

Rel 314Q Islam

Spring 2013

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Note: Student work submitted as part of this course may be reviewed by Oxford and Emory faculty/staff for the purposes of improving instruction and enhancing Emory education.

General Education Program Requirements: This course fulfills HSC (History, Society, Cultures), CWR (Continuing Writing), and INQ (Ways of Inquiry) requirements.

"Ways of Inquiry" courses are designed to introduce students to the specific ways knowledge is pursued in each discipline through active engagement in the discipline's methods of analysis. INQ courses start with questions, are student-centered and often collaborative, and place increasing responsibility on students for their own learning. Students not only experience each discipline's distinctiveness but also move beyond its boundaries to understand connections with other disciplines and fields. These explorations often consider ethical issues and social responsibility and expand classroom learning with real-world experiences.

Course Description

This writing-intensive, inquiry-based course explores the diversity of religious beliefs and practices in Islam, one of the world's major religions and multi-cultural traditions. It assumes no prior knowledge of the subject. In addition, one does not need to be a believer in any particular religion, or for that matter a skeptic, to realize the importance of Islam in history and in the contemporary world. A major aim of this course is to give voice to Islamic texts and provide a window into how Muslims in varying socio-historical contexts view themselves. Among the specific topics addressed are: Islamic sacred sources such as Qur'an and Sunna, Islamic doctrine and law, philosophy, Sufi mysticism, gender and the role of women, and the ongoing debate between secularism and traditionalism in contemporary Islamic societies.

The course's INQ designation calls attention to inquiry and analysis as main features of our class. Inquiry is a systematic process of exploring issues, of seeking for information by asking questions and using the methods of an academic discipline to find answers. Inquiry-based learning requires that you embark on a journey of questioning within our scholarly study in order to learn also about the academic discipline of the comparative study of world religions. In other words, you will be asked to investigate the Islamic traditions we study via your own increasing scholarly vocabulary and analysis projects. You will learn to apply some the approaches, methods and categories employed in the comparative study of world religions. In addition, you will be asked to apply in a disciplined manner what you learn in our course readings in Islam in order both to cultivate an appreciation for such methods and categories and to critique and offer improvements to them in the manner of an independent religion scholar.

An aim of any study of religious traditions is an understanding of the basic assumptions and practices of different peoples. The discipline of comparative religious studies is not a means to evaluate traditions for worth, but a scholarly means of determining patterns, commonalities and differences between religious practices, beliefs, and traditions in general while recognizing the

unique characteristics of and pluralities within each. Islam is a highly diverse tradition with many internal vicissitudes. A premise of this class is that different Muslims have had vastly differing (at times complementary, at times opposing) interpretations of Islam, at times referring to different texts as authoritative, at times offering radically different interpretations of the same texts. Given this spectrum of interpretations, one can never assume that any one Muslim's perspective is somehow "orthodox" to the exclusion of all other perspectives. Our readings will include samples of primary sources from all 1400 years of Islamic civilizations in many regions of the Muslim world. These materials will allow us to question essentializations of the religion and hopefully achieve a de-centered, new understanding of the idea of Islam, an idea which continues to take shape.

Objectives

From the foregoing you can see that the ultimate aim of the course is to neither glorify nor critique Islam or Muslims but rather to equip you with the tools to evaluate the ways in which Islam is conceptualized. In short, the goals and objectives for you as a student enrolled in this course are:

- to know some of the diversity of religious beliefs and practices in Muslim history and present;
- to learn how to ask useful questions according to the methods of the academic study of religion;
- to analyze and critically evaluate ideas, arguments, and points of view related to the study of religion, including the problems related to the study of Islam such as negative media stereotypes and "essentialism";
- to construct your own arguments within the framework of the academic study of religion to convince others that your way of conceptualizing a matter is correct; and
- to develop further your critical skills as a thinker, reader, writer, and speaker within and beyond the academic study of religion.

Required Readings

- Carl Ernst. *Following Muhammad: Rethinking Islam in the Contemporary World* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2003).
- Michael Sells, *Approaching the Qur'an: The Early Revelations* (Ashland: White Clouds Press, 2007).
- Farid Esack. *On Being a Muslim: Finding a Religious Path in the World Today* (London: Oneworld Publications Ltd., 1999 [reprint 2009]).
- Additional readings: Other required readings will be made available on Blackboard (Bb) throughout the semester. We will also make extensive use of resources available on the Internet. The web is not a library but it can be a rich and useful resource if navigated cautiously, i.e., if you critically evaluate and assess the information you find there.

Blackboard

This course will use the communication tools on Blackboard. Announcements, readings, documents, and grades will be posted on Blackboard as well as some helpful Internet links. Many of our assignments require you to use Blackboard as well. You would do well to acquaint yourselves with some of the Blackboard features and use them as a frequent point of entry and exploration around many of the issues we will be discussing.

Grading

This is a reading and writing intensive class. The class is listed at the 300 level, and I will treat it accordingly. You do not need to major in religion to take this class. However, I do expect you to work hard and to contribute to class discussions. While I will lecture for part of the class almost every day, it will be conducted much more on a seminar model of examining your reactions to the reading material. The readings are engaging, and heavy. If you have not done the readings, it will simply be impossible for you to participate in the discussion. While we will suffer from that, the main damage will be done to your own learning and your grade. This equally applies to the amount and quality of writing expected of you. Your final grade will be calculated as follows:

1. Preparation and Participation	10%
2. One (1) Lecture Presentation	10%
3. Academic Journal	10%
4. Six (6) Inquiry Essays	40%
5. Final Inquiry Project	20%
6. Course Portfolio	10%

(Grading Scale: A, B, C, D, F. Plus and minus grades may be given on individual assignments and final grades.)

Course Requirements

1. Preparation and Participation (10%)

Attendance: You must be present for class meetings in order to do well in the course. The assigned readings will be supplemented by in-class lectures, discussions, exercises, and more. Make sure you arrive for class on time. Latecomers will be counted absent at the very beginning of class. Should you be late, you are permitted to enter the classroom only if you do so silently and without disturbing class proceedings. You are **allowed to be absent from a total of three (3) class sessions. With every additional absence your final grade for this class will go down 5%.** This means you will have to plan ahead with your allowance of three absences. Talk to me ahead of time if you foresee any difficulties for yourself with this policy.

Professional Classroom Behavior: My expectations of professionalism extend, of course, to classroom etiquette. This includes such behavior as arriving on time, staying in the classroom until an official break or the end of the class period, packing up only when class has finished, and using a computer only for class purposes. You must not use cell phones and other wireless devices during class. If you use your phone, let's say, to tweet or to check the stock market, or if your phone goes off during class, you will be counted as absent for that day.

Preparation: Reading assignments for each week are due at the beginning of each week unless noted otherwise. I expect you to keep up with all readings and assignments and to get the notes for missed class sessions from your peers. Appropriate preparation means reading the material several times, making notes, and coming to class with specific questions; part of this preparation should include consultation with recommended readings and standard reference works in order to understand fully the argument in the text. Here are some hints for studying and learning new names and terms:

- ❖ Use the glossaries and indexes in Ernst and Sells.

- ❖ Write down notes in the margins of the books or articles after you look things up, or take notes on your computer.
- ❖ Think about names and terms in relation to key issues in the course.
- ❖ Use study questions to stimulate your intellectual journal entries.
- ❖ Outline complicated readings so you can create an overview of the subject for greater familiarity.

Participation: There will be ample opportunity for you to participate in our class. Apart from my lectures you will be involved in activities such as class discussion, group work with subsequent presentations, and in-class writing assignments. Additional activities and assignments including peer assessments on written and oral work will also count toward your participation grade. While I will call on you often and ask about the content of assigned readings you are strongly encouraged to ask questions and suggest topics for discussion in class on your own.

Student Minutes and Presentation: Taking notes on lectures and class discussion is a critical part of your learning experience. You are all expected to take notes during class as you will have to draw on them for your own work as well as when preparing for the essays. Your notes will also be the basis for **brief 2-minute presentations** that each of you is to give in class as part of your participation grade. Every day our meetings will start with one of you presenting on the previous class session. Be concise as you only have two minutes of talking time, and resist the temptation to provide a summary of the previous class. Instead, highlight the main points and provide details only when relevant. Your peers will provide you with feedback on your presentation's content, structure, and delivery. (Additional tips and guidelines for presentations and public speaking can be found on our Blackboard site.)

Midpoint Reflections: In order to give substantial focus to your observations, questions, and ideas in our class, I will be asking each of you to take a turn doing a "midpoint reflection" – one of you each class session. Roughly half-way through our class, we will shift gears and turn the time over to you. You will summarize **one** key point or idea from the discussion so far, and then direct our attention to one question or issue you feel has NOT been covered enough in the discussion to that point. (This might be something you noticed in your own reading that seemed striking, puzzling, moving, or annoying. Or it might be one of the study questions that we have not yet had time to address.) You should plan on using no more than 1-2 minutes for both of these steps combined. After you raise your question/issue, the other class members will join in discussion with you on that topic and ones related to it that occur to them. I will be completely silent for at least 5 minutes during this time in order to let you facilitate the discussion and encourage you to talk among yourselves. After 5 minutes I may re-join, summarize the discussion, or I may just let the discussion keep rolling along. The object of this activity is to enable us to take a fresh turn in our class discussions, to focus on questions or angles that might not otherwise occur to us as a whole group, and to receive contributions to the discussion from all members of the class.

2. Academic Journal (10%)

For this class you are asked to keep an academic journal. The academic journal is designed to encourage you to keep up with your reading, keep you engaged with the material, enrich class discussion (as you will already have something to say), help you practice your skills in thinking critically and writing fluidly, and, finally, provide a log of your thoughts at this state in your studies. We will use Blackboard's blog function to collect your entries which also allows us to read and comment on each other's writing. Additional guidelines and descriptions can be found on our Bb site.

3. Lecture Presentation (10%)

During the course of the semester we will be discussing a wide range of concepts, events, or people in the history and contemporary reality of western religious traditions. Frequently we will benefit from additional information and analysis that goes beyond what our readings offer. Therefore, you will be assigned a particular topic for which to develop expertise through additional out-of-class research. You will be responsible for an **eight-to-ten-minute lecture presentation** based on your topic in order to deepen the class' understanding of the subject. All presenters are required to meet with me prior to the presentation date to discuss the results of their initial research and ideas for the presentation. You must email me ahead of our meeting a list of at least three reliable academic sources you are planning to use for your presentation. Correct citation usage is expected. I suggest you follow the conventions of *The Chicago Manual of Style* for all references. Furthermore, everybody will write one peer assessment for another class member's lecture presentation over the course of the semester. (See guidelines on Blackboard for further information.)

4. Six (6) Inquiry Essays (40%)

The inquiry essays (see course schedule for dates) encourage you to study one topic carefully and in its context, as you refine your ability to write clearly and argue persuasively within the academic study of religion. All inquiry essays will be **take-home essays of 1,000 words (+/- 10%)**. I will post in advance of each assignment essay prompts as well as guidelines on how to write essays.

There will be eight (8) opportunities to write inquiry essays throughout the semester. **You must write a total of six (6) inquiry papers throughout the semester.** This means that you have the freedom to choose which essays you want to write in accordance with your interest and schedule. However, in **Week 7** of the semester (See course schedule for exact dates.) I will ask you to select one of the essays you have written up to that point for me to grade. Additionally, I will choose a second of your essays in the semester's first half at random and grade it as well. We will repeat this process in **Week 12** of the semester for two of the inquiry essays you wrote between Week 7 and 11. Regardless of which papers you choose to write, all essays must be submitted on time as indicated on the course schedule. Late papers will not be accepted. **Each of the four graded essay will be worth 10% of your final grade.**

Regardless of your particular approach to the topic, you must have a specific point or claim to argue in your essay. I encourage you to write a thesis paragraph ahead of time and to discuss it with me. Many students have found that it improves the quality of their writing. (See Bb for further additional guidelines for the inquiry essays.)

5. Final Inquiry and Analysis Project (20%)

Your final inquiry assignment asks you to write an inquiry/analysis essay of 1,500 words (+/- 10%). The guidelines for the previous inquiry essays also apply to the final essay. Different from the earlier assignments, however, the final inquiry essay gives you the opportunity to reflect in a thoughtful, mature, informed, and scholarly manner on **a topic of your choice** relating to our course. Any topic or text that relates to and draws on the materials from this course is permissible. Make sure that you offer an argument about, or interpretation of, the topic you choose. Make one overall point. Do not try to do too much. The point of this assignment is to encourage depth, since the journals encourage breadth.

6. Course Portfolio (10%)

The portfolio allows you to exhibit your efforts, progress, and achievements as a thinker and writer in the academic study of religion this semester and gives you a chance to reflect on your own learning by identifying strengths and weaknesses as well as growth over time. Your task for the portfolio is to choose **three (3) pieces of writing** from this semester that demonstrate your development as a scholar of religion in relationship to the central learning goals for the course. You have the freedom to include any piece of writing from this semester, with one exception: You must include one of the inquiry essays you wrote but for which you did not receive a grade. In a **reflective essay of 1,000 words**, you will make an argument about your development as a scholar of religion and explain why you have chosen the works you have and how they show your development. It will be important for you to remember that the portfolio is not just a collection of your work this semester, but a deliberate **selection**. In other words, you should think carefully about which pieces you choose to include and spell out in the reflective essay the reasons that justify their inclusion. (Additional guidelines will be made available on Bb.)

Office Hours and Opportunities for Conferencing about Your Writing

The number and nature of the writing assignments make this a writing-intensive course. Peer reviews, class discussion, and written feedback that I give you on your assignments are meant to help you reflect on your writing and to enhance your written work through a series of revisions. In addition to these formal procedures, I also encourage you to see me during my office hours in order for us to reflect together on how to improve your writing. If my office hours conflict with your schedule, I will be happy to make an appointment with you at a more convenient time. At a minimum, I expect everyone to stop by my office at least once in the semester—by yourself, in pairs, or in small groups. Bring a piece of writing together with feedback and comments so that we have something to start our discussion.

Facilitating a Stronger Learning Experience

Those students needing help with writing, English, or research, please also note the support provided by the Writing Center run by Dr. Adriane Ivey or the ESL program headed by Ms. Stacy Bell. If a disability requires special circumstances for you in the classroom, taking notes, or taking tests or exams, please contact the Office of Disability Services to initiate the accommodation request process. More detailed information is available on the website at www.ods.emory.edu.

Academic Fairness

All students deserve an atmosphere of fairness, honesty and maturity. All of us at Oxford College live by the standards set forth in the Honor Code, which includes the “responsibility for maintaining standards of unimpeachable honesty in all academic work.” The Honor Code also indicates that we cannot tolerate actions in others that violate this code, so we (and you) are obligated to report violations. Oxford College takes this honor code very seriously, as do I, and penalties for violations are severe. Please read the Honor Code carefully; I will trust you to conduct yourselves accordingly.

Course Schedule

Week 1

Jan. 15 Syllabus and Introduction

I. Islam in the Eyes of the West

Jan. 17 Clash of Civilizations?

Reading: Ernst, *Following Muhammad*, Preface and Chapter 1, "Islam in the Eyes of the West."
Additional readings (Bb): Huntington et al.

MLK Day (Jan. 21)

Week 2

Jan. 22 The Study of Islam and the Nature of Religion

Reading: Ernst, *Following Muhammad*, Chapter 2. Additional reading (Bb): description of lecture presentation assignment (incl. peer assessment guidelines)

Jan. 24 The Study of Islam as Religion

Reading: Gary E. Kessler, *Ways of Being Religious*, Mayfield Publishing Company: Mountain View, 2000, 25-36 (Bb).

- *Inquiry Essay Option 1: Turn in completed inquiry essay assignment on Bb by Sunday, January 27 (11:59 p.m.)*

II. The Sacred Sources of Islam

Week 3

Jan. 29 The Prophet Muhammad: The Muhammad of History

Reading: Ernst, *Following Muhammad*, pp. 71-93 (108-119). Additional reading (Bb): Selections from Alfred Guillaume's translation of Ibn Ishaq's *Sirat Rasul Allah*.

Jan. 31 The Muhammad of Authority and the Muhammad of Grace

Reading: ["The Hilya, or the Adornment of the Prophet"](#), from the website of Pakistani calligrapher Rashid Butt. Read and listen to selections from [Qasidah al-Burdah](#), the poem about the mantle or cloak of the Prophet and his character.

- *Inquiry Essay Option 2: Turn in completed inquiry essay assignment on Bb by Sunday, Feb 3 (11:59 p.m.)*

Week 4

Feb. 5 Introduction to the Qur'an (as Written Text)

Reading: Ernst, *Following Muhammad*, pp. 93-105. Reading: Michael Sells, *Approaching the Qur'an: The Early Revelations* (Ashland: White Clouds Press, 1999), pp.1-40.

Feb. 7 The Qur'an: Translation and Recitation

Reading: Sells (cont.). Additional reading (Bb): Andrea Useem, "Islam, a Vocal Exercise of Faith," *Chronicle of Higher Education* 47:13 (2000), A72.

Week 5

Feb. 12 The Qur'an: Translation and Recitation (cont.)

Collaborative Inquiry Project: Translation/Recitation of the Qur'an

Feb. 14 The Qur'an as Guidance

Reading (Bb): Selections from Helmut Gätje, *The Qur'an and Its Exegesis* (1976).

- *Inquiry Essay Option 3: Turn in completed inquiry essay assignment on Bb by Sunday, Feb 17 (11:59 p.m.)*

Week 6

Feb. 19 Contemporary Scriptural Interpretation: Qur'an and Woman

Reading (Bb): Excerpts from Amina Wadud, *Qur'an and Woman: Reading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective* (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: Penerbit Fajar Sdn. Bhd., 1992).

Feb. 21 Contemporary Scriptural Interpretation: Qur'an and Woman (cont.)

Reading: TBA

- *Inquiry Essay Option 4: Turn in completed inquiry essay assignment on Bb by Sunday, Feb 24 (11:59 p.m.)*
- *Select one Inquiry Essay from Options 1-4 for grading. (Email instructor selection by Tuesday, February 26.)*

III. Islamic Ethics and Society

Week 7

Feb. 26 Introduction to Islamic Law: History and Early Developments

Reading: Ernst, *Following Muhammad*, Chapter 4, pp. (108-119) 119-127. Web Sources: [Forty Hadith](#). Additional readings (Bb): Selections from Shafi'i's *Risala* on the authority of the Prophet Muhammad's Sunna.

Feb. 28 Hadith and Woman

Reading (Bb): Excerpts from Fatima Mernissi, *The Veil and the Male Elite* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1991), pp. 1-4, 49-61, 62, 64, 70-81, excerpted in Charles Kurzman, ed., *Liberal Islam: A Sourcebook* (Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 112-26.

Week 8

Mar. 5 The Practice of Faith

Reading (Bb): "Ritual Worship: Selections from the Qur'an." Web Resources: Prof. Alan Godlas' ["The Sunnah: Practice and Law"](#) page -- read section on Islamic Practice and explore some links to the five pillars. On the hajj, browse the following web sites: [Virtual Hajj](#)

Mar. 7 Sacred Ritual: The Hajj

Reading (Bb): Chapter 17 of Malcolm X, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X / with the assistance of Alex Haley* (New York: Grove Press, 1965). Browse the following web sites: Hajj 2011 Packages from [USA, Canada](#), and Hajj 2013 Packages from [the UK](#).

- *Midterm deficiencies: Wednesday, March 6*
- *Last day for dropping courses without academic penalty: Friday, March 8*
- ***Inquiry Essay Option 5: Turn in completed inquiry essay assignment on Bb by Sunday, March 10 (11:59 p.m.)***
- *Spring Recess: Monday, March 11-Friday, March 15*

IV. Islam in the Modern World

Week 9

Mar. 19 Islamic Ethics in the Colonial Age

Reading: Ernst, *Following Muhammad*, Chapter 4, pp. 127-139-141. Charles Kurzman, “[Bin Laden and Other Thoroughly Modern Muslims](#),” *Contexts* 1:4 (Winter 2002), pp. 13-20.

Mar. 21 Islamic Law and Democracy

Readings: TBA

- *Inquiry Essay Option 6: Turn in completed inquiry essay assignment on Bb by Sunday, March 24 (11:59 p.m.)*

Week 10

Mar. 26 Rethinking Women in Society: Modern Debates on Women’s Rights

Reading: Ernst, *Following Muhammad*, Chapter 4, pp. 142-151. Additional reading (TBA).

Mar. 28 Modern Debates on Women’s Rights (cont.)

Reading (Bb): selections from Bouthaina Shaaban, *Both Right and Lefthanded: Arab Women Talk about Their Lives*, 1988. Additional readings (TBA).

- *Inquiry Essay Option 7: Turn in completed inquiry essay assignment on Bb by Sunday, March 31 (11:59 p.m.)*

V. Ascending into Paradise and Returning to Earth: Spirituality and Mysticism

Week 11

April 2 Qur'an and Spirituality: The Nature of Islamic Mysticism

Reading: Ernst, *Following Muhammad*, Chapter 5, pp. 164-168, 174-182. Web resources: Listen to the recordings from the NPR programs “[Rumi](#)” and “[Spirit of Islam](#)” and browse the associated websites for information on and samples of Islamic mysticism, poetry, and music.

April 4 Islamic Mysticism (cont.) --- Mystical Poetry: Rumi

Reading (Bb): Prologue to Rumi’s *Masnawi*. Selections from *Mystical Writings*

- *Inquiry Essay Option 8 (Site Visit Analysis): Turn in completed inquiry essay assignment on Bb by Sunday, April 7 (11:59 p.m.)*

- *Select one Inquiry Essay from Option 5-8 for grading. (Email instructor selection by Tuesday, February 26.)*

Week 12

Apr. 9 The Spirituality of Shi'ism

Reading: Ernst, *Following Muhammad*, pp.168-174. Bb: "A Shi'i Creed." Web resources: [Photos of tombs of the Imams in Medina](#); [Photos of shrines relating to Ali](#); [Photos of shrines relating to the martyrdom of Husayn](#); [Photos of shrines relating to the 10th, 11th, and 12th Imams](#); [Tears for Kerbala, a children's book on the martyrdom of Husayn](#); [Chart of the 14 Infallibles](#); [Chart of Shi'i Groups](#); for comprehensive information on the Isma'ili tradition, see the web site of the [Institute of Isma'ili Studies](#).

Apr. 11 Shi'i Spirituality: Lamentation and Redemptive Suffering

Web resources: Michael Muhammad Knight, "[Bleeding for the Imam: Heartbreak and Catharsis in Muharram](#)." [Muharram Procession 1427](#) (video of procession in New York, February 2006); see also [Newsday report on violent Sunni protest](#).

VI. Rethinking Islam in the 21st Century

Week 13

Apr. 16 Progressive Islam: Farid Esack's *On Being a Muslim*

Reading: Esack, *On Being a Muslim*, pp. 1-110.

Apr. 18 Progressive Islam: Farid Esack's *On Being a Muslim*

Reading: Esack, *On Being a Muslim*, remaining chapters.

Week 14

Apr. 23 In-class Peer Review of Final Inquiry Project Drafts

Apr. 25 Conclusions

Reading: Ernst, *Following Muhammad*, Postscript.

- *Turn in Final (Revised) Inquiry Paper: Sunday, April 28 (11:59 p.m.).*
➤ *Finished Course Portfolio due Friday, May 3 (2:00 p.m.)*