Islamic Legal Thought

Answer one question for each part.

Part I: Origins and Hadith

1. *The Encyclopedia of Religion* has invited you to write an entry on the hadith authenticity debate in Western scholarship. Names that should appear in this discussion include (but are certainly not limited to): Ignaz Goldziher, Joseph Schacht, Muhammad Mustafa Azami, G. H. A. Juynboll, and Harald Motzki.

2. *The Encyclopedia of Religion* has invited you to write an entry on *maddhab*. Be sure to discuss their origins and evolution from the pre-formative to the post-formative (but not necessarily modern) era. Also explain why there exists a plurality of *madhhab*, particularly in Sunni Islam, and why only four have come to dominate Sunni legal discourse. Terms that should appear in this discussion include (but are certainly not limited to): *ijma‘*, *qiyas*, *ijtihad*, and *taqlid*.

Part II: Reform/Modernity

1. According to various contemporary Muslim reformers, one could make an “Islamic case” for democracy. Provide 3-5 examples of prominent Muslim thinkers who have made an “Islamic case” for democracy, discuss the specifics of their proposals, and offer reasons why it is likely/unlikely that their proposals will acquire widespread acceptance among the ‘*ulama*’ (including those living in the context of the “Arab Spring”). Be sure to explain what exactly is novel about each proposal.

2. Analyze and compare the approaches and methodologies to legal reform of at least three different modern or contemporary Muslim thinkers. What do/did each of these individuals hope to achieve? How likely is it that their approaches to legal reform could gain wide acceptance among the ‘*ulama*’? What are the prospects for their proposals to be come to fruition?

Part III: Gender/Ethics

1. There is probably no question in Islamic studies more fraught with controversy than that of women’s status in Islam. What evidence is there that the status of women in Arabia improved because of Muhammad’s revelation? What evidence is there that it deteriorated? How did the development of the corpus of hadith and fiqh impact women’s status?

2. Describe the ideas of classical Muslim scholars regarding women’s legal, moral, and intellectual competence, and these ideas have historically impacted women’s lives. Follow this with a discussion of Islamic feminism, and the potential for pursuing full gender equality within an Islamic framework.