



Society for the Study of Muslim Ethics
S·S·M·E

2022 Annual Meeting Program (Virtual)

Wednesday January 5

Pre-Conference Panels

5:00-6:30PM EST

Narrativity and Muslim Ethics

In this panel, AbdoulKarim surveys Muslim non-profit organizations and charities public responses to the murder of George Floyd to analyze the narrative form of Blackness and anti-Blackness in Muslim religious thought. By adopting a narrative analysis of responses, she aims to sketch the forms of Blackness grounding Muslim ethical discourses in the public sphere, with attention to how organizational responses script religious obligations according to human difference. Meybodi in turn explores the ways in which concepts such as salvation history, eschatology, and the apocalypse are reflected in the Qur'an, propounding the linearity and ultimate destruction of time, or the arrival of a messianic figure or age that marks a new stage of existence, and the piercing imminence of ultimate Divine Judgement. Exploring the interplay of these elements is crucial for understanding and developing an Islamic theological ethics.

Panelists: Iman AbdoulKarim, Yale University

Zahra Moeini Meybodi, University of Chicago

Convener: Martin Nguyen, Fairfield University

7:00-8:30PM EST

Book discussion panel on Ayesha Chaudhry's *The Colour of God*

Panelists: Naveena Naqvi, University of British Columbia

Shaista Patel, UC San Diego

Tazeen Ali, Washington University in St. Louis

Shehnaz Haqqani, Mercer University

Respondent: Ayesha Chaudhry, University of British Columbia

Convener: Betsy Mesard, Bryn Mawr University

Thursday January 6

4:15-5:30PM EST

Exploring History in Muslim Ethics (Concurrent session #1)

In this panel, Ibrahim interrogates Wael Hallaq's claim that the thought of Muslim reformer Rashid Rida (d. 1935) is Utilitarianist with little to no basis in Islamic legal and ethical values, arguing instead that Rida's thought was firmly grounded in Islamic norms. Hafez in turn investigates the historical development of deontological morality as a basis of reform and social intervention in the late Ottoman Empire, focusing on a cohort of Muslim-identifying, Turkish-writing Ottoman moralists who popularized a duty-centered morality along the lines of modern citizenship. And Butool examines the methodological challenges posed by historical textual approaches to Muslim ethics by exploring the problems she faced when excavating ideas about war and conquest from eighth-century Islamic texts.

Panelists: Syeda Beena Butool, Florida State University

Yasir S. Ibrahim, Montclair State University

Melis Hafez, Virginia Commonwealth University

Convener: Cyrus Zargar, University of Central Florida

Friday January 7

10:00-11:30AM EST

Aesthetics and Cinema in Muslim Ethics

In this panel, Qamar argues that Islamic aesthetics is the ideal of Muslim ethics, and as such, seeks to develop a new philosophy of Muslim ethics grounded in *ihsan*, the highest manifestation of aesthetics and ethics. The remaining two presentations address the ethical challenges and opportunities posed by the medium of film within Islamic contexts. Zargar draws on medieval Muslim thinkers Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (d. 505/1111) and Ibn Arabi (d. 638/1240) to critically interrogate prominent Iranian filmmaker Majid Majidi and the possibility of images to convey metaphysical meaning and reality, while Szanto offers an analysis of the ways Kurdish political and social life have shaped filmmaking, especially in the face of suffering.

Panelists: Khadijah Qamar, independent scholar

Cyrus Zargar, University of Central Florida

Edith Szanto, University of Alabama

Convener: Sam Houston, Stetson University

1:15-2:30PM EST

New Approaches in the Study of Muslim Ethics (Concurrent session #4)

The present panel seeks to push forward disciplinary conversations about the nature and scope of Muslim ethics through a set of papers that reflect a series of innovative takes on the field. Houston tackles the important turn towards the "ethics of the everyday" in Muslim and comparative religious ethics by examining the discourses and practices of the South African Muslim anti-apartheid grassroots activist group Call of Islam that were crucial in building

democratic coalitions across religion, race, and class. Von Doetinchem de Rande takes a broad view of the field as a whole by demonstrating the persistent impact of the thought of George Hourani on the study of Islamic ethics and calling for greater critical awareness of the way in which the assumptions of the founders of the field continue to shape our contemporary discussions.

Panelists: Sam Houston, Stetson University
Raissa A. von Doetinchem de Rande, Rhodes College
Convener: Omar Farahat, McGill University

4:15-5:30PM EST

Gender, Justice, and Muslim Ethics (Concurrent session #6)

In this panel, Ayubi explores the gendered and hierarchical nature of prescribed distribution of money and notions of monetized justice in classical Islamic philosophical ethics (*akhlaq*) and gendered monetary rules from Islamic law, arguing that these traditions monetize justice in a way that renders women as fungible ethico-legal subjects, which contradicts notions of justice within the Islamic ethics tradition itself and raises philosophical questions of how the Islamic tradition connects Divine justice to human justice. Responding to the paucity of female voices on theological and philosophical understandings of justice, Mahjabeen draws upon the seventh-century Sermon of Fatima which was delivered by Fatima, daughter of Muhammad (p), in protest of the confiscation of her lands by the caliph, and places it in conversation with John Rawls' concept of a "well-ordered society" to explore Fatima's definition of justice and its continued relevance for us today.

Panelists: Zahra Ayubi, Dartmouth College
Mahjabeen Dhala, Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley
Convener: Shannon Dunn, Gonzaga University

SSME Business Meeting

5:45-6:45PM EST

Saturday January 8

1:15-2:30PM EST

Comparison and Agency in Muslim Ethics (Concurrent session #8)

In this panel, Hussain explores Sayyid Ahmad Khan's and Reinhold Niebuhr's common identification of freedom not with lack of restraint but with a ceaseless negotiation of the relationship between morality and history in the regime of human finitude, advocating for the continued relevance of this insight in our current age of technological crisis. Eksici explores the intersections of human capacity, agency, legal responsibility, and moral ontology with a specific focus on a post-classical ethical debate of Islamic legal theory—*al-Muqaddimat al-Arba'a* (The Four Premises)—and the approach proposed by Sadr al-Shari'a (d. 747/1346) and al-Taftadhani (d. 792/1390). Finally, Heidelberger argues that Abu Hamid al-Ghazali's (d. 505/1111) attention to practice in his *Ihya' 'ulum al-din* (*Revival of the Religious Sciences*), involving both intellectual formation and states of character, strengthens possibilities to explore contemporary questions

about belief in the one God as they are posed in comparative theology and ethics among Muslims, Jews, and Christians.

Panelists: Khurram Hussain, Lehigh University
Abdulmecid Yasir Eksici, University of California, Santa Barbara
Kathryn Heidelberger, Boston University
Convener: Betsy Mesard, Bryn Mawr University

2:45-4:00PM EST

The Environment and the Nonhuman Other in Muslim Ethics (Concurrent session #9)

In this panel, Tlili evaluates the potential impact of three modern approaches to hadith which include the Qur'an-only movement, Modernist Salafism, and Traditionalist Salafism, and shows why they are less beneficial to nonhuman creatures than the premodern Late Sunni Tradition. Inspired by Tlili's research, Ozgur Alhassen assesses whether one can come to an egalitarian, rather than an anthropocentric, worldview from the Qur'an, answering in the affirmative by looking to the ideas of tawhid, pre-creation, creation, faith and human flaws in the Qur'an. Finally, drawing on fourteen months of ethnographic fieldwork in Lamongan, East Java, Indonesia, Amri argues that Islamic and secular-neoliberal ethics have inspired Muslims to manage natural resources sustainably by utilizing Islamic norms and market economic principles to cultivate an Islamic environmentalism that recognizes the economic benefits of doing sustainable natural resource management.

Panelists: Sarra Tlili, University of Florida
Leyla Ozgur Alhassen, independent scholar
Ulil Amri, Gonzaga University
Convener: Syeda Beena Butool, Florida State University

4:15-5:30PM EST

Trauma and the Ethics of Research: A Reflection and Conversation (Concurrent session #10)

In this panel, Hammer reflects both on her experiences conducting ethnographic research for her 2019 study *Peaceful Families: American Muslim Efforts Against Domestic Violence* (Princeton University Press) as well as on the reception of this study in order to assess the promises and pitfalls of researching traumatized populations. Ample time will be set aside for a wider discussion amongst those present about the ethical responsibilities of researchers who work with communities and populations who have experienced trauma in any one of its many forms.

Panelist: Juliane Hammer, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill
Convener: Shannon Dunn, Gonzaga University

Sunday January 9

1:15-2:30PM EST

Muslim Bioethics (Concurrent session #11)

In this panel, Padela seeks to address a range of moral quandaries and policy issues surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic by presenting an Islamic bioethical framework which bridges epistemic theories of biomedicine and the Islamic legal tradition, all for the purposes of answering the following inter-related questions: For Muslim patients/families, when is it permissible to forgo mechanical ventilation? For Muslim clinicians, what circumstances justify the withholding or withdrawing of mechanical ventilation from patients? And for policymakers, is there an Islamically-justifiable rubric for allocating mechanical ventilation to patients in times of scarcity? Hashmi in turn argues that the enterprise of Islamic bioethics as it stands today lacks conceptual clarity which results in some very problematic assumptions made by Muslim and non-Muslim authors alike, and as such, he proposes using the principles of religious literacy (as endorsed by the American Academy of Religion) to bring much needed conceptual clarity to the field, to understand Islamic bioethics as a contested space of academic theology, and to promote a more inclusive discourse.

Panelists: Aasim Padela, Medical College of Wisconsin
Javad T. Hashmi, Harvard University

Convener: Mairaj Syed, University of California, Davis