

TRS 152
Islam: Beliefs and Practices
Fall 2014
MWF 8:00 am – 9:05 am, Dante 113.
Instructor: Ali Ataie, MA, PhD student, GTU.
Office hours: Wednesdays 9:15-11:15am (Galileo 207D)
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Course Description:

The purpose of this course is to introduce undergraduate students to the basic tenets of the Islamic faith tradition. We will read and discuss the biography (*sirah*) of the Prophet Muhammad according to the earliest historical sources as well as analyze various sciences ('*ulum*) of the Qur'an and *hadith* (prophetic traditions), and how these two primary Islamic sources influenced the codification of Islamic law (*shari'a*), creedal literature ('*aqidah*), and Islamic mysticism (Sufism [*tasawwuf*]). We will also examine the intellectual contributions of classical and contemporary Muslim theologians, philosophers, mystics, and metaphysicians as well as examine both the history and work of the Western Academy's critical engagement with Islam. This course will explore the fundamental religious beliefs held by Muslims for over 1400 years by covering the three dimensions of Islam as outlined in the famous *hadith* of Gabriel: practice (*Islam*), faith (*Iman*), and spirituality (*Ihsan*). In addition, we will look at various contemporary understandings and manifestations of the global phenomenon of Islam and how these understandings are shaped by various historical, societal, literary, and cultural factors.

Course Objectives:

1. To inform and educate future religious, academic, and community leaders about the normative understandings of traditional Islam by Muslim scholars of the past and present as well as analyze critical responses to those understandings by scholars of Western Academy.
2. To provide tools for developing the ability to study the world through an Islamic framework.
3. To provide resources for students who aim to further develop their critical thinking/writing.
4. To provide the students with a safe space, free of judgment, to learn, engage, and ask critical questions about any aspect of Islam.

Student Learning Outcomes: By the end of the course students will (be)...

1. Able to describe various important events, figures, and name key dates in the biography (*sirah*) of the Prophet Muhammad (family members, eminent companions, "night of power," night journey and ascension, *hijrah*, battles, treaties, etc) and how the revelations of the Qur'an are related to these events. In addition, students will become well acquainted with the Qur'an itself; its content, themes, style, promulgation, transmission, and codification.
2. Memorize several verses from the Qur'an as well as famous *hadith* of the Prophet (in English obviously or Arabic for the truly ambitious!), for the purposes of becoming adequately acquainted with the ethos of sacred text tradition.
3. Able to define various Arabic terms essential to understanding the faith tradition such as *tahwid*,

taqwa, tanzil, sirah, fiqh, etc.

4. Engage in critical interaction with course readings and the issues they raise, and to sharpen skills in written exposition in response to these readings and issues.
5. Familiar with the history and beliefs of both the Sunni and Shiite traditions as well as be able to name and describe various theologies within the early centuries of the Islamic era, how various heterodox denominations differed with the orthodox, and what factors provoked those differences.
6. Describe major Muslim scholars, theologians, jurists, philosophers, mystics, and exegetes and will be able to compare and contrast their approaches and methods of engaging sacred sources.
7. Develop interdisciplinarity by understanding normative prophetic/traditional Islam from the believer's confessional perspective as well as understand and explore the issues and methods of the critical academic community, such as studying the Qur'an through a non-theological, historical, and literary lens.
8. Appreciate the great diversity within the Islamic religious tradition as well as realize the need for authoritative contemporary scholarship on Islam; a religion professed by almost one-fifth of humanity.
9. Able to compare and contrast multiple aspects of the Islamic tradition with those present in the Christian tradition, such as key theological differences and similarities.
10. Demonstrate an understanding of the world and the meaning of existence itself from a non-U.S./European perspective.

Course Format:

Each class session will consist of a lecture (approx. 60 min) along with instructor and student interaction. Each student is expected to complete the reading for that week and have in mind at least three or four points, questions, or concerns that they would like to share with their peers.

Required Texts:

- 1) *The Holy Qur'an* (Students are required to obtain an English translation of the Qur'an, preferably by 'Abdullah Yusuf 'Ali, Marmaduke Picktall, or Ahmad Zaki Hammad). Qur'ans must be brought to all class sessions. Whether you are a Muslim or not, please practice good etiquette with your Qur'ans (and all books for that matter) by not leaving them on the ground. All textbooks in any language contain knowledge and deserve our respect.
- 2) *An Introduction to Islam*, fourth edition by Frederick Denny, 2010.
- 3) *The Vision of Islam* by Sachiko Murata and William C. Chittick, 1994.

Recommended Texts:

- 1) *How to Read the Qur'an* by Carl W. Ernst, 2011.
- 2) *'Ulum al-Qur'an: An Introduction to the Sciences of the Qur'an* by Ahmad Von Denffer, 1983.
- 3) *Muhammad: His Life Based on the Earliest Sources* by Martin Lings (Shaykh Abu Bakr al-Siraj), 1984.
- 4) *The Creed of Imam al-Tahawi* by Hamza Yusuf, 2007. This text consists of a brief historical background followed by the Creed presented as 130 Logia with parallel Arabic and English text.

*** These texts will prove to be valuable resources and references for your future studies/teaching.

Assessment and Grading:

1) *Class Attendance, Participation, and Journal*

20% of grade

Students must be alert, present, and willing to participate in classroom discussions by offering their insights and reflections from the lectures, readings, and personal experiences. We all want to learn from each other in order to enrich our classroom environment. Students are required to contact me in advance of absences. In addition to this, students are required to keep a journal in which they must write at least 3-4 sentences about their experiences or thoughts with respect to the previous class period. I will collect the journals from time to time without warning, and only I will read them. The purpose of the journals is for me to be able to gauge your responses/experiences and make potential changes to the structure and/or curriculum.

2) *Three Summary Papers*

20% of grade

These will be two pages in length and based on one of the readings which will reveal a student's comprehension of the material. Each summary paper is required to contain at least five footnotes. More instructions will be given during the semester.

3) *Weekly Quizzes*

30% of grade

There will be a short quiz given every Friday at the very beginning of class (except the first Friday, Sept. 5th), totaling 11 quizzes. Students who are late will not be given make-ups. The lowest two quiz scores will be dropped from the final grade. Quizzes will be based primarily on class lectures and vocabulary from reading assignments.

3) *Final Paper*

30% of grade

Students will be asked to submit a 8-10 page research paper (not including bibliography) of a certain aspect of Islam. All papers must be in twelve point font in Times New Roman, double-spaced, with one-inch margins, and Turabian style (see SMC handbook). I do NOT accept papers submitted through email; all papers/outlines must be handed to me as hard copies on or before the due date – no exceptions. **The final paper is due Friday December 5th at 9 am.** We will talk more about the final paper in October sessions.

Grades will be based on the following scale:

94%+ = A	87-89% = B+	77-79% = C+	67-69% = D+	59% or fewer = F
90-93% = A-	84-86% = B	74-76% = C	64-66% = D	
	80-83% = B-	70-73% = C-	60-63% = D-	

Policies:

Cellular phones are not to be used at *any* time during class; if you forgot to silence your phone before

class and are afraid of it making noise, you may pull it out and silence it quickly. Computers may be used as long as you are taking notes; there will be no internet surfing, emailing, facebooking, tweeting, or game playing please.

Everyone is expected to be respectful toward others especially if there are (and there will be) differences of opinion; I encourage students to voice their concerns/issues/disagreements and want to stress that our classroom is a “safe space” for honest and frank discourse. SMC is a place where diversity is celebrated!

Tentative Outline of Class Weeks:

Week 1 (Sept. 3rd-5th): Prophetic History, Islam’s Historical Embodiment

Lecture: The life of the Prophet Muhammad (Meccan and Medinan periods). *Sirah* Literature; Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Hisham, Ibn S’ad, al-Tabari; four caliphs or twelve Imams?; the history of the Sunni/Shi’a split, Battle of Karbala, the Ummayyad and Abbassid Dynasties.

* Students are expected to begin reading Denny pp 1-96; Murata & Chittick xiv-xxxix.

Assignment for next week:

Complete the reading of Denny pp 1-96, 187-208; Murata and Chittick xiv-xxxix; quiz 1 on Sept. 12th.

Week 2 (Sept. 8th-12th): Prophetic History (continued); Islamic Jurisprudence and Legal Theory

Lecture: History and lineage of the Qur’anic prophets (Adam, Noah, Hud, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, etc); lessons from their lives and struggles and significance for Muslims; The development of the four schools (*mathahib*) of law (*fiqh*) in the Sunni tradition and their founders (Abu Hanifah, Malik b. Anas, al-Shaf’i, Ahmad b. Hanbal) and the Ja’fari school in the Shi’ite tradition. The purpose of the schools and their contemporary (ir)relevance.

Assignment for next week:

Denny pp 97-129, 164-186; Murata & Chittick pp 45-84; quiz 2 on Sept. 19th.

Week 3 (Sept. 15th-19th): Islamic Theology/Prophetology

Lecture: Who is Allah? Ash’ari and Maturidi perspectives on theology; God’s Immanence and Transcendence; *Tawhid* (Monotheism) and Theology (Divine Names / Speech (*Kalam*) / Essence (*Dhat*) and Attributes (*Sifaat*); Mercy and Wrath; God of Abraham, Moses, and Jesus Christ. Muhammad as role model; best of creation; paragon of virtue; love (*mahabbah*) of the Prophet as means (*wasilah*) to God.

Assignment for next week:

Murata & Chittick pp 132-163; quiz 3 on Sept. 26th.

Week 4 (Sept. 22nd-26th): Islamic Theology/Prophetology (continued)

Lecture: Selected readings and commentary of various Logia from the *al-Tahawiyya* Creed: one the most celebrated formulaic creedal articulations on the Sunni tradition written by Imam Abu Ja'far al-Tahawi (d. 321/933).

Assignment for next week:

Denny pp 130-149; quiz 4 on Oct. 3rd.

Week 5 (Sept 29th-Oct. 3rd): History of the Qur'an

Lecture: The composition, gathering, and codification of the Qur'an; the *Suhuf* of Zaid b. Thabit and the subsequent *Uthmani Mushaf* (Codex of Uthman); a look at various early manuscripts such and the Codex of Ibn Mas'ud, Ibn Ka'b, as well as at the Yemeni palimpsest discovered in 1972; critical response to the confessional version of events by Western Islamicists; different versions of the Qur'an or multiple readings?

Assignment for next week:

Denny pp 150-163; Murata & Chittick pp 28-34; quiz 5 on Oct. 10th.

Week 6 (Oct. 6th-10th): Introduction to *Hadith* (Prophetic traditions)

Lecture: What are hadith and why are they important? How hadith are used for edification, legislation, and creedal literature; different grades of hadith and major hadith collections (Bukhari, Muslim, Tirmidhi, etc). What is the *Sunnah* (Prophetic Precendent)?

Assignment for next week:

TBA; quiz on Oct. 17th.

Week 7 (Oct. 13th-17th): Introduction to the Qur'anic Sciences ('*Ulum al-Qur'an*)

Lecture: The Qur'an in manuscripts; form, language, style; contexts of revelation (*asbab al-nuzul*); abrogation (*naskh*); clear (*muhkamat*) and obscure (*mutashabihat*) verses.

Assignment for next week:

TBA; quiz 6 on Oct. 24th.

Week 8 (Oct. 20th-24th): Introduction to the Qur'anic Sciences (continued)

Lecture: The seven modes (*al-ahruf al-sab'ah*); principles of exegesis (*tafsir*); translation theory; the Qur'an as miracle (*'ijaz al-Qur'an*); Qur'an and science; Qur'an and Orientalists; etiquette (*adab*) with the Qur'an.

Assignment for next week:

Denny pp 209-260; Murata & Chittick pp 265-318; quiz 7 on Oct. 31st.

Week 9 (Oct. 27th-31st): Sufism and the Mystical Path

Lecture: Islamic Spirituality (*tasawwuf*); Practical & Theoretical Sufism; Beatific Vision (*ru'ya*); love (*mahabbah*), intimacy (*uns*), and longing (*shawq*); states and stations; actualizations and tastings; centrality of the prophetic experience; mystical union (*jama'*) in Islam compared to Judaism and Christianity. The Sufis of Baghdad: Abu'l Qasim al-Junayd, al-Husayn Mansur al-Hallaj; classical mystics and metaphysicians: Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, Muihidin b. al-'Arabi, Jalaluddin al-Rumi; Sufi orders: Mevleviyya, Qadariyya, Shadiliyya, Ba'alawi.

Assignment for next week:

Denny pp 341-382; quiz 8 on Nov. 7th.

Week 10 (Nov. 3rd-7th): History of Western Engagement with Islam and Modern-Day Criticism

Lecture: John Damascene, Thomas Aquinas, Peter the Venerable; the classical Orientalists; contemporary academic engagement with Islam (Kung, Basetti-Sani, Cantwell-Smith, Crone, Schimmel, Armstrong, Luxemburg, Ernst, etc.); polemical and vitriolic attacks on Islam: analysis of "Fear, Inc." – by the Center of American Progress; claims and methodologies of contemporary Islamophobes like Robert Spencer, Daniel Pipes, Steve Emersen, David Yerushalemi, etc.; analysis Edward Said's *Orientalism*; Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

Assignment for next week:

TBA; quiz 9 on Nov. 14th.

Week 11 (Nov. 10th-14th): Intersections of Scripture, Hermeneutics, Intertextuality

Lecture: Different interpretive methodologies to the Bible by Muslim scholars (Ghazalian textual affirmative approach vs. Ibn Taymiyyah's textual critical approach); Muhammad in the Bible; Muhammad typologies in the Old & New Testaments; textual analysis (of the Hebrew and Greek) and exegesis of various biblical passages which many Muslim scholars maintain contain prophecies of the Prophet Muhammad; comparing this method with the method of early Christian exegetes and looking at their proposed Christological typologies.

Assignment for next week:

Murata & Chittick 164-192; quiz 10 on Nov. 21st.

Week 12 (Nov. 17th-21st): Islamic Christology

Lecture: Jesus Christ in the Qur'an and hadith; a selected reading from the text *Walking on Water* by Shaykh Hamza Yusuf; the Qur'an's polemical response to trinitarian theology and analysis of the Qur'an's picture of Christ possibly borrowed from Christian Gnosticism, Ebionism, Docetism; intertextuality between the Bible and Qur'an and the latter's critical rewriting of the former.

Assignment for next two weeks:

*** No class Nov. 26th-28th.

Denny pp 313-340; final quiz (11) on Dec. 5th; FINAL PAPER DUE on Dec. 5th.

Week 13 & 14 (Nov. 24th-Dec 5th): Theological Complexities, Diversities, and Obfuscations; Renewal and Reform.

Lecture: Heterodox Muslim theologies: *Mu'tazilites* (Rationalists), *Kharijites* (Seceders), *Murjiyya* (Antinomians), *Jahmiyyah* (Pantheists), *Jabriyya* (Determinists), *Qadariyya* (Dualists), *Mujassimah* (Anthropomorphists), etc. How did these groups justify their theological/ethical positions from the Qur'an and hadith? We will also be examining the main foci of modern day Muslim groups such as the Salafiyya, Wahabiyya, Deobandi, Barelvi, Sufiyya, etc.

Happy Holidays!