

CRITICAL ISLAMIC REFLECTIONS 2007

HERMENEUTICS AND THE FUTURE OF ISLAM IN AMERICA

Organized by:
The CIR Committee in conjunction with *The Muslim Student Association*
Yale University

CALL FOR PAPERS

We invite abstracts for presentation at the 6th annual
Critical Islamic Reflections Conference at Yale University on
Saturday 14 April 2007

DEADLINE FOR ABSTRACT SUBMISSION: 15 JANUARY 2007

One of the most pressing questions facing Muslims today is the interpretive direction that Muslim communities and societies choose to adopt in the 21st century. The future is often presented as a struggle between competing hermeneutical approaches to foundational texts and praxis labeled 'traditional,' 'Salafī,' 'progressive,' 'Şufī,' 'indigenous,' and so on. Debate over the merits of each approach takes place in public forums, from the popular press and academic publications to blogs and list-serves and carries on in cafés, mosques, classrooms, and living-rooms.

This year's CIR conference invites papers that carefully examine the terminology, assumptions and methodologies that underlie the prevailing or emerging approaches to Islam in America. We welcome papers that speak to any of the following:

I. The Terminology

What are the origins and semantic fields of terms like 'traditional,' 'Salafī,' 'progressive,' 'Şufī,' 'indigenous,' and so on? (We mention only a few designations to serve as examples, but all such terms are open to examination.) What connotations do they carry? Who are the key players, institutions, and movements that define these terms, and do they represent disparate segments of society with competing interests? Are there consequences for the American-Muslim community if any one of these approaches takes a front seat in the public arena?

II. The Methodology

Do these approaches privilege the same foundational textual sources and spiritual and intellectual figures? Is each approach accompanied by a different set of core assumptions? What is the difference in their interpretive methodologies? How do these approaches differ with regard to their respective emphases on religious law, theology, and ethics?

III. Case Study: Pluralism

By employing any one methodology, papers in this panel should demonstrate the hermeneutic at play as applied to the issue of pluralism. As opposed to other panels that are expected to be descriptive, this panel encourages papers that argue from within a particular methodological framework, adopting the perspective of an 'insider.'

IV. Rapprochement

Are the different approaches mutually exclusive or do they share common ground? If they are mutually exclusive, where do the fault lines lie? Is there an intellectual *bar-zakh*, or a threshold space, that could serve to bridge or transcend the perceived divides? Can we locate figures in Muslim intellectual history whose methods could be viewed as paradigms for reconciliation?

Guidelines for Submission:

Please submit abstracts of no more than 500 words that address any aspect of this theme by 15 January 2007. Successful candidates will be informed of their selection by 1 February 2007. 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.