

AL AZHAR UNIVERSITY ISLAMIC STUDIES

AL AZHAR UNIVERSITY ISLAMIC STUDIES: A DEEP DIVE INTO METHODOLOGIES AND APPROACHES

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KEYWORDS: AL AZHAR UNIVERSITY ISLAMIC STUDIES, ISLAMIC THEOLOGY, ISLAMIC JURISPRUDENCE, AL-AZHAR UNIVERSITY, ISLAMIC SCHOLARSHIP, METHODOLOGY OF ISLAMIC STUDIES, TRADITIONAL ISLAMIC EDUCATION, MODERN ISLAMIC THOUGHT, AL AZHAR UNIVERSITY CURRICULUM, ISLAMIC STUDIES IN EGYPT, RELIGIOUS STUDIES.

ABSTRACT: THIS ARTICLE EXPLORES THE RICH TAPESTRY OF METHODOLOGIES AND APPROACHES EMPLOYED IN THE STUDY OF ISLAMIC STUDIES AT AL AZHAR UNIVERSITY, A RENOWNED INSTITUTION WITH A HISTORY SPANNING OVER A MILLENNIUM. FROM ITS TRADITIONAL RELIANCE ON USUL AL-FIQH (PRINCIPLES OF JURISPRUDENCE) AND TAFSIR (QURANIC EXEGESIS) TO ITS MODERN ENGAGEMENT WITH CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES, AL AZHAR UNIVERSITY ISLAMIC STUDIES OFFER A UNIQUE AND MULTIFACETED PERSPECTIVE ON ISLAMIC THOUGHT. WE WILL DELVE INTO THE KEY METHODS, EXAMINING BOTH THEIR HISTORICAL EVOLUTION AND THEIR CONTINUING RELEVANCE IN THE 21ST CENTURY.

THE HISTORICAL FOUNDATION OF AL AZHAR UNIVERSITY ISLAMIC STUDIES

AL AZHAR UNIVERSITY ISLAMIC STUDIES ARE DEEPLY ROOTED IN A RICH HISTORICAL TRADITION. FOUNDED IN 970 CE, AL AZHAR INITIALLY SERVED AS A MOSQUE AND A CENTER FOR RELIGIOUS LEARNING, GRADUALLY EVOLVING INTO THE PRESTIGIOUS UNIVERSITY IT IS TODAY. FOR CENTURIES, THE STUDY OF ISLAMIC LAW (FIQH), THEOLOGY (KALAM), QURANIC EXEGESIS (TAFSIR), AND HADITH (PROPHETIC TRADITIONS) FORMED THE CORE OF ITS CURRICULUM. THE METHODOLOGY FOLLOWED A PREDOMINANTLY TRADITIONAL APPROACH, HEAVILY RELIANT ON:

THE STUDY OF CLASSICAL TEXTS: STUDENTS ENGAGED EXTENSIVELY WITH THE WORKS OF PROMINENT SCHOLARS, MEMORIZING AND ANALYZING TEXTS FROM VARIOUS ISLAMIC SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT. THIS METHOD EMPHASIZED ROTE LEARNING AND MASTERY OF THE ORIGINAL ARABIC TEXTS.

THE MASHSHAikh SYSTEM: LEARNING WAS LARGELY BASED ON A MASTER-APPRENTICE RELATIONSHIP (MASHSHAikh), WHERE STUDENTS LEARNED DIRECTLY FROM ESTABLISHED SCHOLARS THROUGH LECTURES, DISCUSSIONS, AND PERSONAL GUIDANCE. THIS PERSONALIZED APPROACH FOSTERED A DEEP UNDERSTANDING OF THE NUANCES OF ISLAMIC THOUGHT.

EMPHASIS ON IJTIHAD (INDEPENDENT REASONING): WHILE RESPECTING ESTABLISHED PRINCIPLES AND INTERPRETATIONS, AL AZHAR FOSTERED CRITICAL THINKING AND ENCOURAGED STUDENTS TO ENGAGE IN IJTIHAD WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF ISLAMIC JURISPRUDENCE, ALBEIT CAUTIOUSLY AND WITHIN ESTABLISHED PARAMETERS. THIS ENSURED BOTH INTELLECTUAL RIGOR AND ADHERENCE TO RELIGIOUS NORMS.

THE EVOLUTION OF METHODOLOGIES IN AL AZHAR UNIVERSITY ISLAMIC STUDIES

THE 20TH AND 21ST CENTURIES WITNESSED SIGNIFICANT CHANGES IN AL AZHAR UNIVERSITY ISLAMIC STUDIES. THE RISE OF MODERNISM, COLONIALISM, AND GLOBALIZATION PROMPTED A REASSESSMENT OF TRADITIONAL METHODOLOGIES AND THE INCORPORATION OF NEW APPROACHES. THIS EVOLUTION INVOLVED:

INTEGRATION OF MODERN DISCIPLINES: AL AZHAR BEGAN INTEGRATING DISCIPLINES LIKE HISTORY, SOCIOLOGY, PHILOSOPHY, AND COMPARATIVE RELIGION INTO ITS CURRICULUM. THIS ALLOWED FOR A MORE NUANCED UNDERSTANDING OF ISLAMIC THOUGHT WITHIN ITS HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL CONTEXT.

ENGAGEMENT WITH CONTEMPORARY ISSUES: AL AZHAR'S SCHOLARS INCREASINGLY ADDRESSED CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES, APPLYING ISLAMIC PRINCIPLES TO ISSUES LIKE HUMAN RIGHTS, SOCIAL JUSTICE, AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS. THIS REQUIRES A DYNAMIC APPROACH TO INTERPRETATION, OFTEN ENGAGING WITH NEW CONTEXTS AND REALITIES.

EMPHASIS ON INTERFAITH DIALOGUE: AL AZHAR HAS ACTIVELY PROMOTED INTERFAITH DIALOGUE AND UNDERSTANDING, FOSTERING RESPECTFUL ENGAGEMENT WITH OTHER RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS. THIS NECESSITATES ADOPTING METHODOLOGIES THAT PRIORITIZE CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION AND CRITICAL COMPARISON.

DEVELOPMENT OF SPECIALIZED FIELDS: AL AZHAR HAS DEVELOPED SPECIALIZED FIELDS WITHIN ISLAMIC STUDIES, INCLUDING ISLAMIC ECONOMICS, ISLAMIC BANKING, AND ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHY, EACH DEMANDING ITS OWN UNIQUE METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH. THESE FIELDS NECESSITATE A MULTIDISCIPLINARY APPROACH, INTEGRATING ISLAMIC PRINCIPLES WITH MODERN ECONOMIC AND PHILOSOPHICAL THEORIES.

CONTEMPORARY APPROACHES IN AL AZHAR UNIVERSITY ISLAMIC STUDIES

TODAY, AL AZHAR UNIVERSITY ISLAMIC STUDIES ENCOMPASS A DIVERSE RANGE OF METHODOLOGIES. WHILE TRADITIONAL APPROACHES REMAIN CENTRAL, NEWER METHODS ARE INCREASINGLY INTEGRATED:

HISTORICAL-CRITICAL METHOD: THIS APPROACH EMPLOYS HISTORICAL AND TEXTUAL CRITICISM TO ANALYZE ISLAMIC SOURCES, EXAMINING THEIR HISTORICAL CONTEXT, AUTHORSHIP, AND TRANSMISSION. THIS ENSURES A MORE OBJECTIVE AND NUANCED UNDERSTANDING OF THE TEXTS.

COMPARATIVE RELIGIOUS STUDIES: THIS APPROACH COMPARES ISLAMIC THOUGHT AND PRACTICES WITH THOSE OF OTHER RELIGIONS, FOSTERING A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY AND COMMONALITIES. THIS REQUIRES SENSITIVITY, CRITICAL ANALYSIS, AND RESPECT FOR DIVERSE BELIEF SYSTEMS.

SOCIAL-SCIENTIFIC METHODS: AL AZHAR SCHOLARS INCREASINGLY EMPLOY SOCIAL-SCIENTIFIC METHODS, SUCH AS SURVEYS, INTERVIEWS, AND STATISTICAL ANALYSIS, TO STUDY ISLAMIC COMMUNITIES AND PRACTICES. THIS ENHANCES EMPIRICAL RESEARCH IN THE FIELD OF ISLAMIC STUDIES.

HERMENEUTICS: THE APPLICATION OF HERMENEUTICAL METHODS FOCUSES ON UNDERSTANDING THE INTERPRETATION AND MEANING OF RELIGIOUS TEXTS WITHIN SPECIFIC HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXTS. THIS PROMOTES A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF DIVERSE INTERPRETATIONS WITHIN ISLAMIC SCHOLARSHIP.

CONCLUSION

AL AZHAR UNIVERSITY ISLAMIC STUDIES REPRESENT A VIBRANT AND EVOLVING FIELD, INTEGRATING TRADITIONAL APPROACHES WITH MODERN METHODOLOGIES. ITS COMMITMENT TO BOTH PRESERVING ITS RICH HERITAGE AND ENGAGING WITH CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES ENSURES ITS CONTINUED RELEVANCE IN THE 21ST CENTURY. THE UNIVERSITY'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE GLOBAL UNDERSTANDING OF ISLAM, ITS EMPHASIS ON CRITICAL THINKING, AND ITS COMMITMENT TO FOSTERING INTERFAITH DIALOGUE MAKE IT A PIVOTAL INSTITUTION IN SHAPING THE FUTURE OF ISLAMIC THOUGHT.

FAQs

1. WHAT ARE THE MAIN SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT TAUGHT AT AL AZHAR UNIVERSITY? AL AZHAR TRADITIONALLY EMPHASIZES THE MALIKI SCHOOL OF JURISPRUDENCE, BUT ALSO TEACHES OTHER SCHOOLS LIKE SHAFI'I, HANAFI, AND HANBALI, ALLOWING FOR EXPOSURE TO DIVERSE INTERPRETATIONS WITHIN SUNNI ISLAM.
1. IS AL AZHAR UNIVERSITY OPEN TO WOMEN? YES, AL AZHAR UNIVERSITY HAS OPENED ITS DOORS TO WOMEN, THOUGH THEIR INVOLVEMENT HAS HISTORICALLY BEEN LESS PROMINENT THAN THAT OF MEN. OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN'S EDUCATION AND PARTICIPATION CONTINUE TO EXPAND.

1. WHAT LANGUAGES ARE USED IN TEACHING AT AL AZHAR UNIVERSITY? ARABIC IS THE PRIMARY LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION. HOWEVER, SOME PROGRAMS MAY OFFER COURSES IN OTHER LANGUAGES, PARTICULARLY ENGLISH, TO ACCOMMODATE INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS.
1. WHAT ARE THE ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS FOR AL AZHAR UNIVERSITY ISLAMIC STUDIES PROGRAMS? ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS VARY DEPENDING ON THE SPECIFIC PROGRAM AND LEVEL OF STUDY. GENERALLY, APPLICANTS NEED TO DEMONSTRATE STRONG ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AND A SUFFICIENT LEVEL OF ARABIC PROFICIENCY.
1. DOES AL AZHAR UNIVERSITY OFFER ONLINE COURSES IN ISLAMIC STUDIES? WHILE TRADITIONAL IN-PERSON LEARNING REMAINS CENTRAL, AL AZHAR IS EXPANDING ITS ONLINE OFFERINGS, PROVIDING MORE ACCESSIBILITY TO ITS COURSES.
1. HOW DOES AL AZHAR UNIVERSITY ADDRESS CRITICISMS REGARDING ITS APPROACH TO ISLAMIC STUDIES? AL AZHAR HAS ACKNOWLEDGED THE NEED FOR REFORM AND MODERNIZATION, ACTIVELY ENGAGING IN DIALOGUE AND RESPONDING TO CRITIQUES WHILE MAINTAINING ITS COMMITMENT TO TRADITIONAL VALUES.
1. WHAT ARE THE CAREER PROSPECTS AFTER GRADUATING WITH AN ISLAMIC STUDIES DEGREE FROM AL AZHAR? GRADUATES CAN PURSUE CAREERS IN ACADEMIA, RELIGIOUS LEADERSHIP, ISLAMIC FINANCE, JOURNALISM, AND VARIOUS OTHER FIELDS REQUIRING A DEEP UNDERSTANDING OF ISLAMIC THOUGHT.
1. HOW DOES AL AZHAR UNIVERSITY'S APPROACH TO ISLAMIC STUDIES DIFFER FROM OTHER UNIVERSITIES? AL AZHAR'S APPROACH IS DEEPLY ROOTED IN ITS HISTORICAL TRADITION AND FOCUS ON THE MALIKI SCHOOL OF THOUGHT, ALTHOUGH IT IS INCREASINGLY INCORPORATING MODERN METHODS AND PERSPECTIVES. OTHER UNIVERSITIES MIGHT APPROACH THE SUBJECT WITH LESS EMPHASIS ON A SPECIFIC SCHOOL AND MORE ON COMPARATIVE STUDIES.
1. IS AL AZHAR UNIVERSITY SOLELY FOCUSED ON SUNNI ISLAM? PRIMARILY, YES. WHILE AL AZHAR IS KNOWN FOR ITS COMMITMENT TO SUNNI ISLAMIC SCHOLARSHIP, IT ALSO ENGAGES WITH OTHER ISLAMIC TRADITIONS, ALBEIT TO A LESSER EXTENT.

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al azhar university islamic studies: Yusuf Al-Qaradawi, Islam and Modernity Samuel Helfont, 2009 This work analyzes how the conditions of modernity have shaped the contemporary views of the prominent Islamic thinker, Yusuf al-Qaradawi. At the outset, it lays the foundation for a discussion of modernity by reviewing the ideas of prominent philosophers, such as Kant, Hegel, as well as of contemporary social scientists, such as Habermas. Based on their understanding of modernity, this work shows how increased education, mass communication, and migration have changed the way Muslims perceive their religion. It also shows how al-Qaradawi's thinking reflects this. Al-Qaradawi is put into historical perspective through a review of modernity in the Islamic

world over the last 200 years. This is followed by an examination of his views on a number of pertinent issues, including science, massmedia, jihad, international relations, democracy, and feminism. The findings are based on hundreds of fatwas, sermons, and interviews in the Arab media, and on relevant secondary sources, both in English and Arabic. As of yet, no in-depth work of this length has been published on al-Qaradawi in English.

al azhar university islamic studies: Sufism in Ottoman Egypt Rachida Chih, 2019-04-17
This book analyses the development of Sufism in Ottoman Egypt, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Examining the cultural, socio-economic and political backdrop against which Sufism gained prominence, it looks at its influence in both the institutions for religious learning and popular piety. The study seeks to broaden the observed space of Sufism in Ottoman Egypt by placing it within its imperial and international context, highlighting on one hand the specificities of Egyptian Sufism, and on the other the links that it maintained with other spiritual traditions that influenced it. Studying Sufism as a global phenomenon, taking into account its religious, cultural, social and political dimensions, this book also focuses on the education of the increasing number of aspirants on the Sufi path, as well as on the social and political role of the Sufi masters in a period of constant and often violent political upheaval. It ultimately argues that, starting in medieval times, Egypt was simultaneously attracting foreign scholars inward and transmitting ideas outward, but these exchanges intensified during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as a result of the new imperial context in which the country and its people found themselves. Hence, this book demonstrates that the concept of 'neosufism' should be dispensed with and that the Ottoman period in no way constituted a time of decline for religious culture, or the beginning of a normative and fundamentalist Islam. Sufism in Ottoman Egypt provides a valuable contribution to the new historiographical approach to the period, challenging the prevailing teleology. As such, it will prove useful to students and scholars of Islam, Sufism and religious history, as well as Middle Eastern history more generally.

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modern Islamic discourse.

al azhar university islamic studies: *Reaching for the Crescent* Norshahril Saat, Azhar Ibrahim, Noor Aisha Abdul Rahman, 2021-07-29 Islamic religious teachers (asatizah) and scholars (ulama) play a significant role in providing spiritual leadership for the Singapore Malay/Muslim community. Lately, the group has been cast under the spotlight over a range of issues, from underperformance in the national examination, their ability to integrate into the broader society, exposure to radical and conservative ideas such as Salafism from the Middle East, and unemployment. *Reaching for the Crescent* examines a growing segment within the group, namely Islamic studies graduates, who obtained their degrees from universities in the Middle East and neighbouring Malaysia and Indonesia. It identifies factors that condition the proliferation of Islamic studies graduates in Singapore, examine the dominant religious institutions they attend, the nature of Islamic education they received, and their challenges. It tackles the impact of their religious education on the spiritual life and well-being of the community. Based on qualitative and quantitative data collected, the book calls for a rethinking of a prevailing discourse of Arabization of Singapore Muslims and academic approaches that focus on madrasah education and Islam through the security lens.

al azhar university islamic studies: Islam: A Profound Insight Ahmad M. Hemaya, 2012-12-30 - It is the only book which enables the reader a deep and comprehensive view of Islam as religion, practices and a way of life. - Taking in consideration that there are many books on variety of Islamic issues, still, this is almost the only book that enables a comprehensive overview of Islam covering all of its different aspects and sides. Besides, it explores profoundly the Islamic practices and their argumentations towards women, violence, sex and many other controversial issues around Islam. - It explores in a new and unique way the Islamic rituals (especially the five prayers) in a way the exposes the beauty and secrets of Sufism in its practical form, mixing between practice and theory as it is felt and done by the leaders of Sufism in their most rightful moments. - The book is meant to be an enchanting art piece. Its layout and illustrations were innovated by German arts and designers to provide the reader with enjoyable read experience. - It analysis also the motivations and argumentations the terrorism considers in the name of Islam. - The variety of the topic discussed in the book and the way of dividing and classifying them makes it a good page turner.

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al azhar university islamic studies: *Studying Islam in the Arab World* Sari Hanafi, 2023-12-21 Addressing the rupture between religious and social sciences in Arab universities, this book provides a critical assessment of the curricula of Shariah and Islamic Studies departments across the Arab World, arguing for increased interdisciplinary dialogue. Based on over 250 interviews with university students and teachers, this study is the sum of five years of field research observing the curricula and teaching styles of colleges in the Shariah sciences. The author provides critical insight into these curricula by focusing on case studies in Lebanon and Jordan, Morocco, Kuwait and Qatar, and in Malaysia. In doing so, the book aims to answer the following questions: What is the aim of religious education? Does it aim to create people who specialize solely in religious affairs, or does it aim to form the student according to a comprehensive human framework? What is the nature of the relationship between the social sciences and the Shariah sciences? The book concludes by examining three pioneering institutions which have introduced alternative curricula in teaching Shariah studies. The book has wide geographic and ideological coverage, and will appeal to university students, academics, and policy analysts working across a range of disciplines, including

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al azhar university islamic studies: Teaching Islamic Studies in the Age of ISIS, Islamophobia, and the Internet Courtney M. Dorroll, 2019-01-24 How can teachers introduce Islam to students when daily media headlines can prejudice students' perception of the subject? Should Islam be taught differently in secular universities than in colleges with a clear faith-based mission? What are strategies for discussing Islam and violence without perpetuating stereotypes? The contributors of Teaching Islamic Studies in the Age of ISIS, Islamophobia, and the Internet address these challenges head-on and consider approaches to Islamic studies pedagogy, Islamophobia and violence, and suggestions for how to structure courses. These approaches acknowledge the particular challenges faced when teaching a topic that students might initially fear or distrust. Speaking from their own experience, they include examples of collaborative teaching models, reading and media suggestions, and ideas for group assignments that encourage deeper engagement and broader thinking. The contributors also share personal struggles when confronted with students (including Muslim students) and parents who suspected the courses might have ulterior motives. In an age of stereotypes and misrepresentations of Islam, this book offers a range of means by which teachers can encourage students to thoughtfully engage with the topic of Islam.

al azhar university islamic studies: Muhammad Karen Armstrong, 2023-06-15 A life of the prophet Muhammad by bestselling author Karen Armstrong. 'Armstrong has a dazzling ability: she can take a long and complex subject and reduce it to its fundamentals, without over-simplifying' SUNDAY TIMES 'One of our best living writers on religion' FINANCIAL TIMES 'Not just a sympathetic book that would dispel the misconceptions and misgivings of its western readers, but also a book that is of considerable importance to Muslims' MUSLIM NEWS Most people in the West know very little about the prophet Muhammad. The acclaimed religious writer Karen Armstrong has written a biography which will give us a more accurate and profound understanding of Islam and the people who adhere to it so strongly. Muhammad also offers challenging comparisons with the two religions most closely related to it - Judaism and Christianity.

al azhar university islamic studies: Holy White Lies Sameh Egyptson, 2018-10-28 The White Lie is a translation for a fatwa in Arabic, Al-Kedhb al-Abyad, issued by theologian Yusuf al-Qaradawi, chairman for The European Council for Fatwa and Research (ECFR). Al-Qaradawi and his companions are part of one of the biggest movements in the world, The Muslim Brotherhood. The book presents extensive research in the Muslim Brotherhood sources to understand the ideology and strategies of the movement from the most important primary sources and how it uses White Lies to reach the aim of their strategies. It also shows examples of the application of these strategies in the West with a documented study in Sweden, where the author relied on the documents of the archives of Swedish government institutions. The book contains over 800 footnotes. The Muslim Brotherhood has, according to one of the most prominent leaders in the movement, Youssef Nada, more than 100 million members all over the world. It is a controversial movement since they have managed to advance all the way to governmental positions in many Muslim countries and they have official and unofficial relations with many politicians and religious authorities all over the world. At the same time, it is singled out as one of the biggest greenhouses for terror organizations and terrorists.

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