

## CRITICAL ISLAMIC REFLECTIONS 2006

### Contemporary Muslim Discourses on America: Perceptions of Self and Other

# Call for Papers

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We invite abstracts for papers to be presented at the  
Critical Islamic Reflections Conference  
Saturday, April 15, 2006 at Yale University

Deadline for Abstract Submission: February 15, 2006

Reference to America is a salient preoccupation of Muslim public discourse all across the world. The aim of this year's CIR conference, conceived as the inverse of last year's, is to investigate the ways in which Muslims portray America and Americans. We are seeking papers which go beyond merely documenting such discourses or pronouncing judgments on them. Papers should instead examine the context of these representations, assess their origins and mechanisms, and identify the sociopolitical or ideological functions they embody.

The conference is organized around two substantive themes. The examples provided below are not intended to be limiting, but rather illustrative of the general aims of the conference. CIR invites papers that speak to any of the following:

#### I) Emulation or Opposition: The View From Without

Muslim scholars, intellectuals, politicians, and militants have cultivated a multifaceted critique of the American influence on and presence in the Muslim world. For many, America symbolizes opportunity and progress, a nation to emulate or even immigrate to. For others, it is the embodiment of a civilization at odds with Islamic values, intruding culturally, economically, and militarily into the Muslim world. At times, America also becomes a proxy for more general queries about Islam and modernity. Some views are limited to academic circles or privileged elites, while others gain wider acceptance amongst popular audiences; and yet others are shared across all strata of Muslim societies.

We are looking for commentary on the ways in which academic, religious, and popular portrayals of America have been constructed and how these images relate to Muslim identity. What kinds of interests do they serve? How have such widely varying perceptions emerged, and what are their impacts on current affairs? What personalities advocate particular representations of America, and from which segments of society do they draw support? Papers in this category may approach the topic either through an analysis of individuals such as Shirin Ebadi, Mahathir Mohammad, Yusuf al-Qaradawi, or Osama bin Laden, or through institutions such as the al-Azhar University or al-Jazeera Television.

## II) Insider Insights: The View From Within

The location of discourse unquestionably influences perceptions of self and other, hence the need for particular attention to representations of America originating from those who see themselves as “American Muslims”, broadly defined. The sizeable population of Muslims in the United States is comprised of both indigenous and immigrant communities, representing diverse cultures and a variety of domestic and international interests.

What are the competing discourses on America, critical or sympathetic, amongst the various Muslim voices within the United States? Is it possible to identify distinct currents of thought – such as liberal assimilation, respectful idealization, traditional reassertion or even defiant polemicism – with specific segments, subcultures, or generations within the American Muslim population? Where do the fault lines lie, and why and how do they arise? Are there points of convergence where the multiple voices remain unanimous? Again, papers may choose to focus on individuals such as Malcolm X, Hamza Yusuf, Khaled Abou El-Fadl, or Amina Wadud, or groups such as the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) or the Progressive Muslim Union (PMU).

### GUIDELINES FOR SUBMISSION

Please submit abstracts of 500 words or less by February 15, 2006. Successful candidates will be informed of their selection by February 20, 2006. The conference will be held at Yale University on April 15, 2006.

Submissions of abstracts and papers will only be accepted electronically. Please direct them as MS Word attachments to: [yaleCIR@gmail.com](mailto:yaleCIR@gmail.com). Further inquiries may also be made at this email address.

Please forward this call for papers to anyone interested in contributing a paper or attending the conference. More information on the annual Critical Islamic Reflections Conference at Yale University is available online at <http://www.yale.edu/cir>, which also provides links to previous conference websites.