

May I be a dog of the streets of Medina,
Indeed, the highest station of every perfect sage.

- Pir Mehr Ali Shah (d.1937)

What's the meaning of Pakistan; *no god but God!*

The minstrel and the music –both have changed
Our sleep has changed, the tale we told has changed
The nightingale now sings a different song
The colour in the cheeks of spring has changed

- Akbar Ilahabadi (d. 1921)

You have heard me sing the praises of English education, because I wanted you to be taught English. Now that you've learnt English to the extent that every good subject of our impress Queen Victoria should, let me now tell you the faults of the English, because everything has its good and bad aspects.

- "Nazir Ahmad's Letter to his Son"

From Taliban to Taj Mahal (& back)

(Windows into Islamic South Asia, its Unity and Diversity, Wonders and Splendors,
Tragedies and Ambiguities, & Memory and Heritage)

REL 379 (Spring 2021) TTH 11:35-12:50 pm (LIB Studio)

WHAT IS IT ABOUT? (Previously Course Description)

Run as a seminar, this is a survey overview of Islamic South Asia from 16th-20th century with a particular emphasis on Muslim literary and artistic cultures and religious thought. Besides essential orientational introduction and synthetic conclusion, we will time travel back and forth (ca.1500-2000) covering various themes, but primarily, religious life, thought and culture as witnessed through the lens of literary and artistic traditions. In translation, you will listen to the voices of the major actors of the story of Islam in South Asia. Reading these primary texts will therefore constitute the core practice in our study. Quite regularly, we will watch movies and documentaries as well (an essential dimension to our study), and occasionally, will also welcome guest speakers. NOTE: All studies (aka classes) with me involve conscientious reading of texts and entail (in order of significance) speaking *from within* texts, speaking *with* them, and speaking *to/about* them as well.

TEXT-GUIDES

(Available at the Bookstore)

1. *A Thousand Yearnings: A Book of Urdu Poetry and Prose*, tr. and ed. by Ralph Russell
2. *Islam in South Asia in Practice*, edited by Barbara Metcalf
3. *Sources of Indian Traditions: Modern India, Pakistan and Bangladesh* (multiple editors)

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}

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 also about the burdens of conscience, and to what extent our honor intersects with our conscience.

THE INTELLECTUAL COMMUNITY

Meeting with the Instructor

Prof. Syed Rizwan Zamir

Office: Eumenean Hall 104; **Phone:** (704) 894 2950]

Email: rizamir@davidson.edu (On the weekends I tend to keep very low)

You can meet with SRZ:

1. Right after the class meeting (just walk up to me); or
2. Through a scheduled appointment through email. Mention your availability in the next couple of days and your preference for a zoom or in-person meeting; or
3. Potentially Friday afternoon (3-5, do check in advance); or
4. Pre-arranged or on the spot (if possible) lunch in the Union right after the class.

The Intellectual Community inside and outside the class

We will speak about this in the class on the first day.

A Room in View & Google DOC [A recurring practice]

You are strongly encouraged to contribute to the Google Doc & the “a room in view” series.

Recommended Reading:

If you feel inspired to explore further a topic discussed in a certain week, you are welcome to write to the instructor and ask for a recommended reading. Do clarify your question or what aspect in particular is of interest to you.

INTELLECTUAL PRACTICES (AKA Course Assignments)

Presence & Contributions to the Intellectual Community (includes Storytelling & Poetic Readings)	20%
Exploratory Group Project of choice and interest (in consultation with the instructor)	25%
Weekly Journal-Portfolio [Reflective 80%, Explorative 20%] – 10 Entries in total	20%
Final Exam (Cumulative)	35%

Greetings, everyone.

COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH

STEP I=ARTICULATING THE PROJECT: FOUR THINGS TO BRING

1. A text (or passage) & topic
2. The question?
3. The quest/intent/what do you intend to know & why/stakes in the question?
4. What do you need from me?

DUE DATE: THURSDAY MARCH 10 in class [Do update the Google Doc with this information]

For Step I & II, see guidelines here: <https://rizwanzamir.net/research-ing/>

[Note: These guidelines are written more generally but offer the 'spirit' of the exercise.]

STEP II=ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Both steps I & II must be worked on together and complement each other. Therefore, before you begin Step II, REVISE Step I in view of the guidelines.

DUE DATE: April 8, 2022 [FINAL VERSION OF STEP I & II to be posted on the Google Doc]

Key & relevant *primary texts* and *scholarly studies* on the subject/theme/question must be consulted and studied. You will continue to build this annotated bibliography beyond April 8th until the project is finished.

STEP III= TEACHING A SESSION (SIGN UP ON GOOGLE DOC BEFORE APRIL 1)

A 50-minute Teaching session followed by Q&A and feedforward from the instructor.

You will assign readings and homework and will be *teaching* (not presenting)

See guidelines here: <https://rizwanzamir.net/how-to-teach/>

STEP IV= Your Supreme Court Ruling OR Fatwa (to be delivered through Moodle)

As pointed out in the class, you are writing A SUPREME COURT RULING OR A FATWA (See Metcalf text for template, i.e., Shah Bano Case OR Fatwa translated by Khalid Masud)

PROCESS:

ONLY USE THE LIBRARY COURSE GUIDE: <https://davidson.libguides.com/rel379>. If you experience hurdles, talk to the librarians. **Formal Certification from a Librarian (to be delivered with the Fatwa/Supreme Court Ruling):** Every team will provide a short note from the librarian that they have discussed your research and are satisfied with your research and research method.

BREAKDOWN OF THE 25% GRADE:

STEPS I & II = 7%

STEP III = 7%

STEP IV = 7%

PROCESS=4%

GUIDELINES FOR STORYTELLING

Some research on terms, figures, the author and aspects of the story will inevitably be necessary. Sources consulted for that need to be documented as accompanying bibliography. The act itself has **three parts**:

1. A compelling telling/enacting/performing of the story (video, powerpoint, oral performance etc., up to you to see what makes sense);
2. Meaning and interpretation of the story, and its significance;
3. Finally, discovering and making explicit concrete connections between the story (or theme or key aspect of the story) and what we have studied thus far, and some takeaway(s) from your presentation;

TIME: 12-15 minutes. The team itself will need to regulate time.

Guidelines for the Class Google Doc

NOTE: Posting questions/comments on the Google Doc **ended on May 24**. Focus now on other and upcoming business. You of course need to continue to carefully read the assigned material and craft your portfolio- journal entries.

Instructions from the EMAIL and copied from the Google Doc:

“It is important to understand the purpose of the Google Doc entries. Your passage-question provides raw material for the class conversation, and also gives me a sense of your interest, investment and what you seek to know or probe. Since it is almost impossible to cover every question in the class (our texts are just too rich) I will try to review and address your questions in some direct or indirect way. Still, not every question could be covered that easily. If your question is still pressing, speak to me right after the class and I will take it up.”

JOURNAL-PORTFOLIO

There will be a **total of 10 entries**. The *audience* of your entries in both cases is your REL 379 classmates.

- The **8 reflective entries** each are to be written at the end of a week. These need to be engaged with the texts and conversations that we had in the class. The length will be between **100-250 words**.
- The **2 explorative entries** that bring in additional research-like explorations on some theme from the week (again to be written after the week’s readings and discussion are over) will be between **250-500 words**.

These will be handwritten (dated and timed), and all in one journal/notebook. Loose papers clipped

or otherwise will not be acceptable. Beginning next week, occasionally I will invite a student or two to discuss an entry from their journal.

Voluntary Visit

Consider visiting any of the mosques in Charlotte. Contact Muslim Students Association or South Asian Students Association to see if they are able to facilitate.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

INSTRUCTOR'S:

By the end of this course, the participants will have:

1. Extensively read and interpreted primary texts from Muslim South Asia;
2. Cultivated further the ability to “walk with authors,” i.e., being in engaged and sustained conversation with an author and her text(s) by 1) listening to the author(s), 2) making sense of what’s been heard, and 3) articulating thoughtful and engaging question(s) and response(s) to author’s point of view;
3. Probed and engaged a culture other than one’s own;
4. Been introduced to the unity and diversity of the religious, ethical, aesthetic, literary, social and political realities of Muslim South Asia from 1500 to the present;
5. Comprehended ways in which South Asian Islamic past is remembered, and informs its present;

NOTE: Most significantly, our study seeks to of this class is to make study of Islam in South Asia *relevant, fruitful, enjoyable* and *meaningful* for those invested in the endeavor.