailing human rights conditions in the Muslim world.
- Become familiar with the various human rights discourses employed by Islamists, state officials and human rights proponents in the Muslim world.
- Gain insight into the domestic and international politics of human rights in Muslim World contest.
- Examine contemporary case studies which bring out the various angles and consideration inherent in the “Islam and Human Rights” inquiry.
- Facilitate critical thinking on the subject-matter of the course.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

At the end of the course, students should be able to:

- Describe the key areas of human rights concerns stemming from particular interpretations and codifications of Islamic law.
- Identify diverse Muslim positions and associated theological worldviews on the question of the compatibility of Islam and human rights.
- Analyze the political and social roots of human rights contests and discourses in the Muslim world.
- Discuss the status of human rights in the Muslim world a more contextualized and critical perspective than is readily available in mainstream media and Western political discourse.
- Assess the promise and potential trappings of various advocacy strategies used (or proposed) to promote human rights in the Muslim world.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY CODE:

Standards of academic conduct are set forth in the University's Academic Integrity Code. By registering, you have acknowledged your awareness of the Academic Integrity Code, and you are obliged to become familiar with your rights and responsibilities as defined by the Code. Violations of the Academic Integrity Code will not be treated lightly, and disciplinary actions will be taken should such violations occur. Please see me if you have any questions about the academic violations described in the Code in general or as they relate to particular requirements for this course.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS FOR INTERRUPTION OF CLASSES:

In the event of an emergency, American University will implement a plan for meeting the needs of all members of the university community. Should the university be required to close for a period of time, we are committed to ensuring that all aspects of our educational programs will be delivered to our students. These may include altering and extending the duration of the traditional term schedule to complete essential instruction in the traditional format and/or use of distance instructional methods. Specific strategies will vary from class to class, depending on the format of the course and the timing of the emergency. Faculty will communicate class-specific information to students via AU e-mail and Blackboard, while students must inform their faculty immediately of any absence. Students are responsible for checking their AU e-mail regularly and keeping themselves informed of emergencies. In the event of an emergency, students should refer to the AU Student Portal, the AU Web site (www.prepared.american.edu) and the AU information line at (202) 885-1100 for general university-wide information, as well as contact their faculty and/or respective dean's office for course and school/ college-specific information.

EARLY WARNING NOTICES:

Undergraduate students may receive Early Warning Notices within the first month of classes. These notices are designed for you to contact your faculty, receive assistance, and develop strategies to improve your performance in the class. Please note that you should seek help throughout the semester when you have questions, fail to submit an assignment, fail to attend class, or receive an unsatisfactory grade.

COURSE POLICIES:

1. There are no laptops allowed in class, unless a student has a documented special need to use one. Bring pen and paper to take hand-written notes. Powerpoints will be available on blackboard.
2. Students are expected to attend class regularly. There is no attendance taken, but a pattern of absences is noted and dealt with as needed. If you miss a class, you are responsible for getting notes from other students.
3. Extensions are granted only in cases of documented illness or special need. Late papers are docked one letter grade for every day they are late.

GRADE RANGE:

“A” : Excellent, Surpasses Expectations

“B” : Good, Meets Expectations

“C” : Meets Most, but not all Expectations

“D” : Poor Performance

“F” : Failed to Meet Any Minimum Expectations

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

The grade for this course will be comprised of the following:

<u>Category</u>	<u>Points</u>
Class Participation	20%
Case Study Reports and Presentation	20%

Midterm	20%
Final Paper	40%

Total	100%

Class Participation

Students will be evaluated on their class participation, namely the extent to which they engage with the topics taken up in this course and the extent to which their engagement is informed by the assigned readings. Active participation on blackboard discussion forums and blogs will also be considered in determining students' class participation grades.

Midterm

There will be a closed-book essay midterm exam.

Case Study Reports and Presentation

Students are required to choose a particular Muslim world country and submit four two-page reports on the following topics.

1. Human rights conditions.
2. The state's response to the international human rights framework.
3. Islamist party/ movement discourses on human rights.
4. Domestic and International human rights advocacy initiatives and strategies.

Each report will be due on the date the class is taking up that topic (indicated in the schedule below). Each student will have a country blog on the course's blackboard page and post his or her report on that blog prior to the class in which that particular report is due. On February 24, 2011 when the last report is due, student are required to bring a hard copy print-out compiling all four reports to submit to the instructor in class.

Student will sign up to present the findings of one of their reports to the class in a 10 to 15 minute presentation on one of the four dates the reports are due.

Final Paper

Students are to write a 10-12 page analytical paper on an approved topic. The paper topic is due by March 24, 2011 and an outline is due by April 14, 2011. A printed hard-copy of the final paper is due in my office on April 26, 2011. I will not accept e-mailed submissions.

COURSE SCHEDULE:

January 13Session 1 - Course Overview and Introductions**January 20**Session 2- The International Human Rights Project and its Critics

Univeralism v. Relativism

Individualism v. Collectivism

Orientalism and International Power Dynamics

Readings:

- For an orientation on the international human rights framework, read the Stanford Encyclopedia's entry on "Human Rights" at <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/rights-human/> Students will enter this class with different levels of familiarity with the human rights framework. You should read as much as you need to be up to speed on the basic framework, foundations, and institutions.
- Review the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention Against Torture (CAT). Read enough to familiarize yourselves with the key rights guarantees and spirit of these instruments. No need to get bogged down in details here.
- Excerpt from Makau Mutua, "Savages, Victims, and Saviors: The Metaphor of Human Rights" *Harvard International Law Journal* (2001) pp 201-209 are assigned, but this is a provocative and classic piece in the literature. I encourage anyone who has the time to read beyond p 209.
- Excerpt from Shadi Mokhtari, *After Abu Ghraib*, section on "International Human Rights and Power" pp. 7-17
- Excerpt from Abdulaziz Sachedina, *Islam and the Challenge of Human Rights*, pp 158-170.

January 27**Session 3- Applying the Human Rights Framework to the Muslim World**

Intro. to Islamic law

Intro. to human rights violations stemming from Islamic law

Readings:

- Mayer Chapters 1-9

Case Study Assignment #1- Describe human rights conditions in the country you have selected. Divide your description into rights violations traditionally associated with repressive regimes and rights violations in some way associated with Islamic principles or Islamic law.

February 3**Session 4- The response from the State**

Readings:

- Excerpt from Eva Brems, Human Rights: Universality and Diversity, “Islamic reservations to human rights conventions” pp. 267-280.
- Sonia Cardenas and Andrew Flibert, “National Human Rights Institutions in the Middle East,” Middle East Journal 59 (2005): 411-436.
- Excerpt from Shadi Mokhtari, After Abu Ghraib...pp. 175-180.
- Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam (appendix B in Mayer)

Case Study Assignment #2- How has the state responded to the international human rights framework? What human rights treaties has it ratified and what if any reservations has it entered with these ratifications? Has the state created any national human rights institutions or bodies? What is the official state position on human rights?

Here are a couple of links to get you started:

Reservations to CEDAW

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/reservations-country.htm>

List of National Human Rights Bodies:

<http://www.nhri.net/NationaldataListPrint.asp?MODE=1&ID=2>

February 10

Session 5 Spectrum of Muslim Voices/ Perspectives on Human Rights

- Irene Oh, “Maududi, Qutb and Soroush: History and Humanity” in *The Rights of God, Islam, Human Rights and Comparative Ethics* (Georgetown UP, 2007)
- Sophie Chamas, “Sayyid Muhammad Hussein Fadlallah: Muslim: Cleric and Islamic Feminist” *Journal of Alternative Perspectives in the Social Sciences* (2009)
- Chapter 3 on thought of Abdullahi An-Naim in *Human Rights: Southern Voices*, William Twining ed. (Cambridge UP, 2009).
- Margot Badran, “Islamic Feminism Revisited” *Countercurrents*, available at <http://www.countercurrents.org/gen-badran100206.htm>

February 17

Session 6 -Islamists and Human Rights

- Amr Hamzawy, Marina Ottoway and Nathan Brown, *Islamist Movements and the Democratic Process in the Arab World: Exploring the Gray Zones* (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2006) available at http://www.carnegieendowment.org/files/cp_67_grayzones_final.pdf
- Benjamin MacQueen, “The reluctant partnership between the Muslim Brotherhood and human rights NGOs in Egypt” in *Islam and Human Rights in Practice: Perspectives from Across the Ummah* (Rutledge, 2006).
- Shadi Mokhtari, Section on “Traversing the Religious and the Secular in Human Rights” in *After Abu Ghraib: Exploring Human Rights in America and the Middle East*. pp 183-198.
- Greg Feely, “Indonesian Islamist Perspectives on Human Rights” in *Islam and Human Rights in Practice: Perspectives from Across the Ummah* (Rutledge, 2006).

- Jenny B. White, “The Islamist Movement in Turkey and Human Rights” Human Rights Review (2001).

Case Study #3- Identify Islamist discourses on human rights in your country. Do Islamists use human rights discourses to challenge the ruling government? What is their position on Islamic law where there are human rights concerns? How (if at all) have Islamist positions/ discourses on human rights changed?

February 24

Session 7- How to approach the Islam and Human Rights Challenge

What is the best strategy for internal actors? What is the role of foreign actors?

Readings:

- Anthony Chase, “The Tail and the Dog: Constructing Islam and Human Rights in Political Context ” in Human Rights in the Arab World, Independent Voices (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).
- Naz K. Modirzadeh, “Taking Islamic Law Seriously: Islamic Law and the Battle for Muslim Hearts and Minds” Harvard Human Rights Review (2006) available at <http://www.law.harvard.edu/students/orgs/hrj/iss19/modirzadeh.shtml>
- BAOBOB for Women’s Human Rights, Please Stop the Amina Lawal Protest Letter Campaigne (2003) available at <http://www.wluml.org/node/1025>
- Andrew Alberson, “The Obama Administration’s Quiet Approach to Reform in the Arab World” Arab Reform Bulletin (Dec. 8, 2010) available at http://www.carnegieendowment.org/arb/?fa=show&article=42099&utm_source=Arab+Reform+Bulletin&utm_campaign=213c233373-ARB+Daily+%28English%29&utm_medium=email

Case Study #4: Describe human rights promotion initiatives and strategies in your country. Identify local and international human rights advocates or project. How do they approach human rights promotion? How effective are they?

March 3

Session 8 - Midterm Exam

March 10

Spring Break

March 17

Session 9- Iran: Women's Rights

Readings:

- Arzoo Osanloo, *The Politics of Women's Rights in Iran* (Princeton, 2000)

March 24

Session 10-Iran: Human Rights and Green Movement

Readings:

- Select Chapters in Nader Hashemi and Danny Postel, *The People Reloaded: The Green Movement and the Struggle for Iran's Future* (Melville House, 2011)

***Final Paper topic is due.

March 31

Session 11: Human Rights in Morocco

Readings:

- Veerle Opgenhaffen and Mark Freeman, "Transitional Justice in Morocco, A Progress Report" International Center for Transitional Justice (2005) available at <http://www.ictj.org/images/content/1/9/197.pdf>
- Luke Wilcox, "Secularists And Islamists In Morocco: Prospects For Building Trust And Civil Society Through Human Rights Reform," *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies* (2008).
- Katie Zoglan, "Morocco's Family Code: Improving Equality for Women" *Human Rights Quarterly* (2009).

April 7

Session 12- Human Rights in the post-9/11 Era

Readings:

- Shadi Mokhtari, After Abu Ghraib, Exploring Human Rights in America and the Middle East (Cambridge, 2009)

April 14

Session 13- Human Rights under Occupation: Islam and Human Rights in Iraq and Afghanistan

- Excerpts from Iraqi and Afghan Constitutions
- Compilation of Articles to be posted.

***An outline of your final paper is due.

April 21

Session 14- Course Wrap-up

April 26

***Final Papers Due

REQUIRED BOOKS:

Ann Elizabeth Mayer, Islam and Human Rights: Tradition and Politics Fourth Edition (Westview 2008).

Arzoo Osanloo, The Politics of Women's Rights in Iran (Princeton, 2000)

Nader Hashemi and Danny Postel, The People Reloaded: The Green Movement and the Struggle for Iran's Future (Melville House, 2011)

***Note this book will be out until late January or early Feb.

Shadi Mokhtari, After Abu Ghraib, Exploring Human Rights in America and the Middle East (Cambridge, 2011)

***Note the paperback will be published in Feb. Please order the paperback to reduce students' expense.