

Islamic Religion



RS 202 MEST 261 HIST 261

Spring 2007

Instructor: David Bertaina
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Email:

Class Hours: MWF 12-12:50pm
appointment

Office Hours: MW 2-4pm; by

Location: Langdon 303

Office Location: 245 Trinity Hall

Course Description:

Islam is one of the largest faith communities in the world today. But what does it mean that someone professes to be a Muslim? Are Muslims part of a monolithic community? Together we will embark on a journey this semester, in order to discover the complex history, thought, figures, and contemporary issues surrounding Islam. This course will introduce you to Islam in order to examine its role in interpreting language, ideas, history, culture, and identity in the Muslim world, which extends even into the United States.

The goal of this course is to offer an account of Islam through its history (e.g., Muhammad, the Caliphate, colonialism), texts (e.g., Qur'an, *ʿadīth*, *tafsīr*, *sharīʿa*), communities (e.g., Sunnī, Shīʿī, Sufī) and encounters (Jewish/Christian/Others, women and Islam, political Islam). By the conclusion of the course, you should be able to describe the formative historical development of Islam, the prominent texts and doctrines derived from the Islamic tradition, and the spectrum of Islam in the contemporary period.

As students of Islam, your goals should be to acquire the necessary tools for our semester-long journey. First, an active historical imagination will help you to explore the concepts that we will encounter in our readings. Each of us will have read the text, but a vivid imagination will be required to thoughtfully compose reader responses, essays, and papers that intelligently engage the various topics. Second, properly applied reading skills will help you to understand the vast amount of material written by Muslims. I will call attention to the most important sections, but make sure to capture the general ideas and patterns of the readings. Third, our journey requires dedication to the class as an academic community. Our success will depend upon the contributions of each student, particularly when you are assigned different topics in order to multiply our findings. Finally, the success of our class journey will rely heavily upon academic discipline. Group participation and discussions will bloom when everyone has read attentively and carefully prepared for class. By developing imagination, reading skills, community, and discipline, the class will share in the ongoing conversations about Islam.

Required Texts:

Norman Calder, Jawid Mojaddedi, and Andrew Rippin, eds., *Classical Islam: A Sourcebook of Religious Literature* (London: Routledge, 2003).

Andrew Rippin, *Muslims: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices*, Third edition (London: Routledge, 2005).

Tayeb Salih, *The Wedding of Zein and Other Stories* (Washington, DC: Three Continents, 1985).

Reading selections on E-Reserve:

A. J. Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted* (New York: Touchstone, 1996). [The text is available online at <http://arthurwendover.com/arthurs/koran/koran-arberry10.html>.]

Karen Armstrong, *Islam: A Short History* (New York: Modern Library, 2000) 141-164.

S. Cardenas and A. Flibbert, "National Human Rights Institutions in the Middle East," *Middle East Journal* 59 (2005): 411-436.

Sidney Griffith, "Christianity and Islam in Historical Perspective," 1-14.

A. Guillaume, tr., *The Life of Muhammad* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955) 104-107.

Tarif Khalidi, *The Muslim Jesus* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2001) 51-65.

Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *The Heart of Islam* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 2002).

Uri Rubin, "Prophets and Prophethood." In: *Encyclopedia of the Qur'an*, vol. 4. Ed. Jane Dammen McAuliffe (Leiden: Brill, 2004) 289-307.

Bruce Rutherford, "What do Egypt's Islamists Want?" *Middle East Journal* 60 (2006): 707-731.

Barbara Stowasser, *Women in the Qur'an, Traditions, and Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994) 119-134.

Brannon Wheeler, *Prophets in the Qur'an* (London: Continuum, 2002) 297-320.

Course Structure:

1. **Prompt attendance is vital.** Tardiness or absence may cause you to miss a reader response or quiz. These cannot be made up without contacting me prior to missing a class. Excessive absences (more than three) will result in a course deduction. Any late assignment will drop by ten percent each day.
2. **Full class participation will help us reach our full potential.** Our entire academic community needs everyone to speak and participate in order to be successful. Non-participation decreases our returns and lowers our effectiveness as a class. Be sure to bring the relevant reading materials to class. Occasional quizzes/essays and reader responses will be given on lectures and/or required reading material.
3. **Adherence to the Student Honor Code is critical to our success.** As an academic community, each person contributes to our overall success through their own ideas and concepts. Directly copying or plagiarizing from others detracts from the goal of enhancing our conversation. Plagiarism results in a zero and a referral to the administration.
4. **Take pleasure in your class experience.** Education provides a wonderful opportunity for you to cultivate your intellect. During our semester-long

journey, remember that your intellectual discoveries will affect your decisions in college and beyond. At the conclusion of the semester, take pride in the work you will have accomplished together with our community.

Evaluation:

There are two types of in-class written materials: 1) prepared weekend essays (1-3 pages); and 2) in-class pop quizzes/essays on the reading material. There is also one research paper (4-5 pages) which will respond to one of a choice of topics. Finally, the student will take a written exam during finals week based on a series of factual and essay questions.

Grades will be determined from the following categories:

Attendance/Participation	(25%)
Quizzes and Essays	(35%)
Research Paper	(20%)
Final Written Exam	(20%)

Grading Scale

A	=	100-94%
A-	=	93-90%
B+	=	89-87%
B	=	86-84%
B-	=	83-80%
C+	=	79-77%
C	=	76-74%
C-	=	73-70%
D	=	69-65%
D-	=	64-60%
F	=	59-0%

Academic Dishonesty:

Students should adhere to the rules and regulations of California State University, Chico, especially regarding Plagiarism and Cheating. The academic policy is posted at http://www.csuchico.edu/prs/EMS/EM04/em04_36.htm. Every student enrolled in a Religious Studies course is required to read through the policy and complete the RS tutorial and self test on plagiarism and cheating as a class assignment. The policy of the Department of Religious Studies is to automatically fail anyone who has cheated or plagiarized an assignment with a subsequent referral to the student judicial affairs committee. Please read the standards set in the Code of Students Rights and Responsibilities.

Schedule of Topics:

Week 1: History

Mon, 22 January	Syllabus and class expectations; Visit to Meriam Library for resources
Wed, 24 January	Historical Background: Pre-Islamic Middle East, Arabs, Conquest Readings: <i>Muslims</i> pp. 1-5; <i>Classical Islam</i> 3-5
Fri, 26 January	No Class Meeting: Watch "Little Mosque on the Prairie" (CBC)

<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=4689644836814333621&hl=en> (or try youtube.com)

Readings: *Muslims* 7-21; *Classical Islam* 6-9

Weekend Essay #1: "My perceptions of Islam" (Essay Due Monday beginning of class)

Week 2: Concepts of Scriptures I

Mon, 29 January The Qur'ān: Themes of God, Prophets, Jesus, Judgment Day, Paradise

Readings: *Muslims* 22-33; *Classical Islam* 10-15

Wed, 31 January Assembly of Qur'ān, Manuscripts, Authority, Inimitability

Readings: *Muslims* 33-43; Read Sūra 12 (Yūsuf) online (A.J.

Arberry)

Fri, 2 February Commentaries and Tales of the Prophets genre

Readings: *Encyclopedia of the Qur'ān* "Prophets and Prophethood" 289-306 (E-Reserve)

Week 3: The Prophet and Prophethood

Mon, 6 February Muhammad: Biography; Sīra Tradition in Sources; Authority and Significance

Readings: *Muslims* 44-58; *Classical Islam* 16-18

Wed, 8 February Traditions about Muhammad

Readings: *Classical Islam* 19-35, 64-72; *Life of Muhammad* 104-107 (E-Reserve)

Fri, 10 February Battles and early Islamic Community

Readings: *Muslims* 59-66; *Classical Islam* 83-87

Weekend Essay #2: "My Life in the Early Islamic Community" (Essay Due Monday)

Week 4: Concepts of Scriptures II

Mon, 12 February The Qur'ān: Grammatical development of Arabic and its script

Readings: *Muslims* 66-72; *Classical Islam* 73-82, 88-92

Wed, 14 February Literary analysis of the Qur'ān; Sources of tradition; Jesus in Islamic tradition

Readings: *Classical Islam* 59-63; *Prophets in the Qur'ān: Jesus* 297-320 (E-Reserve); *Muslim Jesus* 51-59 (E-Reserve)

Fri, 16 February Islamic Theology: Islamic sects, Free Will & Predestination, Reason, Justice, Uncreated Qur'ān, Unity; Al-Ashari and Al-Maturidi

Readings: *Muslims* 73-87

Week 5: The Tradition Elaborated I

- Mon, 19 February Beginnings of *Fiqh* (Law) and *Shari‘a* (Religious Law): The Sunna, Schools of Law, Principles of Jurisprudence, Morality, Judge, Justice
Readings: *Muslims* 88-102; *Classical Islam* 36-49
- Wed, 21 February Islamic approaches to Law
Readings: *Heart of Islam* 115-156 (E-Reserve)
- Fri, 23 February Origins of *‘adīth* (Traditions); Islamic Ritual Practices
Readings: *Muslims* 103-117; *Classical Islam* 50-58

Week 6: The Religious Spectrum

- Mon, 26 February Shī‘ī Islam: The spectrum of Islam; Shī‘ī origins, the Qur’ān, the *‘adīth*, the Imāmate
Readings: *Muslims* 119-128; *Classical Islam* 97-118
- Wed, 28 February Shī‘ī theology; practices and sects
Readings: *Muslims* 128-135; *Classical Islam* 118-133
- Fri, 2 March Religious and political authority in Sunni and Shī‘ī Islam
Readings: *Classical Islam* 163-169; *Heart of Islam* 57-87 (E-Reserve)

Week 7: The Tradition Elaborated II

- Mon, 5 March Islamic Issues of Faith and Philosophy
Readings: *Muslims* 149-159; *Classical Islam* 134-146
- Wed, 7 March Theology and Reasoning, Dialectical Theology (*Kalām*), God’s Speech and Attributes
Readings: *Muslims* 160-172; *Classical Islam* 147-162
- Fri, 9 March Medieval Islamic Philosophy: The Soul, Reason, Perfection
Readings: *Classical Islam* 170-177
- Weekend Essay #3: “My Fatwa on Veiling” (Essay Due Monday)

Week 8: The Tradition Elaborated III

- Mon, 12 March Islam and Modernity; Law and Ritual
Readings: *Muslims* 173-199; *Classical Islam* 178-209
- Wed, 14 March Sacred Art and Architecture: Geography; Mosques, Calligraphy, tombs and devotion
Readings: *Classical Islam* 210-227
- Fri, 16 March Qur’ān Recitation and Music in Islam
No Readings

Spring Break 19-23 March

Week 9: Inner Islamic Discourse

Mon, 26 March Mysticism in Islam: Sufism, Doctrine and practice, Sufi Orders, Ibn Arabi

Readings: *Muslims* 136-148; *Classical Islam* 228-247

Wed, 28 March Al-Ghazali and Rumi; Wine and Drunkenness

Readings: *Classical Islam* 248-268

Fri, 30 March **Cesar Chavez' s Birthday: No Classes**

Week 10: Outer Islamic Discourse I

Mon, 2 April Muslim-Christian History

Readings: *Christianity and Islam* 1-14 (E-Reserve)

Wed, 4 April Colonialism and Islam

Readings: *Islam: A Short History* 141-164

Fri, 6 April Biographies of Muhammad

Readings: *Muslims* 200-228

Week 11: Outer Islamic Discourse II

Mon, 9 April Women in Islamic tradition

Readings: *Women in the Qur'an: Modern Muslim Interpretations* 119-134 (E-Reserve)

Wed, 11 April The Qur'an in contemporary scholarship: Major figures of exegesis, doctrines

Readings: *Muslims* 229-256

Fri, 13 April Islamic Identity: The Pillars and the modern world

Readings: *Muslims* 257-283

Week 12: Contemporary themes in Islam I

Mon, 16 April Muslims in America; African-American and Immigrant Muslims

Research Paper (4-5 pages) Due at the beginning of class

Readings: Begin next class readings

Wed, 18 April Global Islam: The Spectrum

Readings: *Heart of Islam* 87-112 (E-Reserve)

Fri, 20 April Women in contemporary Islam

Readings: *Muslims* 287-300

Week 13: Contemporary themes in Islam II

Mon, 23 April Islam through the eyes of the Arabic novel (Discussions this week)

Readings: *The Wedding of Zein* 31-75

Wed, 25 April Islam through the eyes of the Arabic novel

Readings: *The Wedding of Zein* 75-95

Fri, 27 April Islam through the eyes of the Arabic novel

Readings: *The Wedding of Zein* 95-120

Weekend Essay #4: "My Response to the Wedding of Zein" (Due Monday)

Week 14: Contemporary themes in Islam III

Mon, 30 April Islam in the Contemporary World: Asia, Africa, Europe, and beyond
No Readings

Wed, 2 May Contemporary World Islam: Intellectualism, Traditionalism, and
"Islamism"

Readings: *Muslims* 301-312

Fri, 4 May Human Rights and Islam

Readings: "National Human Rights Institutions" 409-436 (E-

Reserve)

Week 15: Conclusions

Mon, 7 May The Spectrum of Islamic political thought

Readings: "What do Egypt's Islamists Want?" 707-731 (E-

Reserve)

Wed, 9 May Closing Discussions: Islam and the Future

Fri, 11 May Review for Final Written Exam

Final Written Exam: Wed, 16 May 12-1:50pm

Weekend Essays

- #1 “My perceptions of Islam”
 Length: 1-2 pages
 Due: Monday, 29 January

During this first week, you will have just watched “Little Mosque on the Prairie.” Since Islam, the Qur’ an, and Muslims have such a prominent place in contemporary discourse, each of you has a particular perception of Islam. For some, it is part of their faith practice; for others, it is a distant religion that is relatively unknown. In one to two pages, write a brief history of your perceptions of Islam. You may include emotional statements or remain factual in your statements about your experiences. Submit the completed essay at the beginning of class on Monday.

- #2 “My Life in the Early Islamic Community”
 Length: 2-3 pages
 Due: Monday 12 February

After reading sections of the Qur’ an and understanding the important rules and guidelines for the early Islamic community, you should have some sense of the factors that shaped the lives of people in the early seventh century. We have discussed the historical background and the new challenges facing communities in the Middle East. Imagine yourself as a member of the early Islamic community in Mecca, and write about how your role fits into the community. One of your main goals should be to demonstrate your intellectual engagement with our primary texts.

- #3 “My Fatwa on Veiling”
 Length: 2-3 pages
 Due: Monday 12 March

During this weekend you will read “Law and Ritual” from your *Classical Islam* Reader (pp. 178-209; see esp. 198). Imagine yourself as a Muslim legal judge, and you must issue a legal ruling (*fatwā*) concerning veiling. Should people be veiled? Women and/or men? Is it appropriate in some instances or locations and not in others? You can base your argument on any number of sources, including the Qur’ an, tradition (*sunna*), and/or Logic (*ma ‘nā*).

- #4 “My Response to the Wedding of Zein”
 Length: 2-3 pages
 Due: Monday 30 April

“The Wedding of Zein” by Tayeb Salih is a religious novel. The narrative shows a remarkable relationship between community members and Islamic tradition. Compose a response to the story that reflects on the place of Islam within the text. How do themes from classical Islamic literature guide what seems to be a simple folk narrative? How do particular characters represent or embody various religious characteristics? Share your findings with the class!

Research Paper (4-5 pages)

Due: Monday 16 April at the beginning of class

There are a number of options for the subject of your research paper. Your task is to discover some of the basic facts about a particular issue that is pertinent to Islam, and research that issue in the *Encyclopedia of the Qur'an* and/or other written resources. You will need to cite at least three written sources for your paper [online sources should be viewed with suspicion]. You may either select one of the topics listed below, or consult with me if you wish to write on another topic.

- #1 ▪ *adith* (Traditions)
 What is a *▪adith*? How did they develop and become part of Islamic tradition? What are the major texts? What are some of the interesting stories in them? How do they function today? First of all, your paper should give a description and historical account of *▪adith*. Second, your paper should look at *▪adith* in our contemporary context, and how you think they influence current laws or thinking.
- #2 Prophets and Characters in the Qur'an
 Write about a particular prophet or major figure in the Qur'an. Research information about this prophet or qur'anic figure, and talk about why this person is important for Muslims today. First, your goal should be to describe the character in the Qur'an and provide a context for why that person is in the narrative. Second, your paper should talk about how that person influences contemporary thinking and cultural values today.
- #3 Topics in Islamic Law
 What are the origins of Islamic law? Is there one legal code, or many? How have Islamic laws affected the governance of peoples in history and our contemporary period? Your task is to accomplish two goals. First, your paper should provide a basic description of Islamic law and why it is important to study. Second, your paper should focus on a particular topic in Islamic law, and discuss how this topic affects our discourse on current affairs. Subjects may include marriage and divorce, rules for minorities, how to conduct affairs with outsiders, or some other topic. The key is to analyze your topic in the Qur'an, Islamic tradition, and in our present time.