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Online course places Islamic law in its many contexts

A new online course is the first to explore in depth how social contexts and changing interpretations of the faith influence Islamic law.

The course will shed light on how local contexts shape understandings of the Sharia – a range of Muslim values and principles – and Islamic law in different regions and historical periods.

The free 5-week University of Edinburgh course will explore how varying interpretations of the Sharia – which literally means ‘path’ – impact the lives and laws of Muslims in different ways.

The course will feature contributions from world-leading academics, including the University of Edinburgh’s Professor of Islamic and Interreligious Studies, Mona Siddiqui, and Georgetown University’s Associate Professor of Islamic Civilization, Jonathan A.C. Brown.

Students will analyse texts that highlight different interpretations of the Sharia and Islamic law, such as modern fatwas – non-binding legal opinions from Muslim scholars – in countries including North America, Iran, and Indonesia.

Islamic law can inform many aspects of Muslim life, such as individual worship, marital matters and, in some cases, state law.

The course will assess debates surrounding issues such as family law and penal codes, and how they have been addressed in varying ways both historically and today.

Participants will consider a range of case studies, including 16th century Mecca, the British Raj and Sharia Courts in Palestine and Israel. They will also learn about debates over Sharia councils in the UK, and consider varying definitions of the Sharia in modern constitutions.

A series of film nights will be held, where students can watch documentaries about the diverse roles Islamic law can play in Muslim life and discuss them online with fellow participants.

The course is organised by the University of Edinburgh’s Alwaleed Centre, which is committed to encouraging a better understanding of Islam and Islamic culture.

Course organiser Dr David Warren said: “This course aims to increase religious literacy and will give an informed understanding of historical and contemporary Islam. No prior knowledge is needed to take part. We will engage with sensitive and challenging issues in a way that is neither sensationalist nor apologetic.”

Ranked among the top universities in the world

The Sharia and Islamic Law: An Introduction free online course will run from 6 May – 9 June 2019 via the FutureLearn platform. Details of how to sign up can be found online: <https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/an-introduction-to-the-sharia-and-islamic-law>

For further information, please contact:

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