Islam and Global Politics

Convenor: Faiz Sheikh

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Why Political Islam?

Political Islam is an idea that means many things to many people. For some it is the enemy of the free world, replacing a defeated Communism before it. For others, it is an emancipatory idea which promises to redress the inequalities of capitalist modernity.

Join me on an exploration of the origins of an idea. See it develop in the shadow of imperialism, respond to the birth of new states, attempt to heal post-colonial wounds, and declare the USA as its enemy.
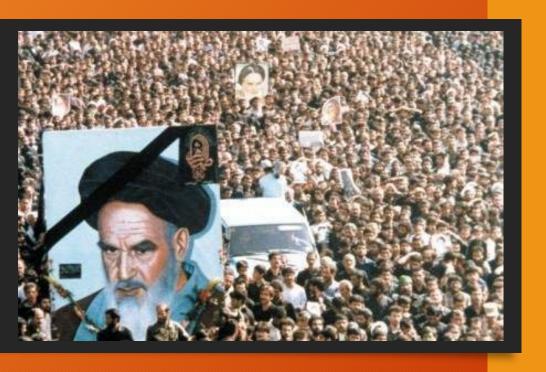
What does the module provide?

This module presents four key thinkers of political Islam from the 19th and 20th century. These thinkers represent the 'origins' (Al-Afghani), Arab-Sunni (Al-Banna), Pakistani-Sunni (Mawdudi) Sunni-Jihadist (Qutb), and Persian Shi'a (Khomeini) foundations of Islamic political thought. The thinking of these individuals, and the movements and ideas they have articulated, have had a lasting and profound impact on the political direction of Muslim majority countries after their experience and interaction with European colonialism.

The module will ask you to critically engage with not only theological and political arguments about the function of Islam in politics, but also the historical context and position of such thought as a search for post-colonial identity.

1. What is political Islam?
2. Contemporary manifestations: from violent rejection to peaceful elections
3. Islam and the state: End of Caliphate and beginnings of colonial rule
4. Al-Afghani: Reform or apology?
5. Al-Bana and the bottom-up state
6. Mawdudi and the top-down state
7. Qutb and jihad
8. Khomeini and the Islamic Republic
9. Post-Islamism and the future
10. Essay writing workshop

Module structure

Objective: By the end of this module you should have developed a detailed knowledge of the political thought of key Muslim thinkers. You should be able to critique the writing of these thinkers, and scholarship around them. You should be able to show an appreciation for the ambiguity of knowledge at the interface of Islam and politics. Finally, you should be able to develop your own arguments about the Islamic world's encounter with modernity.

Organisation: Weekly 3 hr student led workshops.

Assessment:

- 1 x 3000 word essay

- 1 x group presentation

- 1 x 1000 word reflective essay

About me

I have been researching political Islam for 14 years. Sitting in between theory and religion, between Islam and International Relations, can be disorienting. But it is also liberating to take new and different ideas and try to mesh them with the 'old'. Being British-Pakistani is another one of these in-between spaces which I guess trained me well for the topic!

My book, *Islam and International Relations*, won the 2017 CAIT book prize.

I enjoy painting miniatures, playing board games, and arguing over the cinematic merits of the prequal trilogy.