

COALITION FOR SEXUAL
AND BODILY RIGHTS
IN MUSLIM SOCIETIES

“Gender, Sexuality, Islam and Science”

Reading & Discussion course for Human Rights Advocates



“There is nothing wrong in this movement, for European culture, on its intellectual side, is only a further development of some of the most important phases of the culture of Islam. Our only fear is that the dazzling exterior of European culture may arrest our movement and we may fail to reach the true inwardness of that culture.”

(Mohammad Iqbal, *Mohammad Iqbal: Essays on Reconstruction*, 147)

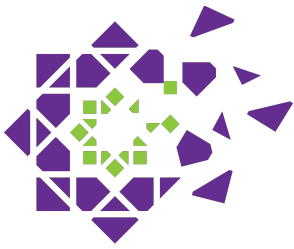
Course Description

Science and religion are often seen as conflicting forces in today’s world. Navigating your place in such a world is difficult as it is, but becomes even more so if your gender and/or sexuality are in conflict with cultural expectations. You want to believe in the modern scientific developments on gender and sexuality in particular, and about the universe in general, without having to forgo your relationship with the divine that you already have limited access to, given you are of the margins.

In light of the above, this course aims to further discourse & debate amongst participants, to explore how definitions of philosophical concepts in science and religion (from the authors we read on the subjects) not only possess a harmonious relationships with one another, but also make our understanding & acceptance of gender and sexual diversity more holistic & consistent. While the course has a deeper focus on Islam, we’ll also bring in perspectives from Christianity, and explore the cross-overs amongst different traditions.

Course Dates

The course runs for 10 consecutive weeks, and will take place on Saturdays, UTC 9:00 – 11:30 AM, from 10 October – 12 December 2020. Participants will need to complete the required readings in their own time in advance of the weekly group sessions.



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Course Objectives

1. To provide queer community and allies, with a hermeneutics/method-of-interpretation of religion (particularly Islam) on matters of gender and sexuality that is intellectually in line with modern developments.
2. To enable participants to engage in a constructive dialogue about gender, sexuality, Islam and science.
3. To create a supportive space for participants to further define and find their place in a universe full of conflicting ideas.

Prerequisites

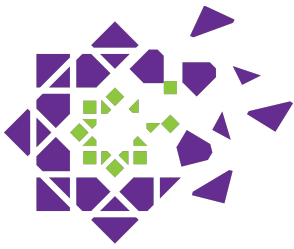
1. A high level of proficiency in English language is required.
2. A significant level of comfort with reading and comprehending academic texts is essential.
3. Commitment to the course readings is a must.

Target Audience

This course is especially aimed at a queer audience, however allies are welcomed to join in and create the space & dialogues together. While the course is open to all who meet the pre-requisites and can attend the entire course. Given limited spaces, we will prioritize engaging activists, advocates and academics living and working across CSBR's focal regions.

About the Instructor

Aun Shahid received his masters degree in theology and religion from University of Exeter (UK) in 2015. Since his return to Pakistan, he has offered several courses in some of the renowned educational institutes in his country such as National College of Arts and Beaconhouse National University. Apart from theology, he holds special interest for the fields of philosophy of science, and gender and feminism. He is an independent researcher and activist as well who has recently co-founded a group called “Praxis of Queer Social Ideas in Society” (PRAQSI) that is currently working towards the economic and political empowerment of transgender men.



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Course Outline & Readings

Session 1:

- Mohammad Iqbal: “The Conception of God and the Meaning of Prayer”, in *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, Edited by M. Saeed Sheikh. Lahore: Kazi Javed, 2009.
- Charles Peirce: “How to Make Our Ideas Clear”.

Session 2:

- Charles Peirce: “Notes on Scientific Philosophy”, in *The Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce Vol. 1: Principles of Philosophy*, Edited by Charles Hartshorne & Paul Weiss. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1931.
- Surah Al-Najam

Session 3:

- Rachel Mann: “A New Song,” “Into the Desert of Real,” and “Getting Naked with God”, in *Dazzling Darkness: Gender, Sexuality, Illness, and God*. Glasgow: Wild Goose Publications, 2012.

Session 4:

- Basit Koshul: “The Quranic Self, the Biblical Other and the Contemporary Islam-West Encounter”, in *Scripture, Reason, and the Contemporary Islam-West Encounter*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.

Session 5:

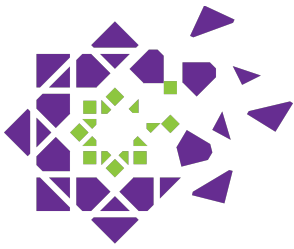
- Afsaneh Najmabadi: “Early Qajar” and “Nineteenth Century Transformations”, in *Women With Mushtaches and Men Without Beards: Gender and Sexual Anxieties of Iranian Modernity*. California: University of California Press, 2005.

Session 6:

- Michel Foucault: “The Repressive Hypothesis” and “Scientia Sexualis”, in *The Will to Knowledge*. Vol. 1. of *The History of Sexuality*, Translated by Robert Hurley. London: Penguin Books, 1976.

Session 7:

- Bertrand Russell: “A Free Man’s Worship”, in *Mysticism, Logic and Other Essays*. London: The Floating Press, 1917.
- Victor E. Frankl: *Man’s Search for Meaning*. New York: Pocket Books, 1985.



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Session 8:

- Christopher McClure et al.: “Reconstructing Islam in a Post-metaphysical Age: Mohammad Iqbal’s Interpretation of Immortality”, in *Mohammad Iqbal: Essays on Reconstruction of Modern Muslim Thought*, Edited by Basit Koshul and H. C. Hillier. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015.

Note The course runs for 10 weeks, and will include an opening session, mid-term evaluations and closing feedback sessions. These eight session readings will also be spread out over the 10 weeks, depending on the pace of discussion and the groups’ direction.

Reading Strategy

For this course you will need to practice active reading. Keep asking yourself, “What is the point of all this? What am I supposed to be getting out of it?”. Then organize your reading around answering those questions. Understand important or summary points in the text by highlighting, underlining, or writing on the margins of the text. Often it helps to scan material quickly to get a sense of what the point is before really getting into it. Often it helps to look back over the whole text after reading it, to fix the main points in your understanding.

Sample Reading

Here is a sample reading to gage your level:

<https://www3.nd.edu/~afreddos/courses/264/fmw.htm>

Participants are not supposed to understand each and every word of the above reading. If you are able to go through it and feel confident in your understanding of 50-60% of what’s in there, you’ll feel well equipped to take this course.

Questions? Email: coordinator@csbeonline.org