

**“The Problem of Being: Ontology in Contemporary Islamic Philosophy”**  
**Monday, 15 April 2024, 11:00 am – 12:30 pm**

Mullā Ṣadrā (d. 1640) is one of the greatest of all Islamic philosophers matched only by the likes of Ibn ‘Arabī (d. 1240), Avicenna (d. 1037) and Suhrawardī (d. 1191). A wide-ranging thinker and philosopher, Ṣadrā left a great body of work spanning a vast array of fields from logic, philosophical Sufism (*‘irfān*), ethics (*akhlāq*) to natural philosophy/physics (*ṭabī‘iyyāt*), ontology, and metaphysics (*ilāhiyyāt*). His oeuvre comprises over forty-five works (some in several volumes) that draw on practically every field of Islamic intellectual learning from its inception until his own day. Mullā Ṣadrā is, above all, a philosopher of *wujūd* (being/existence). Hence, my focus in this workshop on *Bidāyat al-ḥikma* will be the Ontology part of the book. Following Ṣadrā, ‘Allāma Ṭabāṭabā‘ī defends the primacy of being (*aṣālat al-wujūd*) in the debate between being and essence (*wujūd wa māhiyya*), which is one of the central issues in Islamic philosophy. Bidāya also explains the unique doctrine of the gradation of being (*tashkīk al-wujūd*). For Ṣadrā and his commentators, the problem of “being” (*wujūd*) is the foundation of all philosophical principles, the basis of metaphysical inquiries, and the pole around which rotates the science of unity, the science of the return (*ma‘ād*), and the science of soul.