

## Islamic Law Expert to Speak on Islamic Law and the Challenge of Islamophobia Oct. 25 at UCSD

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Jan Jennings

Khaled Abou El Fadl

Khaled Abou El Fadl, a leading authority on Islamic law in the United States and a major contemporary Islamic thinker, will speak on *Islamic Law and the Challenge of Islamophobia* at 8 p.m. Oct. 25 in the Price Center Ballroom at the University of California, San Diego.

The lecture is one in an ongoing series presented by UCSD's Eugene M. Burke Lectureship on Religion and Society. It is free and open to the public.

Fred Randel, chair of the Burke Lectureship Governing Board, says "Islamic law has often become a news item in recent years when some extremist group demands that the legal system of a country be replaced by a conception of Islamic law that departs drastically from western norms of democracy, civil liberties, and the rights of women."

Randel says Abou El Fadl's lecture will explore such questions as: What does Islamic law really mean in the Islamic tradition? Have we allowed our understanding of Islamic religion and law to be distorted by the extremist's misconceptions? Or is Islamic law as unreasonable and as hostile to western values as many Americans assume?

Abou El Fadl is the Omar and Azmeralda Alfi Professor of Law at UCLA Law School where he teaches Islamic law, National Security Law, Law and Terrorism, Immigration, Human Rights, and International Law. He previously taught Islamic law at the University of Texas at Austin Law School, Yale University Law School, and Princeton University Law School.

Abou El Fadl writes extensively on universal themes of morality and humanity and the notion of beauty as a moral value. He is a staunch advocate of women's rights. He has written 10 books and more than 50 articles on Islamic law and Islam.

Recent books include *The Search for Beauty in Islam: A Conference of the Books* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2006); *The Great Theft: Wrestling Islam from the Extremists* (Harper San Francisco, 2005); *Islam and the Challenge of Democracy* (Princeton University Press, 2004), and *The Place of Tolerance in Islam* (Beacon Press, 2002).

A strong proponent of human rights, Abou El Fadl serves on the Advisory Board of Middle East Watch and previously on the Board of Directors of Human Rights Watch. He also was previously appointed by President George W. Bush as a commissioner to the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom.

In 2007, Abou El Fadl received the University of Oslo Human Rights Award, the Lisl and Leo Eitingier Prize. In 2005 he was named a Carnegie Scholar in Islamic law.

The Islam scholar received a bachelor's degree from Yale University, a J.D. from the University of Pennsylvania Law School, and master's and doctorate degrees in Islamic Studies from Princeton University. He also received formal training in Islamic jurisprudence in Egypt and Kuwait.

The Burke Lectureship sponsors an ongoing series of lectures by distinguished theologians, philosophers, and other scholars who visit the UCSD campus for one or more days of teaching and exchange with faculty, students, and interested members of the community.

The endowed series honors the memory of Eugene M. Burke, a Paulist priest, teacher, theologian, church historian, and scholar. After his retirement from Catholic University in 1976, Burke was closely associated with UCSD as a member of the Paulist ministry to students and as a member of the UCSD Catholic community until his death in 1984. The Burke Lectures focus on the religious dimensions of being human, exploring the function and responsibility of religion in society and its role in shaping social and moral values.

For further information call Dick Mauro (858) 453-4618 or visit the Burke Lecture web page at: <http://burkelecture.ucsd.edu>

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