

Introduction to Islam

REL 272 (Spring 2012)
TTH 9:40 – 10:55 (Chambers 2068)

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Office Hours: Mon, Tue & Wed 3:00 – 4:30

Course Description:

This course is a general introduction to Islamic faith, practices, history and culture. Our method of study will make reference to both the normative textual sources of Islam and the lived experience of the Muslim community through centuries. After a brief overview of the approaches to the study of Islam as they have emerged over centuries in the West (and our own method of study this semester), we will explore Islam as a religion, discussing its core beliefs, most important rites, religious texts and various religious and intellectual disciplines such as law (*shari'ah*), theology (*kalam*) philosophy (*falsafah*) and mysticism (*tasawwuf*). Our study will also encompass Islamic culture and its various artistic and aesthetic expressions as developed over centuries. The course will close with discussion of early Islamic history and Islamic sects (such as the Shi'ites) and a brief overview of the present state of the Islamic world and its relationship with the West in modern times.

Required Readings (available at the Bookstore):

1. Curtis, Edward. *Muslims in America: A Short History*. (New York: Oxford, 2009).
2. Eaton, Gai. *Islam and the Destiny of Man*, (State University of New York Press, 1986).
3. Murata, Sachiko, and William C. Chittick. *The Vision of Islam*. (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006)
4. Nasr, Seyyed Hossein. *The Heart of Islam: Enduring Values for Humanity*. (New York: HarperOne, 2002).
5. _____. *Ideals and Realities of Islam* (updated ed.). (? ABC International Group, 2000).
6. Safi, Omid. *Memories of Muhammad: Why the Prophet Matters*. (New York: HarperOne, 2009).

Course Requirements:

Midterm Examination	30%
Final Examination	35% (self-scheduled)
2 Response Papers (3-4 pages) OR Book Report (7-8 pages) OR Research Paper (8-10 pages)	20%
Attendance & Participation*	15%

***Note:** Participation grade is based on the overall quality of your in-class participation throughout the semester. This includes proper class etiquette, attentiveness, asking engaging questions and responding to those asked by the instructor. Do ask the instructor if you have any questions regarding how to make your participation more effective.

Attendance Policy: Attendance is compulsory in this course and more than 2 absences without valid excuse such as sickness or family emergency etc. will result in lowering of grade. It is student's responsibility to obtain notes and 'catch-up' in the case of absence. Absence will not be a good excuse for not knowing what happened in the class.

A Note on the Response Papers:

The purpose of the response paper is to help you critically engage the materials you have learned in the class. It is not merely a summary of the readings or lectures. Instead, these assignments give you a chance to reflect on aspects of the readings that you find interesting, contentious, or simply unclear or confusing. In the larger picture, these "response papers" are designed to help you "think through" the major themes in the readings and develop synthesis of the disparate ideas that you'd learn. Clearly, a response paper is not an op-ed or an expression of how you felt about the readings. Without at all leaving yourself out – and in full awareness of the assumptions you bring to your analysis – try to persuade your reader of your analysis. The key questions you should be asking yourself are the following:

1. Is this topic worth your time, effort and interest?
2. Is the topic manageable within the page-space prescribed for the assignment?
3. Is it worthy of reader's time and interest?
4. Does it show what it was meant to show to the reader?
5. Is your paper convincing/persuasive?

The response papers should indicate that you have critically engaged the readings; large quotes from the readings are as unacceptable as a rambling current of thoughts unrelated to the subject at hand.

Book Reports:

The purpose of the research paper is to help you to explore further a topic of your interest beyond what we were able to cover in the class. It is strongly recommended that by the end of the first month of classes you decide on the book you choose to write your report on. Make sure to consult the instructor regarding the appropriateness of the book. Before you begin to write your book reports, you are required to read at least three academic book reviews. The book report should

carefully summarize the purpose, structure, content, major arguments of the book and then analyze the book and its significance in light of all that you have learned during the semester. Make sure to engage the readings in your analysis.

Research Papers:

The purpose of the research paper is to allow you to explore further a topic of your interest beyond what we were able to cover in the class. The research paper should meet the standard academic criteria of a proper academic paper including citations.

Disabilities: A student who requires accommodation for a documented disability of any type should see me *immediately* to discuss modifications to course requirements.

Academic Honesty: Students are expected to fully abide by the Honor Code as set out by the College and should pledge all their assignments and exams.

COURSE OUTLINE

Week 1 (Jan 17 – Jan 19): Introduction & Method of Study

Readings: Nasr. *The Heart of Islam*, 57-100;

Jan 19: Documentary: *Orientalism*

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vdE18HdfanI&feature=related>

- Introduction to the Course
- The Islamic World – demographics and cultural zones
- History of the Study of Islam in the West
- Methods & Approaches to the Study of Islam
- Orientalism

Week 2 (Jan 24 – Jan 26): The Sacred History of Islam

Readings: Nasr, *The Heart of Islam*, 3-22 & 39-54; Nasr, *Ideals and Realities*, Chapter 1; Murata & Chittick: 132 – 192

Jan 24: Documentary *Islam: Empire of Faith*

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4SkUBbFOFbg&feature=fvst>

- Islam's Sacred History
- God and Prophecy

- Islam vis-à-vis other religions
- Exclusivism/Inclusivism, both?

Week 3 (Jan 31 – Feb 2): Sources of Islam: The Qur'an

Readings: Nasr, *Ideals and Realities*, Chapter 2; Nasr. *The Heart of Islam*, 22-27; Eaton, Chapter 4

- Nature of the Qur'anic Revelation
- Names of the Qur'an
- Structure of the Qur'an
- Content of the Qur'an
- The Qur'anic Exegesis: Approaches and Methods
- Modes of Muslim Engagement with the Qur'an
- Compilation of the Qur'an
- Trends in Muslim and Western Scholarship

Week 4 (Feb 7 – Feb 9): Sources of Islam: The Prophet

Readings: Nasr, *Ideals and Realities*, Chapter 3; Nasr. *The Heart of Islam*, 27-39; Safi, "Introduction" & Chapter 2

Feb 7: Documentary *Muhammad: Legacy of a Prophet*

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gII7h534qyc&feature=results_main&playnext=1&list=PL200A6B3A73D448DE

- Study of the Prophet in the West
- Names and Titles of the Prophet
- Biography
- *Sunnah* and *Hadith*

Week 5 (Feb 14 – Feb 16): The Prophet in Muslim Piety + Islamic Anthropology

Readings: Eaton, Chapter 5; Safi, Chapter 3 & 6

Feb 14: Documentary *Man and Nature*

- Images of the Prophet in Muslim Piety
- Devotion to the Prophet

- Ascension to Heaven (*mi'raj*) and its Implications for Muslim Piety
- The Human Paradox

Feb 16 (1st Response Paper Due): *Read Chapter 2 and 3 of the Qur'an and reflect on the Qur'anic viewpoint on religious pluralism* **OR** *If you have another response paper idea, obtain my explicit approval before you proceed with it.*

Week 6 (Feb 21 – Feb 23): Three Dimensions of Islam & Religious Practice (Islam)

Readings: Eaton, Chapter 10; Murata & Chittick: ix-27

Feb 23: Documentary, *Inside Mecca*

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KFQHgdmJqjo>

- Hadith Gabriel
- Three Dimensions of Islam
- The Five Pillars

Week 7 (Feb 28 – Mar 1): Religious Practice II (Shari'ah & Visions of an Ideal Society)

Readings: Nasr, *Ideals and Realities*, Chapter 4; Nasr, *The Heart of Islam*, Chapter 3 & 4; Eaton, Chapter 9; Chittick & Murata: 22-34

- The Five Pillars Continued
- *Shari'ah* Law
 - Philosophy & Objectives
 - Sources & Methodology
 - Legal Schools
 - Scope of Shari'ah
 - Content
 - Application
 - Basic family and penal laws

SPRING BREAK

FRIDAY, March 2 (4:30 P.M.) – MONDAY, March 12 (8:30 A.M.)

Week 8 (Mar 13 – Mar 15): Peace and Justice

Readings: Nasr. *The Heart of Islam*, Chapter 6

- Peace or Justice?
- *Jihad*

March 15: The Midterm Exam

Week 9 (Mar 20 – Mar 22): Religious Beliefs (*Iman*)

Readings: Murata & Chittick, 35-131

Mar 22: Documentary *Knowledge of the World*

- The Three Principles
- God, Divine Names and Attributes
- Tanzih-Tashbih
- Angels
- The Measuring Out
- Eschatology

Week 10 (Mar 27 – Mar 29): *Iman* Continued and *Ihsan*

Readings: Murata & Chittick, 193 – 294

Mar 29: Documentary *Patterns of Beauty*

- Islamic Eschatology
 - End of Times
 - The Hereafter and the Unfolding of the Soul
 - The Barzakh
 - Final Judgment
- Overview of Islamic Intellectual Disciplines
 - *Kalam* (Islamic Theology)
 - *Hikma/falsafah* (Islamic Philosophy)
 - *Irfan/tasawwuf al-‘nazari* (Theoretical Sufism)

- *Ihsan* – Lexical, Qur’anic and Conceptual Meanings

Week 11 (Apr 3 – Apr 5): *Ihsan* Manifested: Islamic Art and Mysticism

Readings: Murata & Chittick, 295-317; Nasr. *The Heart of Islam*, Chapter 6; Eaton, Chapter 11; Nasr, *Ideals and Realities*, Chapter 5;

- Islamic Art
- Islamic Mysticism (Sufism)
- Wrapping up the Three Dimensions (*Islam, Iman & Ihsan*)
 - Interconnections among the Three Dimensions
 - Map of Islamic Religious Sciences

Apr 5: Documentary *The Inner Life*

EASTER BREAK

FRIDAY, APRIL 6 (4:30 P.M.) – WEDNESDAY, APRIL 11 (8:30 A.M.)

Week 12 (Apr 12): Early Islamic History, Political Thought & Shi’ism

Readings: Murata & Chittick, 295-317; Eaton, Chapter 7 & 8; Safi, Chapter 5

- Rightly-Guided Caliphs
- The Umayyad Dynasty
- The Abbasid Dynasty
- The Caliphate
- Shi’ite Islam

Week 13 (Apr 17 – Apr 19): Islam *in* the West

Readings: Curtis, ix-118; Safi, Chapter 4

April 19: *Reel Bad Arabs* [Documentary]

- Islam in Europe
- Islam in the US
- Islam and Pluralism revisited
- *Orientalism* revisited – Contributions of Hollywood

Week 14 (Apr 24 – Apr 26): Islam and the West

Readings: Nasr. *The Heart of Islam*, 273-316; Eaton, “Introduction” and Chapter 1 & 2

- Some Contentious Issues
- Recent Debates about Islam in the West
- Occidentalism? Muslim Perceptions of the West

APRIL 19 (Debate): *Islam and the West*

Week 15 (May 1): Concluding Remarks/Open Discussion

MAY 1: Book Report/2nd Response Paper/Research Paper Due

Response Paper:

1. *Reflect on any of the videos that we have watched during this class by way of engaging the readings.*

OR

2. *Find examples of Orientalism from the popular media (news, magazines, TV, movies and blogs etc.) and reflect on the concept of Orientalism. For this response paper it will be crucial to distinguish Orientalism from stereotyping or xenophobia, thus the significance of the proper understanding of the concept itself.*

OR

3. *Reflect on the readings for Week 14 (Islam and the West)*