

ORIENTAL STUDIES TRIPOS Part II

Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies

Monday 9 June 2008 09.00 – 12.00

**IS.13 MIDDLE EASTERN AND ISLAMIC CULTURE:
 HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE MIDDLE EAST**

*Candidates must answer **three** questions, **one** from **each** section.
All questions carry **equal** marks.*

*Write your number **not** your name on the cover sheet of **each** Section booklet.*

STATIONERY REQUIREMENTS

20 Page Answer Book x 1

Rough Work Pad

**You may not start to read the questions
printed on the subsequent pages of this
question paper until instructed that you may
do so by the Invigilator.**

Section I:

1. Explain some of the key factors affecting the development of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Include in your answer an evaluation of the significance of at least two of the following factors and authors: western liberal philosophy (Asad), real-politik considerations (Mazower), WWII and the Holocaust (Lauren, Alexander), the anti-colonialism of Muslim states (Waltz, An-Na'im).
2. "Admittedly, one can hardly deny that the concept of human rights is of Western origin" (Bielefeldt 1995:593). Critically discuss this assertion.
3. How do human rights and humanitarianism allow citizens and subjects to challenge state power?

Section II:

4. "Today, human rights are 'universal' as values, as ideological vehicles, or more precisely, as signifiers in action" (Preis 1996: 13). What does this mean? What are some of the ways in which human rights have become a political tool used by and on Middle Eastern states?
5. Critically discuss arguments about the ways in which universalizing claims can underpin, support, and challenge liberal or colonial projects.
6. There is a great deal of literature dealing with whether or not, and how, Islam "fits" with international human rights standards. Why is this topic of such concern?

Section III:

7. What is the significance of gender to the discussions and implementation of human rights standards in the Middle East and Muslim states?
8. How do representations of suffering figure in the "work" of human rights and in attempts at belonging in national and supranational communities?
9. Considering debates that have happened about torture, would the world be a better place without the UDHR and subsequent international human rights documents, such as the Convention Against Torture?

END OF PAPER