

**Religion 25**  
**Sufism: Islamic Mysticism v1**  
**Spring Term 2014**

**Instructor:** Kevin Reinhart (for something about the instructor including his preferences for written work, check <http://www.dartmouth.edu/~akr/>)

**Office:** Thornton Hall 315

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**office hours:** TBD

Class Meets at the 10 hour (MWF 10:00-11:05; X-hour Thur 12:00-12:50) (Please keep free)

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**Description**

For the majority of Islam's history, the majority of Muslims had at least some connection to Sufism. It was the dominant form of theology for most Muslims, and its Masters were powerful figures—spiritually and often socio-politically. Currently many Muslims believe Sufism is "not really Islam," and around the globe Sufi shrines are being attacked and Sufis are being assaulted. Yet Sufism remains deeply ingrained throughout Islamdom, and is a growing force in the US and Europe. Rumi, the great Anatolian Sufi, is the best selling poet in the US!

What is Sufism, and how should it be understood? In this course we will cover the history, including the modern history of Sufism—major figures, major concepts, rituals, and music. The two centerpieces of the course will be careful reading of a major theosophical text that explains Sufi theory and metaphysics, and the great masterpiece of Rumi, the *Mesnevi*, a series of charming and profound stories written in couplets.

In this course we will begin, as all courses on Islam ought to begin, with the Qur'ān. We will then consider some of those whose lives later Sufis looked back upon as decisive. We will then consider the formative history and doctrines of Sufism, particularly in 9th-13th-century Iraq, Iran, and Central Asia. Next we will consider the crucial doctrines of Sufism: that life is a journey, that this world is an illusion, that being is other than it appears to be. This theosophical unit will give us a chance to read a classic of Sufism, *The Path of God's Bondsman*, and to discuss it at length. Since Sufism's scope is the entire world of Islam, in this iteration of the course we will take as a case study Sufism in the area that became the Ottoman Empire (Turkey, the Eastern Europe, the Arab Middle East). This will give us a chance to think about Sufi architecture, the role of Sufism in converting non-Muslims to Islam, Sufi antinomians (radically anti-social Sufis), Sufi institutions and the masterpiece of Sufi literature, the *Mesnevī-i Me'nevī* of Mevlanā Jalāladdīn Rūmī) and consider how the themes we have examined show up in this masterpiece of Persian literature. We will then briefly survey the praxis of Sufism: the rituals and institutions of the Sufi orders, and the rituals designed to induce ecstatic apprehension of divinity. We will end the course with a consideration of Sufism in the Modern world, both in Islamdom, and in the West.

**Reading**

Many of our readings will be in primary sources (Muslim mystical texts), the theory being that the tradition is spoken for best when it speaks for itself. The secondary sources too include extensive quotations from Sufi sources. This reading is not easy, and must be done in timely fashion. It's hard to catch up.

**Assignments**

Grades are composed of 40% class participation—particularly including the reading of Rāzī: *The Path of God's Bondsman*) Students will be asked to lead discussions of particular texts.

Other assignments: TBD depending on class size

**Required Purchase:**

(Recommended purchase from Amazon; I can help with this)

- 1) Carl Ernst, *Sufism*
- 2) Dāya Najm al-Dīn Rāzī, *The Path of God's Bondsmen*
- 3) Farīdaddīn al-‘Aṭṭār, *The Conference of the Birds*
- 4) Rumi, *The Mesnevi* (tr Mujaddadi; this translation *only!*)
- 5) Readings on Blackboard (these should be printed, not read on screen)

**Reserve (from Baker-Berry Reserve)**

**POSSIBLY OTHER BOOKS TBD**

**HONOR PRINCIPLE:** The faculty and students of Dartmouth College recognize the Academic Honor Principle as fundamental to the education process. Any instance of academic dishonesty is considered a violation of the Academic Honor Principle and may subject a student to disciplinary action. Fundamental to the principle of independent learning are the requirements of honesty and integrity in the performance of academic assignments, both in the classroom and outside. Dartmouth operates on the principle of academic honor, without proctoring of examinations. Students who submit work which is not their own or who commit other acts of academic dishonesty forfeit the opportunity to continue at Dartmouth.

The Academic Honor Principle depends on the willingness of students, individually and collectively, to maintain and perpetuate standards of academic honesty. Each Dartmouth student accepts the responsibility to be honorable in the student's own academic affairs, as well as to support the Principle as it applies to others.

**Any student who becomes aware of a violation of the Academic Honor Principle is bound by honor to take some action.** The student may report the violation, speak personally to the student observed in violation of the Principle, exercise some form of social sanction, or do whatever the student feels is appropriate under the circumstances. If Dartmouth students stand by and do nothing, both the spirit and operation of the Academic Honor Principle are severely threatened

Plagiarism will not be tolerated. Any idea, phrase, wording, or argument that you get from another source, printed or otherwise, must be cited. When in doubt, footnote.

For more information on the Honor Principle:

<http://www.dartmouth.edu/~reg/regulations/undergrad/acad-honor.html>

For questions about academic citation, please refer to *Sources*, available at:

<http://www.dartmouth.edu/~sources/>

**STATEMENT ON DISABILITIES**

Students with disabilities enrolled in this course and who may need disability-related classroom accommodations are encouraged to make an appointment to see me before the end of the second week of the term. All discussions will remain confidential, although the Student Accessibility Services office may be consulted to discuss appropriate implementation of any accommodation requested.

For more information of Student accessibility services

<http://www.dartmouth.edu/~accessibility/facstaff/>

### Class Schedule

<p><b>WEEK : 24-28 March</b></p>	<p><b>“Mysticism” (discussion)</b></p> <p>Reading: Stace, from <i>Mysticism and Philosophy</i>  Katz, <i>Language, Epistemology, and Mysticism</i>  Somewhat formidable reading, but please find the general gist of what Stace is asserting and what Katz is refuting. A good starting point for us before we start thinking about Sufism, and whether it is “Islamic Mysticism.”</p> <p><b>An introduction to Islam</b></p> <p>Ernst, (henceforth “E”) Chapter 1  Schimmel, “Sufism and the Islamic Tradition”  Kalabādhī, “How Sufis Account for their being called Sufis, etc.”</p> <p><b>The Qur’ān as a mystical document</b></p> <p>E, Chap. 2</p> <p>Qur’ān passages (handout or Blackboard); <b>The Qur’ān as a mystical document II</b></p> <p>Commentary on Surat al-Baqarah (Ayyoub)</p>
<p><b>WEEK 2: 31 March-4 April 4</b></p>	<p><b>Proto- and Formative Sufism</b></p> <p>Trimmingham “The Formation of the Schools of Mysticism”  Zaehner, “The Ascension of Abū Yazīd” (be sure to consider the questions attached to the handout)</p> <p><b>Sufi Personalities</b></p> <p>Smith, “Rabī‘ah etc.”  ‘Aṭṭār, Biographies of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and others  Mason, “The Death of al-Hallāj”</p>
<p><b>WEEK 3: April 7-10</b></p>	<p><b>Sufi Assumptions: The Path</b></p> <p>Attar, <i>Conference of the Birds</i> ; (You will want to look at the introduction) + lines 616-2598 (Note that Attar’s method (typical of Persian poetry and prose) is to give a bit of a narrative, then go off on a tangent that relates to the topic at hand, and perhaps even another tangent, then back to the narrative. Try to figure out what the “topic at hand” might be that is illustrated by the seeming tangent.</p> <p>Attar, <i>Conference of the Birds</i> ; lines 2599-4455  “Way of a Mohammadan Mystic” (lightly to see how the idea in Attar becomes instantiated in Sufi thought and institutionalized in Sufi Practice)</p>
<p><b>WEEK 4: April 14-18</b></p>	<p><b>Introduction to Razi</b></p>

	<p>E, 3</p> <p><i>Rāzī</i>, Translator's Introduction; Rāzī's Introductory material (to p. 60)</p> <p>The Nature of Creation</p> <p><i>Rāzī</i> 60-93</p> <p><b>Anthropology I</b></p> <p><i>Rāzī</i> 94-122</p> <p><b>Anthropology I</b></p> <p><i>Rāzī</i> 94-122</p> <p><b>Anthropology II &amp; Prophetology (Historical Soteriology)</b></p> <p><i>Rāzī</i> 124-189</p> <p><b>The Process of Perfection</b></p> <p><i>Rāzī</i> 190-267</p>
<b>WEEK 5:</b> April 21-5	<p><b>Rumī:</b> Spiritual Diary of Rumi's Father; Readings from Shams al-Tabrizi: <i>Me and Rumi</i>;</p> <p>Rumi: <i>Mesnevi</i> v. 1</p>
<b>WEEK 6:</b> April 28-May 2	Rumi II
<b>WEEK 7:</b> May 5-9	May 9 no class
<b>WEEK 8:</b> May 12-16	No class
<b>WEEK 9:</b> May 19-23	Modern Sufism
<b>WEEK 10:</b> May 26-28	No class 26 May (Memorial Day)