

Nancy Khalil (Oct 6)

Title: The Profession: Leader, Ruler, Cleric, Guide, Authority, Preacher, Minister, Mufti, Pir, Murshid, Amir, Shaykh, Da'ee; Imam

Abstract: Our terminology for Muslim religious leadership is quite ambiguous across time and space, and we have a range of words such as imam, 'alim, shaykh, mawla, and mufti, da'ee that are often conflated. The skill set, and consequently societal contribution, was historically based on individual talents and not on institutionally, or state, defined professions and job responsibilities. Why did the profession of the imam evolve into a distinctive position, one that includes leading five daily prayers, but also giving occasional mentoring and advising to community members? How did the position become practical and applied? Why did it shift away from being a natural service available in mosques to a position that entailed marrying and divorcing congregants, advising and counseling, youth work, representing and political relationship building among many other things? This chapter explores some of the history of the imam in current Muslim imagination along with more contemporary expressions of the expectation of an imam working in a U.S. mosque today.

Dr. Khaled Fahmy (Oct 20)

Title: *Siyāsa, fiqh* and shari'a in 19th-century Egyptian law

Abstract: Within classical Islamic political discourse, *siyasa* refers to the discretionary authority of the ruler and his officials, one which is exercised outside the framework of *shari'a*. Scholars of Islamic law, both in the West and in the Islamic world, have tended to agree with Muslim jurists, the *fuqahā'*, that this discretionary authority co-existed in a tense manner with the authority of the *fuqahā'* and with the role and function of the *qāḍī*, the *sharī'a* court judge. As such, scholars of Islamic law, in the rare instances in which they addressed *siyasa*, dismissed it as "secular". By contrast, this paper, which is based on research conducted in the Egyptian National Archives, argues that *siyasa* has always been integral to *shari'a*. Specifically, the paper deals with the history of the Egyptian legal system in the nineteenth century and relies primarily on a complete and extant archive of "*siyasa* councils". By concentrating on how these councils adjudicated criminal cases, the paper argues that the legal system in nineteenth-century Egypt cannot be described as "secular", nor should the process of legal reform that Egypt witnessed be described as "secularization". Rather, the paper argues that by coupling *siyāsa* with *fiqh*, the 19th-century Egyptian legal system is best seen as belonging to a long lineage within Islamic legal practice, one which the Ottomans, in particular, had elaborated on, and one which Mehmed Ali (r. 1805-1848) and his successors perfected and took to unprecedented levels of sophistication. Indeed, the paper argues that what Egypt witnessed in the 19th century is probably the most elaborate implementation of *siyasa* in Islamic legal history.

Lulie El-Ashry (Nov 3)

Title: Mediterranean Crossings: Tracing the path of a Sufi ṭarīqa from Algeria to Italy

A presentation of a prospectus for the Committee on the Study of Religion. A historical and ethnographic investigation of a European Sufi tariqa.

Kathryn Schwarz (Nov 17)

Title: "A Private Printer's Plea: Mūsā Kāstalī versus Shaykh Ḥasan al-ʿIdwī in the Court of Public Opinion, Cairo, 1871"

Abstract: On 17 January, 1871, a most unusual printing was completed at the Kāstalīya Press in Cairo. Mūsā Kāstalī, the Italian born owner and founder of the press, almost certainly had a hand in this affair. For the document was an eighty-four page defense of Mūsā's claims against the Azharite Shaykh Ḥasan al-ʿIdwī, who, Mūsā argued, had initiated the dispute when he refused to pay for the books that he commissioned off of Mūsā's press. The matter had twice been brought to court and decided in Shaykh Ḥasan's favor. With little chance for judicial recourse, Mūsā's case was now presented to the court of public opinion through the vehicle of print. This paper explores the important social developments in nineteenth century Cairo that are encapsulated in this printing. I do so by inserting the text into its local political economy for writing, and assessing the text's intellectual content from this practical vantage. But I also mine the content of the treatise on its own merit for important details on Cairo's evolving legal practices and the function of its burgeoning private printing industry, developing as it was from the local manuscript trade. Together, these insights point towards Cairenes' distinctive engagement with, and cultivation of, civil society via the printed word.

Guillaume Wadia (Dec 1)

Title: The middlemen of empire: the french army and North African nationalism, 1934-1937

Abstract: This paper examines the relationship between French military intelligence officers and their contracting agents in negotiating the terms of empire with North African nationalists and immigrants in Paris during the 1930s. While many early nationalist demands publicly focused on outright divorce from empire, privately, nationalists were also keen on creating a new *modus vivendi* that incorporated them into French imperial administration. They used the threat of disorder as leverage in their bargaining, and forced French imperial officials to at least acknowledge the claims of their charges leading to what I can an "imperial spring" between 1934-1937.