

Syracuse University
Department of Religion
REL 165: Discovering Islam
Dr. Ahmed Abdel Meguid
Office hours: M: 9:30 am-10:30 am; Fr: 12:00 pm-1:00 pm & by appointment
512 Hall of Languages
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Fall 2016

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514 Hall of Languages

Discovering Islam

Course Overview and Description

This course is an introduction to Islam as a religion and a civilization. The course will be divided in three parts. The first part will examine the formation of Islamic civilization in the pre-modern era. We will start with the key stages of the life of Prophet Muhammad, the articulation of the fundamentals of Islam as a way of life and a worldview and a brief survey of Islamic history. The course subsequently turns to a brief investigation of the two sources of Islam (Qur'an and Sunna—the tradition of the prophet) and how the main Muslim intellectual traditions and religious factions approached and interpreted them. In this vein we will explore the main themes and development of Islamic law (*fiqh*), Philosophy, Theology (*kalām*) and Mysticism (*Sufism*) and the key differences between Sunni and Shiite Islam.

The second part of the course gives a glimpse of classical Islamic thought and the conception of the relation among Islamic sciences at the height of Islamic civilization. In this respect we will examine the relation between faith and reason and how the Islamic sciences dealt with it in one of the key works of one of the towering figures of classical Islamic philosophy, al-Walīd ibn Rusūd—Latin Averroes—(d. 1198 C.E.). The third and last part of the course will examine the Islamic conception of ethics and politics. In this vein, it will compare and contrast classical and contemporary perspectives on these central problems.

Course Objectives:

1. To acquire basic knowledge of the emergence of Islam, its basic principles and doctrines and its formative history.
2. To form a strong understanding of the development of Islamic thought and its main schools.
3. To develop insight into key current issues and concerns about Islam as a religion and a way of life.
4. To develop an ability to think and speak critically about current issues and concerns relevant to Islam and Muslims.

Readings and Required Texts

All readings will be available on 'Blackboard' in the sub-folder 'Readings' in the 'Content' folder.

Class Discussion Points and Handouts

I will be posting the class discussion points in the sub-folder 'Weekly Discussion Points' in the 'Content' folder. **The weekly discussion points will be posted on Friday of every week by 5**

pm EST. I will post guide sheets for selected readings in the sub-folder ‘Guide Sheets and Handouts’ which is also be available in the ‘Content’ folder.

Course Requirements and Grading

A. Two exams (a midterm and a final) plus a field-trip/interview report and a final paper (85% of final grade)

1. *Two exams a midterm and a final (total of 50%):*
 - a. Each exam is worth 25% of your grade
 - b. The exams are not cumulative
 - c. The dates of the exam are listed in the class schedule

2. *A short report on a visit to any local mosque.*
 - a. The report is worth 15% of your grade
 - b. Your report should give an account of your impressions about the place
 - c. It should also include your opinion about the extent to which you felt the attitudes and gestures you observed reflect what you studied about Islam.
 - d. The report should be 300-500 words, double-spaced, in 12-pitch font.

3. *Final critical analysis paper*
 - a. The paper is worth 20% of your grade
 - b. The paper should be 750-1000 words, double-spaced, in 12-pitch font.

B. Attendance and participation (15% of final grade)

1. *Class attendance and participation (7.5%)*
 - a. Worth 50% of your participation grade.
 - b. Regular attendance and class participation are both course requirements. Your participation grade will be based on your attendance as well as on the quality and quantity of your contributions to class discussion.

Important Note: Missing more than 1 class except for valid and documented condition may result in your loss of the whole participation grade.

2. *Blackboard participation (7.5%)*
 - a. Worth 50% of your participation grade
 - b. Every week you are required to make a post on Blackboard in the ‘Discussion’ section. The post should reflect what you found most interesting about the week’s readings. Posts will be due at the end of every week by **Saturday at 5 pm)**
 - c. Your post can be either an expression of your own reflections on the text, a question the readings raised in your mind or a response to a colleague’s question/comment

C. Letter/Number Grade Conversion Table for This Course:

	B+ 80-84	C+ 65-69	D+ 54-56
A 90-100	B 75-79	C 60-64	D 50-53

A- 85-89

B- 70-74

C- 57-59

D. A Final Word about Grades

You must complete all of the course requirements by the end of the semester in order to receive a passing grade. Incompletes will be granted only in cases of actual emergency.

Course Policies

1. Paper Submission: You should plan to submit a print out of your report/paper on the day it is due. However, if for any reason you can not print out either of them, you may email it to me before class. I will correct, comment on and grade electronically submitted reports/papers electronically as well and email them back to you.
2. Academic Honesty and Plagiarism: The Syracuse University Academic Integrity Policy holds students accountable for the integrity of the work they submit. Students should be familiar with the Policy and know that it is their responsibility to learn about instructor and general academic expectations with regard to proper citation of sources in written work. The policy also governs the integrity of work submitted in exams and assignments as well as the veracity of signatures on attendance sheets and other verifications of participation in class activities. Serious sanctions can result from academic dishonesty of any sort.
For more information and the complete policy, see <http://academicintegrity.syr.edu>
. Students found to cheat will receive an F for that assignment. Students have a right to appeal.
3. Disability: Students who are in need of disability-related academic accommodations must register with the Office of Disability Services (ODS), 804 University Avenue, Room 309, [315-443-4498](tel:315-443-4498). Students with authorized disability-related accommodations should provide a current Accommodation Authorization Letter from ODS to the instructor and review those accommodations with the instructor. Accommodations, such as exam administration, are not provided retroactively; therefore, planning for accommodations as early as possible is necessary. For further information, see the ODS website, Office of Disability Services <http://disabilityservices.syr.edu/>
4. New Policy Regarding Faith Tradition Observances: SU doesn't have non-instructional days for any religious holiday and students must notify instructors by the end of the second week of classes when they will be observing their religious holiday(s). SU's religious observances policy, found at http://supolicies.syr.edu/emp_ben/religious_observance.htm recognizes the diversity of faiths represented among the campus community and protects the rights of students, faculty, and staff to observe religious holy days according to their tradition. Under the policy, students are provided an opportunity to make up any examination, study, or work requirements that may be missed due to a religious observance provided they notify their instructors before the end of the second week of classes. Students will have access to a notification form through MySlice for two weeks beginning the first day of class. On Monday, September 12, instructors will have continuous access via a religious observances icon in Faculty Services/Faculty Center to a list of students in each class they are teaching who have provided notification.

Weekly Reading Schedule

Part I: Emergence of Islam and the Formation of Islamic Civilization

Monday 29th August through Monday 5th September

The Arabian setting, the Abrahamic tradition, the birth and early life of Muhammad, revelation and the significance of the first revelation. Martin Lings. *Muhammad: His Life Based on the Earliest Sources*

August 29th: Introduction

August 31st: Chapters I-VI

Monday 5th September through Monday 12th September

Muhammad in Mecca: the reception of revelation, the early years of preaching for Islam and the confrontation with Quraysh, the education of the companions, Abyssinia, and the *Hijra* to Medina. Martin Lings. *Muhammad: His Life Based on the Earliest Sources*

September 5th: Labor Day Holiday (No Class)

September 7th: Chapters VII, VIII, IX, X, XII, XIII, XV, XVI, XVII

Monday 12th September through Monday 19th September

Muhammad in Medina: the formation of the Muslim community: challenges and ethics, the spread of Islam in Arabia and the return to Mecca, the farewell pilgrimage, the death and succession of Muhammad. Lings, Martin. *Muhammad: His Life Based on the Earliest Sources*

September 12th: Chapters XVIII, XIX, XX, XXI, XXII, XXIII, XXV, XXVI

September 14th: Chapters XXVII, XXVIII, XXIX, XXXI, XXXII, XXXV, XXXVI, XXXVII, XXXIX

Monday 19th September through Monday 26th September

Death of the Prophet **PLUS** Concise account of the development of Islamic history: Selections from Neal Robinson. *Islam a Concise Introduction* **Plus** Overview of the two sources of Islam (Qur'an and Sunnah)

September 19th: Chapters XL-XLV, XLVI, XLVII, Summary of the main events in the eight years after Hijra, LXXIII, LXXIV, LXXV, LXXIX, LXXX

September 21st: Chapters LXXXI, LXXXII, LXXXIII

On Thursday, September 22nd at 7 pm we will have a screening of the movie: "The Message" on the life of Prophet Muhammad. Pizza and Refreshments will be served. Location TBA

Monday 26th September through Monday 3rd October

A Glimpse of the Qura'an (The Opening Chapter *al-Fatiha*) **PLUS** Sunni Islam—Theology

September 26th: Chapters LXXXIV, LXXXV **PLUS** overview of Islamic History

September 28th: Two selections from Neal Robinson **Plus** selection from Mustansir Mir

Monday 3rd October through Monday 10th October

October 3rd: The Opening Chapter of the Qur'an (selection from Mustansir Mir)

October 5th: **First Midterm**

Monday 10th October through Monday 17th October

Sunni Islam: Theology

October 10th: Sunni Islam—Theology (selection)

October 12th: Sunni Islam—Theology (selection)

Monday 17th October through Monday 24th October

Shiite Islam and Sufism

October 17th: Shiite Islam and Sufism (selection from Andrew Rippin)

October 19th: Shiite Islam and Sufism (selection from Andrew Rippin)

Part II: Glimpse of Classical Islamic Thought

Monday 24th October through Monday 31st October

Reason and Revealed Scripture in Islamic Philosophy

October 24th: Averroes *Decisive Treatise*

October 26th: Averroes *Decisive Treatise*

Monday 31st October through Monday 7th November

Islamic Thought: Reason and Revealed Scripture in Islamic Philosophy

October 31st: Averroes *Decisive Treatise*

November 2nd: Averroes *Decisive Treatise*

Report due October 31st

Part II: Themes and Issues—Classical and Contemporary Perspectives

Monday 7th November through Monday 14th November

Islam, Law and Politics

November 7th: Islamic law and the social-political structure of the Islamic society at the height of Islamic civilization—selections from Wael Hallaq.

November 9th: Islamic law and the social-political structure of the Islamic society at the height of Islamic civilization—selections from Wael Hallaq.

Monday 14th November through Monday 21st November

Islam, Law and Politics

November 14th: Islamic law and the social-political structure of the Islamic society at the height of Islamic civilization—selections from Wael Hallaq.

November 16th: Islamic law and the social-political structure of the Islamic society at the height of Islamic civilization—selections from Wael Hallaq.

Monday 21st November Monday 28th November

Thanksgiving Holiday

Monday 28th November Monday 3rd December

Islam and Politics

November 28th: Rise of Contemporary Islamic Movements and the Concept of ‘Hakimyya’ or ‘God’s Governance’—Selections from Esposito.

November 30th: Rise of Contemporary Islamic Movements and the Concept of ‘Hakimyya’ or ‘God’s Governance’—Selections from Esposito.

Critical Analysis Paper due on November 28th

Tuesday 3rd November through Tuesday 10th December

Islam and Politics

December 5th: Islam and Politics way forward—selections from Wael Hallaq’s *Impossible State*

Final Exam will be held in class in class time on December 7th

Good Luck!