

CRITICAL ISLAMIC REFLECTIONS 2008, YALE UNIVERSITY

ISLAMIC THOUGHT AND MODERN SCIENCE: RE-CONCEPTUALIZING THE DEBATE

CALL FOR PAPERS

We invite abstracts for presentation at the seventh annual
Critical Islamic Reflections Conference
At Yale University on Saturday 12 April 2008

DEADLINE FOR ABSTRACT SUBMISSION: 12 JANUARY 2008

While the “clash of civilizations” has become a fashionable topic in recent times, there remains an older clash that is slowly gaining traction once again: that between science and religion. While real conflict between the two is debatable, the subject has been hotly contested within the popular and academic discourse of most religious traditions.

Thanks to the lived realities of Islamic history, which attest to the coexistence of scientific and religious thought, there is a perception that Islam and science are completely compatible. However, this perception does not take into consideration the rapid advancement of science today. Can Islamic religious thought coexist with modern reconstructions of science and technology?

This year’s CIR hopes to reinvigorate this discussion and bring Islam to the forefront of a growing area within American academic and political discourse where Islamic thought is largely absent. We welcome papers that speak to any of the following:

I. Scientific Discourse in Modern Islamic Thought

We are looking for creative theories on how to reconcile modern scientific thought with Islamic thought, case studies that apply a specific theory or theories toward such a reconciliation, as well as papers that show how others have integrated Islamic thought with science. We suggest the following as possible questions to examine: How has modern scientific thought forced Muslims to re-examine their beliefs and texts? For example, how does one read the story of humanity’s creation in light of modern evolutionary theory? How is Islam coming to grips with modern scientific thought? Does reading the Qur’an in light of modern science give more epistemological weight to positivism than to revelation? Is the Quran a scientific text? How should those ḥadīth that conflict with modern science be understood? Can we reconcile modern day psychology

and psychiatry with traditional Islamic conceptions of the soul and normative behavior?

II. Science and Religion: The Expanding Realm of Bioethics

Science and religion are not discrete realms; they intersect whenever there are moral implications to consider, whether one is at the recycling bin, in the voting booth, or in the clinic. This panel welcomes papers that take up specific bioethical issues (the boundaries of life and death, organ donation, stem cell research, public health, etc.) as well as papers that address more general questions. Bioethical discussions are often framed in terms of the legal categories of fiqh. Should bioethical issues be understood through these categories or can they be understood through other disciplines, e.g. Sufi psychology, Islamic philosophy, and theology? To what extent does the legal flavor of bioethical discussions characterize and distinguish Muslim debates of these issues in contrast to parallel discussions in Christian or post-Christian circles in the West.

III. Influence of Modern Science on Islamic Law

This panel welcomes papers discussing the influence of modern scientific discoveries and advancements on Islamic practice. For example, how do modern scientific discoveries influence Islamic legal rulings on issues like moon sighting, early marriage, fasting, the legality of specific foodstuffs, artificial insemination, and surrogate motherhood? Where does contemporary Islamic legal thought stand on global warming and other important environmental and ethical issues?

Guidelines for Submission:

Please submit abstracts of no more than 500 words that address any aspect of this theme by January 12, 2008. Successful candidates will be informed of their selection by February 5 2008. Submissions of abstracts and papers will only be accepted electronically. Please submit your abstract, a recent resume/CV and short biographical sketch as MS Word or PDF attachments to yaleCIR@gmail.com. Further inquiries may also be made at the same email address. Additional details about the program and past conferences are available at www.yale.edu/cir.