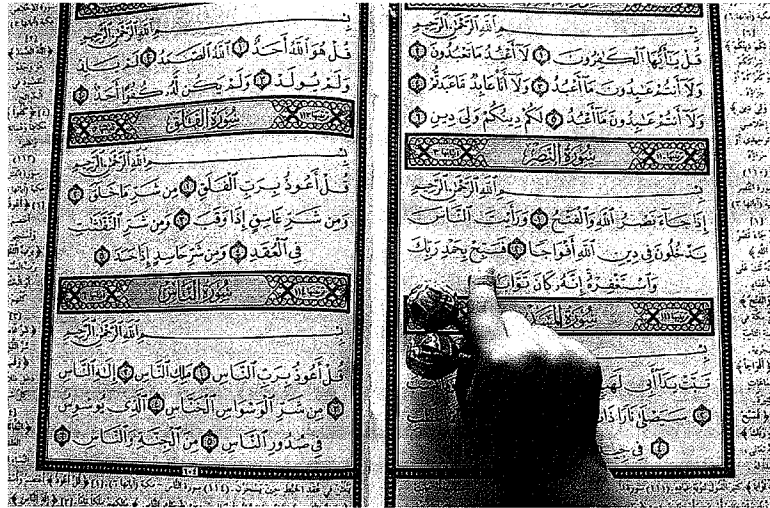


Syracuse University  
Department of Religion  
Fall 2009

REL 165 *The Islamic Tradition*



Time: Tue/Thu 3.30-4.50 pm  
Classroom: SOM Room 013

Professor Tazim R. Kassam  
Office Hrs: Thur 1:00-2:00 pm  
E-Mail: [tkassam@syr.edu](mailto:tkassam@syr.edu)

TA: Carly Dwyer  
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E-Mail: [ccdwyer@syr.edu](mailto:ccdwyer@syr.edu)

**Course description:**

This course will provide an introduction to Islam as a faith and civilization. Topics will include the life and times of Prophet Muhammad; key themes in the Qur'an, the sacred scripture of Muslims; the role of sacred memory (Sunnah) and law (Shariah) in everyday Muslim life; the ritual and devotional practices in Islam; the three major streams within the world of Islam (Sunni, Shi'a and Sufi); Islamic Arts; and the role of women among traditionalists and modernists. The course will employ an interactive format to engage students by having discussions with each other on Blackboard, internet research, and meeting Muslims locally. Students will both build on and examine their prior knowledge and life experience.

**Course goals:**

- To understand the basic beliefs, practices and historical development of Islam
- To become familiar with the diversity of views within the Islamic community
- To think critically about the role of religion in shaping culture and vice versa
- To acquire sufficient information about the faith of Islam to converse intelligently
- To improve reading, writing and analytical skills through course assignments

**Required texts:**

(All are available at SU Bookstore)

*The No-Nonsense Guide to Islam* by Ziauddin Sardar, Merryl Wyn Davies (2007)

*Muhammad: A Prophet for Our Time* by Karen Armstrong (2007)

*The Qur'an: Basic Teachings* by T.B. Irving/K. Ahmad & M. Ahsan (1979)

*In Search of Islamic Feminism: One Woman's Global Journey* by Elizabeth Warnock Fernea (1998)

*The Faith of Shia Islam* by Allama Muhammad Rida al-Muzaffar (1982) (You do not have to purchase this book. A pdf version will be on Blackboard)

*Sufism: A Beginner's Guide* by William C. Chittick (2007)

**Academic Integrity:**

Syracuse University believes that promoting academic honesty is the responsibility of everyone in the Syracuse University community. We expect all students enrolled in Syracuse University programs to adhere to standards of academic integrity. All cases of academic dishonesty will be reported to the relevant Dean in the home College or School for that given course. Penalties will be dependent upon the seriousness of the infraction, and can be appealed to the relevant College/School Academic Integrity Committee.

**Disability:**

Syracuse University is committed to full compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Our community values diversity and seeks to promote meaningful access to educational opportunities for all students. Students seeking disability-related services must contact the The Office of Disability Services at Syracuse University, Room 309, 804 University Avenue, Syracuse, New York 13244-2330.

**My short version:**

The penalty of plagiarism is an F grade. It's simple: *don't copy, don't modify, give full credit*. Essentially, plagiarism is a combination of stealing and lying. Don't do it. To learn more: <http://academicintegrity.syr.edu>.

If you have a disability, it is important for you to register with the Office of Disability Services (315-443-4498). We would like to make every effort to support you and provide a positive learning environment. Please get an Authorization letter from ODS.

**Texting:**

If you are texting, twittering, e-mailing or surfing, you are not paying attention. Additionally, you are most likely distracting a nearby student (or students). My policy is simple: you will be asked to leave and counted as absent for that class. Cell phones must be turned off.

## Evaluation:

Attendance and Participation is mandatory 15%  
Except for medical or family emergencies. In both cases, proper evidence is required. Every class missed incurs a penalty of -2%.

Two Short Assignments 20%

a) A brief two-page report of a site-visit to the mosque and / or interviews of at least three Muslims from different backgrounds (race, gender, Shia or Sunni etc.) You will be given more details to assist you with this assignment. *Due Thursday Oct 8, 2009*

b) For this assignment, you will investigate information available online on Islam on specific topics and assess the sources you are able to find. I will give you a list of topics. You will submit a two-page report including links. *Due Thursday Nov 5, 2009*

Weekly Reflection Papers on Blackboard 30%

The philosophy behind this assignment is as follows:  
*You don't know what you think you know until you've written it.*  
You may need to read that sentence a few times.

For this assignment you will write a short two to three paragraph (~250 words) reflection paper on the assigned readings for the week. Identify one paragraph or concept or event that grabs your attention and discuss it and make an attempt to understand it. Your Reflection Paper must be posted on Blackboard by Monday at noon.

You will then read one of your fellow student's reflection paper and respond to the issues that it raises. You must offer a *substantive* response. That means you will be building upon and adding to the other student's reflection. You may be able to connect your ideas. The Response paper must be posted on Blackboard by Thursday at noon.

At the end of the semester, for your final Reflection Paper, you will review the reflections you have written over the semester, assess your experience, and identify your best papers. *Due: Nov 30, 2009*

The critical requirement is that a) the papers are submitted on time (late ones will not be accepted), and b) they specifically address the readings. Please note, this is not a "journal" but a serious, academic engagement with the reading. The grade for this is a Pass / Fail. In other words, you begin with 30%.

Take-home exam 35%

The Take-home exam will be on the materials covered in the course including readings, class lectures and assignments. Your focus will be on clarity of ideas, writing skills, and interpretation of subject material. You will be provided with a list of questions a week before the Take-home is due. *Due Thur Dec 10, 2009*

## **Tentative Schedule:**

Note: The schedule is subject to change. Pay attention to announcements in class and check Blackboard regularly.

### **The Islamic World Today**

Wk 1	Sept 1/3	Introduction to Course What is Islam? Who is a Muslim?
Wk 2	Sept 8/10	Islamophobia and Orientalism Diversity: Mapping the <i>worlds</i> of Islam <i>Sardar 90-127</i>

### **The Rise of Islam in Historical Context**

Wk 3	Sept 15/17	Pre-Islamic Arabia & the Meccan Setting <i>Armstrong 13-89</i>
Wk 4	Sept 22/24	Prophet Muhammad: Life and Times <i>Armstrong 89-165</i>
Wk 5	Sept 29/Oct 1	Religious and Socio-Political Transformation <i>Armstrong 165-214</i>

### **Revelation of Islamic Scripture**

Wk 6	Oct 6/8	The Qur'an in Islamic Arts & Ritual <i>Sardar 8-52; Kristina 257-261; Sells (BB)</i>  <i>Due: (2) Short Report Oct 8</i>
Wk 7	Oct 13/15	The Qur'an: Form, Interpretation & Themes <i>Quran 21-75; 131-155</i>

### **Prophetic Paradigm as Islamic Tradition**

Wk 8	Oct 20/22	Muhammad as Model: Origins of Hadith and Sunnah <i>Quran 97-130; Schimmel 22-55</i>
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### **Women, Veiling and Politics in Islam**

Wk 9	Oct 27/29	Women at the Rise of Islam <i>Fernea 388-422; xi-62</i>
Wk 10	Nov 3/5	The veil and contemporary voices <i>Fernea 144-200</i>

*Due: (2) Short Report Nov 5*

### **Diversity of Practice and Interpretations in Islam**

Wk 11	Nov 10/12	Distinctions between Shi'a & Sunni <i>Nasr 147-179; Momen 11-60 (BB)</i>
Wk 12	Nov 17/19	Imamat: Religious Authority in Shi'ism <i>Al-Muzzafar all</i>
Wk 13	Nov 24	Sufism: The Mystical Tradition of Islam <i>Chittick 1-51</i>
	Nov 26	<i>Thanksgiving - No class</i>
Wk 14	Dec 1/3	Sufism & Conclusion <i>Chittick 52-110</i>

*Due: Reflections Review: Nov 30*

Wk 15	Dec 8/10	<i>Due: Take-home Dec 10</i>
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**Notes:**