

SHI'ISM (& SUNNI ISLAM)

AN INTRA-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

REL 273 (Spring 2020)
MW 2:30-3:45 pm (Chambers 2068)

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WHAT IS IT ABOUT? (Previously Course Description)

This course is primarily an overview of the doctrines, thought, spirituality, history and diversity of Shi'ite Islam. Our study will complement RELI 272 ("Introduction to Islam") and various other Islam-related courses that focus primarily on the Sunni Islamic tradition. Although primarily an introduction to Shi'ite Islam, we will considerably touch upon the convergences and divergences between Sunni and Shi'ite interpretations of Islam. We will navigate the subject matter in FIVE SECTIONS. We will begin with origins of the Sunni-Shiite split in early Islamic history through a historical context that is indispensable to the appreciation of the Sunni and Shi'ite points of view and major points of contention (SECTION I). We will then proceed to explore Shiite worldview and theology (PART II), and theological and historical diversity within Shiism with special attention to Ismailism (PART III). We will turn then to geographical diversity especially Shiite minorities, and developments within Shiism during the "Modern Age" (PART IV). We will conclude our study with examination of Shiite spirituality, religious life, piety, material culture and ethics, and certain critical issues such as major themes in polemics between Sunnis and Shiites, the role of Sufism in mediating the Sunni-Shiite divide, and finally, the identity, function and theological significance of the messianic figure of Islam, titled *The Mahdi*. PART IV will involve extensive collaborative research that will be formally "taught/presented" to the classmates.

THE ROADMAP

See MOODLE for Calendar of Readings & Intellectual Practices

+ THIS PREZI IS SYNTHESIS OF OUR STUDY THIS SEMESTER:

<https://bit.ly/35toPu9>

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Disabilities: A student who requires accommodation for a documented disability of any type should see the instructor immediately to discuss modifications to course requirements. “Davidson College values the diversity of its community and is an equal access institution that admits otherwise qualified applicants without regard to disability. The college seeks to accommodate requests for accommodations related to disability that are determined to be reasonable and do not compromise the integrity of a program or curriculum. To make such a request or to begin a conversation about a possible request, please contact Beth Bleil, Director of Academic Access and Disability Resources, in the Center for Teaching and Learning by visiting her office in the E.H. Little Library, by emailing her at bebleil@davidson.edu, or by calling 704-894-2129. It is best to submit accommodation requests within the drop/add period; however, requests can be made at any time in the semester. Please keep in mind that accommodations are not retroactive.”

Honor and Conscience: The College expects students to fully abide by the Honor Code. The instructor wonders about our conscience and the convergence/divergence between the two.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

A NOTE:

If going through the course of our study will inspire joy of learning and experience of relevance of these themes to our lives, it will be an excellent learning outcome. Yet making the class more relevant to you personally is something that will require your engagement and deeper investment. Feel free to talk to the instructor about ways in which you (or/and the instructor) could contribute in achieving those learning outcomes, personally and as a collective group.

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INSTRUCTORS':

It is intended that by the end of the class, the participants will have:

1. the necessary background and familiarity with the Shi'ite tradition;
2. learned about the theological diversity within Islamic tradition, and especially within Shiism;
3. learned the core differences between Sunni and Shiite Islam;
4. enhanced core “intellectual” skills of engaged reading, process of research, teaching and presentation, and thinking through and debating conflicting perspectives;
5. firm intellectual foundations in the subject to engage texts and practitioners of Shiite Islam;

YOURS?

Prof. Syed Rizwan Zamir [**Office:** Eumenean Hall 104; **Phone:** (704) 894 2950]

Email: rizamir@davidson.edu (Saturdays I disappear; Sundays I slowly re-emerge)

Meeting Hours: MW 12-1:30 pm

RESOURCES & GUIDELINES for relevant Intellectual Practices

<https://rizwanzamir.net/the-debate/>
<https://rizwanzamir.net/exams/>
<https://rizwanzamir.net/how-to-teach/>
<https://rizwanzamir.net/resources/>
<https://rizwanzamir.net/research-ing/>

INTELLECTUAL PRACTICES (Previously Course Requirements/Assignments)

Midterm REVIEW	30%
Final [Semi-Cumulative] REVIEW	30%
Group Teaching (Annotated Bibliography 5%, Outline with Citations 5%, Teaching 5%)	15%
Presence & Contributions (includes Debate & Questions)	10%
Your Takeaway in 500-words – due on the last day	5%
4-page max Book Report– due on the last day	10%
ABSENCE: from more than ONE meeting will result in loss of 5% of your final grade.	n/a

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NOTE: Various “Intellectual Practices” are in place as “building blocks” to help deepen comprehension and build synthesis. Reviews seek to ensure that we have learned the basics; other Intellectual Practices require engagement and reflection upon texts and themes of our study this term.

COLLABORATIVE TEACHING & RESEARCH (in groups of 2):

Through this intellectual practice we will explore what scholars call “The Other Shiites”, often understudied or Shiite minorities in lesser known regions of the Muslim and non-Muslim worlds. Find your co-laborer/group partner and choose by **February 28th**. Various components of this collaboration are:

- Annotated Bibliography;
- An outline of research-presentation meticulously cross-referencing and supporting your research findings;
- Q&A included a 20-minute “teaching-your-research” visual teaching-presentation;

TOPICS (Shiism in...):

- South Asia (India and Pakistan) – **SRZ will teach-present.**
- Iraq
- Lebanon & Syria
- Turkey & Central Asia
- Saudi Arabia
- Bahrain
- Yemen
- Southeast Asia
- Shiism in the West, Europe OR/AND United States

TEXT-GUIDES

(Available at the Bookstore and on reserve in the library)

THIS PREZI IS SYNTHESIS OF OUR STUDY THIS SEMESTER:

<https://bit.ly/35toPug>

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The Crisis of Muslim History: Religion and Politics in Early Islam 2nd Edition

by [Mahmoud Ayoub](#) (Author) <https://amzn.to/2QmtfhO>

Shi'ite Islam 2nd Edition

by [Muhammad H. al-Tabataba'i](#) (Author), [Seyyed Hossein Nasr](#) (Translator) <https://amzn.to/39AyEtf>

The Ismailis: An Illustrated History THAMES & HUDSON Edition

by [Farhad Daftary](#) (Author) <https://amzn.to/35jtKol>

What is Shi'i Islam? (Routledge Persian and Shi'i Studies) 1st Edition

by [Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi](#) (Author), [Christian Jambet](#) (Author) <https://amzn.to/2SPtpjo>

A Concise History of Sunnis and Shi'is Paperback – February 28, 2018

by [John McHugo](#) (Author) <https://amzn.to/39ExT2n>

Text-Guides for Basic Background in Islam

Note: Prior knowledge of Islam and Muslim civilization is not expected or assumed. For your own comfort, you may pick ONE of the introductory books listed on Veils & Webs.

{Veils & Webs (rizwanzamir.net) > Dear Strangers > Resources}

Additional Resources & Support:

There are numerous resources available to help you through the course. Please see the section entitled “Resources” under the “Dear Strangers” tab from Veils & Webs (www.rizwanzamir.net).

CLARIFICATIONS, GUIDELINES, INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Must always have access to the syllabus & assigned readings for the meeting;
2. If absent on a given day, the burden of knowing what happened in the class, obtaining notes and 'catching-up' will be yours and yours alone;
3. Keep track of your attendance and make a note of the dates you were absent. On the last day of the semester turn in a pledged sheet detailing the days you were absent along with accompanying reasons/explanation, if any;
4. Devices-machines, if used at all, must be for class-related activities only;
5. Please do not come in late or leave early—it is disruptive;
6. Your participation grade will reflect the overall *quality* (and not simply quantity) of your contributions to the conversation throughout the semester. This includes etiquette, attentiveness, preparation, and asking questions that reflect active and thoughtful engagement with the texts and our conversations.