

Islam in the Modern Age: Tradition, Fundamentalism & Reform

REL 378 (Spring 2013)
MWF 09:30 – 10:20 (Chambers 3155)

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Course Description:

Popular discourse often characterizes 'Islam and 'Modernity' as two mutually exclusive points of view. Such attitudes are frequently exhibited in questions such as: "Is Islam compatible with democracy?" or "Does Islam give equal rights to women?" In light of such questions, this course aims to engender a nuanced appreciation of the various meanings of the terms 'Islam' and 'Modernity'. The basic argument of this course is as follows: In order to understand the place of Muslim actors in the contemporary world it is better to conceive of 'Islam' and 'Modernity' as historical projects that are still in the process of being executed. Rather than assume that 'Islam' and 'Modernity' have fixed meanings, our study will try to illustrate how these terms have come to represent varying (often vying!) political, social and spiritual aspirations at different moments in history.

We will begin with an examination of the phenomenon of 'Modernity', its origins in the Western Europe, its various interpretations and significance. We will then turn to a basic introduction to the Islamic tradition and its pre-modern intellectual, political and social landscapes¹. With this historical and intellectual understanding of 'Islam' and 'Modernity', we will examine how 'Islam' and 'Modernity' that had unfolded in different geographical spaces came to intersect during the Colonial age. The rest of the course will examine the intellectual, religious, sociopolitical and cultural transformations in the Islamic world due to this intersection and the response of Muslim thinkers and societies to the Modern ideals. We will end our study by reflecting on the recent developments in the Islamic world and the future of 'Islam' and 'Modernity'.

¹ Although prior knowledge of Islam is not expected, those who have not taken a course with me are ***strongly recommended*** to read at least one of the introductory books on Islam listed in the recommended readings section.

Required Readings (available at the Bookstore):

1. *Modernity: An Introduction to Modern Societies* ed. Stuart Hall, David Held, Don Hubert and Kenneth Thompson (Malden: Blackwell, 2008)
2. *Cambridge Illustrated History of the Islamic World*. Ed. Francis Robinson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999)
3. *Islam in Transition 2nd. Edition* ed. John Esposito and John Donohue (New York: Oxford, 2007)
4. *Islam, Fundamentalism and the Betrayal of Tradition* ed. Joseph Lumbard (Bloomington: World Wisdom, 2009)
5. Rene Guenon. *The Crisis of the Modern World* (New York: Sophia Perennis, 2004)
6. Seyyed Hossein Nasr. *Islam and the Plight of Modern Man* (Chicago: Kazi Publications, 2001)
7. John Esposito and Dalia Mogahed. *Who Speaks for Islam?* (New York: Gallup Press, 2007)
8. Shayega, Daryush. *Cultural Schizophrenia: Islamic Societies Confronting the West* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1997)
9. Ian Buruma and Avishai Margalit. *Occidentalism: The West in the Eyes of its Enemies* (New York: Penguin, 2004)

Recommended Background Readings:

- Ernst, Carl W. *Following Muhammad: Rethinking Islam in the Contemporary World* (Chapel Hill: UNC Chapel Hill, 2004)
- Mahmoud Ayoub. *Islam: Faith and History*. (Oxford: OneWorld, 2004)
- Turner, Colin. *Islam: The Basics 2nd ed.* (New York: Routledge, 2011)

Course Requirements:

(Please note that the instructor reserves the right to change/alter the syllabus as he deems fit)

Midterm Examination	25%
Collaborative Group Project (3 students per group: It includes 12-page paper, annotated bibliography, reflection paper, interviews(?), prez presentation & group interview with the instructor)	40% (instructions below)
Short Assignments + Response Papers OR Book Report (140 pages)	20%
Attendance & Participation	15%

Objectives of the Course:

This is a course on Islam (and religion in general) *in relation to* modernity. Therefore, a nuanced appreciation of the meaning, values and phenomenon of Modernity in its various aspects is critical to the understanding of the subject matter and an integral part of the course. Since it is impossible for this course to be more than an *overview of Islam in the Modern Age*, it is expected that by the end of the class, the students will have the necessary language, categories and familiarity with the 'Islam and modernity' debate to pursue further study, engage the texts and practitioners of the Islamic faith and make sense of contemporary issues dealt with by Muslim thinkers and societies, and for that matter other religious communities facing the challenges of modernity. For the instructor, the success or failure of the course depends on how far the class as a group accomplishes these goals. Furthermore, implicit but the most significant goal of this class is to make learning *relevant, useful, enjoyable* and *meaningful* for all involved in the class. Making the class more relevant to you personally is something that will require your engagement and deep interest. Feel free to talk to the instructor about ways in which you may contribute in achieving these goals, personally and as a group.

Format of the Class:

The format (i.e., structure of the class lecture/discussion, and presentations/assignments) and selection of readings are all carefully thought-out to meet the goals listed above. Students must note that the extent and length of lectures, in-class discussion, debates and group work will be decided in view of these goals and could alter as per the needs of the class. That is why the class format will be flexible and may vary from week to week.

Readings are absolutely critical to your success in this class, both for comprehending the subject and in earning a good grade. Generally speaking, even lectures will mostly be geared towards better understanding of the assigned material. Lectures will provide a framework for the readings, clarify them, and highlight the key points. Hence, you are absolutely expected to have read and formulated your thoughts on the readings before the beginning of the week.

Occasionally, you will be asked to present the summary of the readings, make critical comments, work in groups and make formal presentations of selective portion of the readings, bring in questions from the readings, examples from the media, journals, blogs, magazines or other forums and from outside of the assigned reading for further discussion and clarification. All these activities and active participation in the in-class debates and discussion will be critical.

Your participation grade is based therefore on the overall quality of your in-class participation throughout the semester. This includes proper class etiquette, attentiveness, preparing for the discussion sessions, 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 (I will take regular attendance!) and more than **2 absences** without valid excuse such as sickness or family emergency etc. will result in the 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.*

ASSIGNMENTS:

Note: *The audience for all your written assignments is your REL 378 class.*

Book Report:

The purpose of the book report is to help you 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. You will need *explicit approval* of the instructor for your choice of book. Before you begin to write your book reports, you are **required** to read *at least two* **"academic" book reviews** of books similar to the one you have picked to read to get a sense of the format and style of writing. The audience of the book report is your REL class.

The book report has **three sections**: *Section I* (4-5 pages) will be a carefully written summary that will include the background information of the author and his expertise on the subject, purpose for writing this book, structure, audience (who is he writing for, who is he writing against?), content, major arguments and evidence contained within the book. *Section II* (1-2 pages) will then critically evaluate and analyze the book and its significance in light of the relevant and applicable material that you have learned throughout the semester. A book report that lacks engagement with the assigned readings and knowledge gained during the course will be deemed incomplete. *Section III* (1 page) will be your personal reflections on the book regarding ways in which you found the book insightful, confusing, useful etc. for yourself personally and in relation to the course.

Instructions for the Exam:

1. **GREEN BOOK:** You will absolutely need Green Books for your exam. Loose paper (with or without clips/staple is irrelevant!) will result in loss of points.
2. **HANDWRITING:** Clear and legible. If I cannot read your handwriting, it will mean I won't understand what you are saying. I will have no option but to assume that you don't know the material.
3. **READ AND ANSWER THE QUESTION CAREFULLY:** It is here usually that well-prepared students lose points. Either they end up answering the wrong question (I.e., misreading the question) or not answering it FULLY. So answer the question asked, and answer all parts of it.
4. **TIME MANAGEMENT:** It is common sense and I have suggested a way to divide time for your answers. Do not write essays for short IDs. You will have to make choices. For IDs and short answers you will have to prioritize between more and less important, and more and less relevant things you choose to mention.
5. **READ THE QUESTION AGAIN AND AGAIN WHILE ANSWERING IT:** Related to 3, this works well for keeping one on track.

GROUP PROJECT

By the end of the second week you will divide into groups of three. For the group project each group will turn in the following:

1. **RESOURCES for the Study of your Topic (5% of the grade):** For that you will turn in an annotated wiki-like page documentation/bibliography of the following:
 - a. Academic works, books and writings
 - b. Multimedia: images, audio, videos,
 - c. Popular stuff, newspaper articles, op-eds, blogs, interviews, non-academic books
 - d. Statistical data, surveys, and polls
2. **10-page GROUP PAPER (5%, Instructions for the Group Research paper):**
 - i. Topic/Question, why you chose it, its relevance/significance, who's the audience for your research, and whose question is it? Explain how and why each of the group member is interested in it?

- ii. Research methodology: How did you research your question? How was it appropriate for finding answers to your question? In sum, clarify and justify your approach to research. Be concrete.
- iii. Research process: its different elements, and in what order they were completed. Make sure the process is consistent with your methodology
- iv. Typology: Compare, contrast and provide a typology of the various positions on your topic and question *within the academic sources*. Identify concretely who holds a certain position and why? This section is very important; there has to be a way of classifying various positions into some sort of scheme that your reader could make sense of and draw his or her own conclusions.
- v. What did you find in the *popular media* (see 1c above) on the same subject, how it contrasts with your findings? Why (if so) there is a gap between your findings and what is found in the popular media?
- vi. Discuss *the interviews* and explain the differences among the responses of your interviewees. (NOTE: We will decide if it will be feasible to include this step or not!)
- vii. Your Findings/Conclusions - challenges or potential rebuttals to your research
- viii. Explain the differences between your findings through the academic study, popular media and the interviews (iv, v & vi).
- ix. Where to now? Unresolved questions, confusions, paradoxes etc. If you were to pursue the topic further what would you do?
- x. How your project relates to the course? Have *at least three significant points* you will make to your classmates with whom you have shared a discourse and texts for the whole semester.

3. **Reflections on the PROCESS (5%):** (These reflections are separate and not part of the paper length prescribed – should not be more than 1-2 pages)

- a. Discussion notes/thread and significant points discussed, debated and choices made during the thinking or writing process
- b. Reflections on the process of group research, where it helped, where it hindered etc. (list briefly as points)
- c. What did you learn or got out of this project, individually and as a group?

THE PREZI PRESENTATION (10%, Instructions)

1. You will basically present number 1 and 2 above in the classroom.
2. DO NOT OVERWHELM YOUR AUDIENCE: Time limit on the one hand, and human ability to absorb information to a certain limit on the other should guide your selection of what should be in and what should be out.
3. MAKE IT INTERESTING & BE CREATIVE: Employ images, audio/video etc. for your presentation of the topic. In other words, choose **INTERESTING & IMPORTANT** stuff.
4. You have a **strict time limit** of **20-25 minutes** for your presentation.
5. Your presentation should incorporate your analysis/insights/SOME SORT OF THEME/CONCLUSION.

GROUP INTERVIEW (10%):

Towards the end of the semester you will sign up to have a group interview with me (perhaps during the optional class days). You will need an hour for that. It will be first come first serve.

The soft copy of the Group Paper along with the Resources Page will be due on April 29th by midnight via email. You are not required to turn in a hard copy. You will turn in your PREZI presentation when you meet me for the interview. Make sure to bring a USB copy of it with you.

*Ask questions or see me in my office hours as you work on your group project. 5% of the remaining grade will either be for the **interviews**, or for the overall quality of the process and your work.*

IMPORTANT NOTE: This course is about “Islam” in relation to “Modernity”. Your topic should demonstrate this relationality as it comes to bear upon your particular group project. A project undertaken without this awareness and application of it to the study will be deemed incomplete. Below, I provide ***an illustration*** which should give you a sense of what I mean by this note. Research topic of gender must incorporate three aspects: gender in the modern age/modernity; gender in pmodern Islam; and debate surrounding gender in contemporary Islamic thought and Muslim societies. “The kinds of readings” needed to address these **THREE** aspects for example will be:

Modernity, 122-148, 343-392; *Islam in the World*, 619-680; *Islam in Transition*, 157-177, 184-202, 212-215; Nasr “Male and Female” (*Islam in the Modern World*) Lumbard, Ch. 7; *Who Speaks*, Ch. 4

DEADLINES FOR THE GROUP PROJECT:

- Obtaining Approval of the Topic = By *March 1* (Approval for the Book Report as well)
- Submit RESOURCES = *March 11* (Book Report is also due that day)
- IRB Application submitted for approval (if we decide to include interviews): *March 30*
- Submit GROUP PAPER = *April 19*
- GROUP INTERVIEW & Submitting PREZI Presentation = Week 16 (you will schedule this meeting with me as a group)

Some Guidelines for the Research paper:

Research paper is expected to meet all the requirements of a research paper. These include:

- a clearly thought-out problem or question;
- a clear thesis and conclusion;
- scholarly evidence and persuasive arguments;
- structured and easy-to-follow organization of ideas and transitions from an idea to another;
- thorough editing (for grammar and spelling mistakes);
- proper academic tone and style of writing;
- standard fonts and margins, proper citations and bibliography (use Chicago or MLA)

Writing and Speaking Centers:

Basic writing and speaking skills are expected in this course and quality of both will be critical to your success in this course. You are therefore strongly encouraged to consult writing and speaking centers for your assignments and class presentations. Look up the links below for more information on the services they provide:

Writing Center: <http://www3.davidson.edu/cms/x11014.xml>

Speaking Center: <http://www3.davidson.edu/cms/x15986.xml>

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 14-18): Introducing Islam, Modernity and Islam and Modernity

Readings: *Who Speaks*, Introduction & Chapter 1; *Cambridge Illustrated*, Introduction & Chapter 7

- Scholarly Study of “Islam in the Modern Age”: History, Methods and Approaches
- Our framework for the study of “Islam in the Modern Age”
- Definitions of “Islam”: An Introduction to Islamic faith, practice and history
- Significance of “Islam” in the lives of Muslims then and now
- Premodern Islamic Societies: Politics, Religious Thought, Culture & Social Life

WEEK 2 (Jan 23-25): What is Modernity? What is “Modern” about the Modern Age?

Readings: *Modernity*, 3-54;

- What is Modernity? Defining the “Modern” and “Modernity”
- Origins of Modernity and The Enlightenment
- What changed with Modernity & Why? Changing Intellectual and Cultural Norms

WEEK 3 (Jan 28-Feb 1): Culture, Values and Religion in the Modern Age

Readings: *Modernity*: 169-182 & 395-422;

NOTE: Davidson Library visit for Prezji and collaborative group work this week

- Religion, Values and Ideology – Modernity and Religion
- Culture, its various meaning & “Modern” culture
- Disenchantments and Dilemmas of Modernity

WEEK 4 (Feb 4-8): ‘Intersections’ of Islam and Modernity during the Colonial Age

Readings: *Modernity*, 184-227; *Cambridge Illustrated*, Chapter 4;

Feb 4: We will begin watching “*Lion of the Desert*” in the class and you will finish it on your own.

- Historical Details of the Colonial Period
- Colonial Perceptions of Islam and Muslims
- Intellectual and Cultural Transformations

Response Paper 1 (500 words): *Write a brief reflection paper on the film “Lion of the Desert”. In what ways is this movie related to the subject matter of the course, to the readings for this week on ‘Intersections’ of Islam and Modernity? What is significant about the history of the Colonial Age for the study of Islam in the Modern Age? What should your fellow classmates make note of, what would you cite as important and relevant. What are the themes that stood out for you in the movie?* **DUE on FEB 8**

WEEK 5 (Feb 11-15): What Went Wrong? Crises & Challenges of Colonialism

Readings: *Cultural Schizophrenia*, pp. 3-21, 33-37 & 44-55; *Islam in the World Today* p. 800-829 (will be provided); Syed Rizwan Zamir, "Chapter 1: Ali Naqvi's Reception of the Crisis of Religion" ProQuest Dissertations & Theses (PQDT) database; Nasr, Ch. 2; *Islam in Transition*, 44-48 & 115-121

- Muslim Perceptions of the Colonial Masters and their Thought and Culture
- Diagnosing Crisis and Early Reactions
- Early Muslim Thinkers – Afghani, 'Abdu, Tahawi, Sayyid Ahmad Khan

Short Assignment (1-2 pages): *Find 5 examples from the popular media that creatively captures the "Crisis" that parallels or expands on the readings for this week. Popular media includes newspapers, magazines, blogs, images and videos. The examples should be followed by your brief comments as to the significance of each item.*

OR

Response Paper (500 words): *Without listing the various crises faced by Muslims and Muslim societies, discuss the crisis you saw as most critical/significant and the one least critical/significant and WHY. Explain your reasons to the reader and reflect on why you made these choices and not others? DUE on FEB 15*

WEEK 6 (Feb 18-22): "The Political Crisis": The Question of Governance

Readings: *Cambridge Illustrated*, Chapter 6 (skim); *Modernity*: 55-87; *Islam in Transition*, 16-19, 24-34, 41-43 & 261-340.

- Contemporary Islamic political thought
- Recurring and key Islamic terms of Islamic political theory
- Islam and Democracy
- Role of Shari'ah in Islamic governance

Short Assignment 3 (GROUP WORK, 1-2 pages): *Reflecting on your readings for this week, as a group, draw a comprehensible intellectual map of Muslim responses to the Political Crisis. Your presentation must express the spectrum of political views relationally. In other words it should capture the commonalities and differences among the various positions. You may use bullet points, charts or figures, short descriptions or any other creative medium. You will be asked to present your map of contemporary Islamic political thought in class. DUE on FEB 22*

WEEK 7 (Feb 25-Mar 1): The Question of Economics: State, Economy and Law (Shari'ah)

Readings: *Cambridge Illustrated*, Chapter 5 (skim); *Modernity*: 90-120; *Islam in Transition*, 100-113, 128-132 & 228-260;

Mar 1: MIDTERM EXAM

SPRING BREAK: Fri, Mar 1 (4:30 p.m.) - Mon, Mar 11 (8:30 a.m.)

WEEK 9 (Mar 11-15): Muslim Response I: Reformist/Modernist Tradition

Readings: “Modernism” encyclopedia entry on Davidson Library website under the database *Oxford Islamic Studies Online* http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t236/e0539?_hi=0&_pos=3; *Islam in Transition*, 7-15, 20-23, 122-127, 143-156, 345-360 & 507-512

- Origins, Developments and Characteristics of the Modernist thought
- Its Major Proponents, Significant Ideas and Method of Inquiry
- Influence and Impact

Mar 11: RESOURCES for your Group Project Due Today
March 11: Book Report is Due Today

WEEK 10 (Mar 18-22): Response II – Fundamentalist/Salafi Tradition

Readings: “Fundamentalism” encyclopedia entry on Davidson Library website under the database *Oxford Islamic Studies Online*

http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t236/e0256?_hi=1&_pos=1

Mawdudi “Our Message” (will be provided) *Global Salafism* (will be provided); *Islam in Transition*, 59-63, 409-416 & 430-443

- Origins, Development & Characteristics of Salafi Movement
- Salafi Doctrine and its Critique
- Varieties of Salafism
- Its Major Proponents, Significant Ideas and Method of Inquiry
- Influence and Impact

EASTER BREAK: Mar 30 (4:30 p.m.)- Apr. 3 (8:30 a.m.)

NOTE: IRB application for interviewing people should be submitted by Mar 30.

WEEK 11 (Mar 25-29): Response III – The Tradition and the Traditionalists

Readings: *The Crisis of the Modern World* (complete);

- Development and Characteristics of the Traditional Response
- ‘Traditional’ vs. ‘Traditionalist’
- Critique of the Modern World
- Centrality of the Sacred

WEEK 12 (Apr 3-5): Response III continued...

Readings: Lumbard, Ch. 2; *What is Traditional Islam?* (will be provided) & Nasr, Chapter 1, 5, & 11

- Debate Surrounding Relevance and Place of Spirituality in the Modern World

- Criticisms and Defense of Islamic Spiritual Traditions
- Revival of Islamic Thought, Culture and Rise of a New Muslim Intellectual Elite

Apr 5: In-Class Debate: *Which Muslim response to modernity is best and why? Why others are wrong?*

WEEK 13 (Apr 8-12): Clash of Civilizations? Islam and the West

Readings: *Occidentalism* (complete); *Islam in Transition*, 341-344 & 366-370; Nasr, Ch. 13

Movie (Apr 8): We will begin watching *Mooz-lum* in the class but you will finish it on your own.

Apr 8: Response Paper is Due Today: *Which Muslim response to modernity in your informed opinion is the best and why? Why others are wrong?*

WEEK 14 (Apr 15-19): What a Billion Muslims Really Think?

Readings: *Who Speaks*, 29-166 (selections will be announced and groups will present the readings);

Response Paper (500 words): *Pick readings (including the movie Mooz-lum) from Week 13 OR 14 and reflect on them. It is entirely up to you as to on what you choose to focus. The important thing is that your response paper should be thoughtful, academic in tone, engaged with the readings, demonstrate synthesis of the various points of view and should communicate your thoughts on the subject. Due on Apr 19*

Apr 15: IN-CLASS DEBATE II: ISLAM AND THE WEST

WEEK 15 (Apr 22-26): Concluding Thoughts: Globalization, Future of Islam and Modernity

Readings: *Modernity*, 466-502; Lumbard, Ch. 8;

WEEK 16 (Apr 29-May 3): Class Presentations and Group Interviews

Apr 29: Group Research Paper is Due Today

IN-CLASS PREZI PRESENTATIONS & GROUP INTERVIEWS (you will schedule interview meetings with me as a group)

Optional Class Days may be used if needed.