

Acton University 2019

Outline of "Islam, Reason and Freedom" lecture by Mustafa Akyol

It is no secret today that Islam has authoritarian interpretations that reject the principles of human freedom. This includes imposing religion through state power, punishing people for "apostasy" or "blasphemy," or degrading women or minorities. This lecture will delve into the formative centuries of Islam to map out the roots of the problem, while also showing the sources for progress. It will explain where the Qur'an and the Muslim tradition stands on reason, freedom and natural law.

HIGHLIGHTS:

- 1) The first theological rift in Islam: Freewill vs. Predestination
- 2) The Mu'tazilites vs. Ash'arites — or Ethical Objectivism vs. Divine Command Theory
- 3) The *falasifa*, or "philosophers," and their waning
- 4) The *maqasid*, or "intentions," of the Sharia vs. literalism
- 5) The challenge of modernity
- 6) Issues with the Sharia today: Freedom of religion, freedom *from* religion, equality before law, secular state
- 7) Reformist — or "renewalist" — arguments in contemporary Islam

SUGGESTED READING

- Mustafa Akyol, *Islam without Extremes: A Muslim Case for Liberty*, WW Norton, 2011
(Available at the Acton University Book Store)

- Daniel Philpott, *Religious Freedom in Islam: The Fate of a Universal Human Right in the Muslim World Today*, Oxford University Press, 2019

- Khaled Abou Fadl, *Reasoning with God: Reclaiming Shari'ah in the Modern Age*, Rowman & Littlefield, 2014

- George F. Hourani, *Reason and Tradition in Islamic Ethics*, Cambridge University Press, 2007

You can read articles by Mustafa Akyol on these topics in his [New York Times page](#), and follow him on Twitter at [@akyolinEnglish](#).