

## NES 334/RELI 334: Islamic Thought

Fall 2008 | Department of Near Eastern Studies

Instructor: Dr. Maha Nassar

Office hours: Mondays and Wednesdays, 2:30-4p.m., or by appointment

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This course provides an overview of Islamic social and intellectual history from the origins of Islam to the present day. The first half of the semester is devoted to the development of Islamic thought in the classical period and covers such topics as the Qur'an, Islamic law, theology, and mysticism, as well as the relationship between Sunni and Shi'i Muslims. The second half of the semester concentrates on Islamic thought in the modern world, including the impact of colonialism and nationalism and the debates among a variety of Muslim intellectuals and movements. We examine the writings of selected Muslim intellectuals and also pay special attention to the ways in which modern Muslim thinkers draw upon the classical period in order to support their own arguments and criticize those of their opponents.

### Course Expectations:

1. Attend all class sessions
2. Participate in class discussions
3. Complete all reading assignments
4. Complete all graded assignments

All holidays or special events observed by organized religions will be honored for those students who show affiliation with that particular religion. Also, absences pre-approved by the UA Dean of Students (or Dean's designee) will be honored.

### Assignments:

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|-----------------------------|-----|
| 1. Qur'an paper (4-5 pages) | 20% |
| 2. Midterm                  | 30% |
| 3. Second Paper (4-5 pages) | 20% |
| 4. Final Exam               | 30% |

**Assignments for Honors Students:** Please see page six.

**Note on plagiarism:** Plagiarism is a very serious offence. Be sure to cite properly other people's ideas in your writings. If any part of a paper is plagiarized, you will receive a zero for the assignment. No exceptions. Also note: Wikipedia.com is not an acceptable resource.

Finally, be sure to read UA's Code of Academic Integrity at:

<http://web.arizona.edu/~dos/uapolicies/cai1.html#responsibility>

**Textbooks:** The following textbooks are available for purchase at the Student Union bookstore:

M.A.S. Abdel Haleem (Translator), *The Qur'an*

Afsaruddin, Asma, *The First Muslims: History and Memory*

Attar, Farid Ud-Din, *Conference of the Birds*

Esposito, John and Daila Mogahed, *Who Speaks for Islam? What a Billion Muslims Really Think*

Kamrava, Mehran, ed., *The New Voices of Islam: Rethinking Politics and Modernity*

(*New Voices*)

Patel, Eboo, *Acts of Faith: The Story of an American Muslim, the Struggle for the Soul of a Generation*

Other assigned readings are available on Electronic Reserve (ER):

<http://eres.library.arizona.edu/eres/courseindex.aspx?page=search>

Additional scholarly information about Islam may be found on the web at:

<http://www.uga.edu/islam>

**Following Current Events:** Students are strongly encouraged to follow current events, especially as they pertain to the Muslim world, but should look at mainstream media coverage with a critical eye. Mainstream media coverage of global "hot spots" tends to be superficial, and they often exclude the perspectives of Muslims themselves. Media outlets that tend to give more space to Muslim news and views include: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/>, <http://english.aljazeera.net/>, <http://www.mcclatchydc.com/>, and <http://www.csmonitor.com/>.

**Extra Credit:** Students will have the opportunity for extra credit. One extra credit submission will be accepted towards your midterm exam grade, and one extra credit submission will be accepted towards your final exam grade. Each extra credit assignment can be worth a maximum of ten points. The extra credit assignment is a short, written paper, 1-2 pages in length, typed and double-spaced. They can be short response papers to campus lectures related to the Middle East, or reactions to additional readings and/or films. More specific extra credit options will be discussed in class, and only approved assignments will be accepted. Submissions will be graded on content as well as form.

**Classroom Etiquette:** Please come to class prepared to learn. Students engaged in other activities during class distract the instructor and other students. This includes reading the newspaper, doing other assignments, passing notes, text messaging and talking to neighbors. Students found to be doing any of these activities will be asked to leave the classroom. Also, if your cell phone rings during class, you will be asked to leave the classroom immediately.

**Students with Disabilities:** If you anticipate the need for reasonable accommodations to meet the requirements of this course, you must register with the Disability Resource Center and request that the DRC send me official notification of your accommodation needs as soon as possible. If you would like to discuss how my course requirements and activities may impact your ability to fully participate, please see me by appointment or during office hours

## **PART 1: ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENTS**

### **Week 1: Life of the Prophet Muhammad**

Aug. 25: Introduction - What is Islamic thought?

[Optional background reading: Esposito and Mogahed, pp. 1-28]

Aug. 27: Muhammad's life in Mecca

Afsaruddin, pp. 1-4

Abdel Haleem, "Introduction" in *The Qur'an*, pp. ix-xxi

Aug. 29: The *hijra* and life in Medina

Afsaruddin, pp. 4-18

### **Week 2: The Qur'an – Meccan Suras**

Sep. 1: NO CLASS – LABOR DAY

Sep. 3: God and the Last Day

*Qur'an*, Suras 1, 55, 69, 70, 73, 74, 80, 96, and 100-114

Sep. 5: The Messengers

*Qur'an*, Suras 12, 19, 20, 71

### **Week 3: The Qur'an – Medinan Suras**

Sep. 8: Muslim Society in Medina

*Qur'an*, Suras 24 and 49

Sep. 10: War and peace in the Qur'an

*Qur'an*, pp. xxi-xxvi; Suras 2:190-195, 33 and 63

Afsaruddin, pp. 109-123

Sep. 12: Suras 2 and 3

*Qur'an*, Suras 2:1-100; 2:256-286 and 3:1-200

### **Week 4: Foundations of Sunni and Shi`i Islam**

Sep. 15: The "rightly-guided caliphs" and the spread of Islam

Afsaruddin, pp. 19-46

Sep. 17: Questions of authority and the formation of Sunni Islam

Afsaruddin, pp. 47-75

ER: Scott C. Lucas, "Major Topics of the Hadith"

Sep. 19: The martyrdom of Husayn and the foundation of Shi`i Islam

Afsaruddin, pp. 76-90; 95-98

ER: Heinz Halm, *Shi`a Islam* (selections)

**QUR'AN PAPER DUE**

### **Week 5: Law and order in Muslim societies**

Sep. 22: *Shari`a* and *fiqh*: Basic vocabulary

ER: "Shari`a" in *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*

Sep. 24: Development of the schools of law

Afsaruddin, pp. 99-105; 137-142

Sep. 26: Fasting in *shari`a* and *fiqh*: A Case Study

*Qur'an*: 2:183-187; 97: 1-5

ER: *Hadith* and *fiqh* related to fasting

**Week 6: Islamic Theology and Philosophy**

Sep. 29: Theological debates: God's attributes, predeterminism, faith, leadership

ER: W.M. Watt, "Some Articles of Belief and the Relevant Terms"

Oct. 1: Muslim creeds (*'aqida*)

ER: "The Book of Five Fundamentals"

ER: "Creed of al-Ash'ari"

Oct. 3: Philosophical debates: Nature of God, reason and revelation

ER: "Al-Farabi on the soul" in *Classical Islam*

**Week 7: Sufism**

Oct. 6: What is Sufism?

Asfaruddin, pp. 93-95; 142-147

ER: Paul Heck, "Sufism—What is it exactly?"

Oct. 8: REVIEW

Oct. 10: **MIDTERM**

**Week 8: The Stages of Enlightenment in Sufism:**

Oct. 13: Farid Uddin Attar and *The Conference of the Birds*

Attar, pp. 1-44

Oct. 15: *The Conference of the Birds* part 2

Attar, pp. 44-88

Oct. 17: *The Conference of the Birds* part 3

Attar, pp. 89-133

**PART 2: THE DEVELOPMENT OF ISLAMIC THOUGHT IN THE MODERN WORLD**

**Week 9: Emergence of the Modern Period**

Oct. 20: Spread of Islam in the Early Modern Period (16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> centuries)

ER: "The Poems of Hamza Fansuri (selections)"

Oct. 22: Renewal and Reform (18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries)

ER: Sayyid Ahmed Khan, "Lecture on Islam"

Oct. 24: The *taqlid* vs. *ijtihad* debate

ER: Muneer Farid, "Against Ijtihad"

ER: Muhammad Iqbal, "The Reconstruction of Religious Thought" (selections)

**HONOR STUDENTS: PAPER TOPICS DUE**

**Week 10: Political Islam (Islamism)**

Oct. 27: Nationalism, Salafism and the "Islamic State"

Asfaruddin, 148-167

ER: 'Ali 'Abd al-Raziq, "Message, Not Government, Religion Not State"

Oct. 29: Militant Jihad: Supporters and Critics

Esposito and Mogahed, pp. 65-98

ER: Lawrence Wright: "The Heretic: How al-Qaeda's Mastermind Turned His Back on Terror"

ER: Ali Eteraz, “The Myth of Muslim Condemnation of Terror”

Oct. 31: Religion and Politics in Contemporary Egypt

ER: “The Moderate Muslim Brotherhood”

See also: [www.ikhwanweb.com](http://www.ikhwanweb.com)

### **Week 11: Calls for Reform in the Political and Social Spheres**

Nov. 3: Modernist views of the *salaf*

Asfaruudin, pp. 168-195

Nov. 5: The relationship between democracy and Islam

Fethullah Gulen, “A Comparative Approach...” in *New Voices*

Abdolkarim Soroush, “Reason, Freedom and Democracy...” in *New Voices*

ER: Benazir Bhutto, *Reconciliation* (selections)

Nov. 7: Rethinking the Role of the Qur’an in Society: The Progressive View

Muhammad Shahrour, “The Divine Text and Pluralism...” in *New Voices*

### **Week 12: Gendering Islam: Debates regarding women’s rights and responsibilities**

Nov. 10: Rethinking Islamic History

Leila Ahmed, “Women and the Rise of Islam” in *New Voices*

Amina Wadud, “Aisha’s Legacy...” in *New Voices*

Nov. 12: Debates on the Role of Women in Society

Fatima Mernissi, “Muslim Women and Fundamentalism” in *New Voices*

ER: Yvonne Ridley, “How I came to love the veil”

Nov. 14: The Future of Gender Debates

Esposito and Moghahed, pp. 99-133

**SECOND PAPER DUE**

### **Week 13: Islamic Thought in America**

Nov. 17: History of Muslims in America

ER: Austin, *African Muslims in Antebellum America* (selections)

Nov. 19: Growing up Muslim in America

Patel, pp. 19-58

Nov. 21: Negotiating Plural Identities

Patel, pp. 77-100

ER: Umar Faruq Abdallah, “Islam and the Cultural Imperative”

### **Week 14: Muslims in America after 9/11**

Nov. 24: Muslim reactions to the 9/11 attacks

Patel, pp.125-149

ER: “Muslims condemn terrorist acts”

Nov. 26: NO CLASS

Nov. 28: NO CLASS - THANKSGIVING

### **Week 15: Islam and the West: Conflict or Cooperation?**

Dec. 1: Islam and Pluralism

Patel, pp. 101-123

Mohsen Kadivar, "Freedom of Religion and Belief in Islam" in *New Voices*  
**HONORS STUDENTS: RESEARCH PAPER DUE**

Dec. 3: Muslims in the West

Ramadan, "The Way (Shari`a) of Islam" in *New Voices*

ER: YouTube music videos

Dec. 5: Clash or Coexistence?

Esposito and Mogahed, pp. 135-166

ER: Video: Interview with Hamza Yusuf on *Aljazeera English*

### **Week 16: Wrap-up**

Dec. 8: Islam on the Web

*Take a look at the following websites and come with your questions and comments:*

<http://www.islamicity.com>

<http://www.muslimwakeup.com>

<http://al-islam.org>

<http://www.islam-qa.com> (click on English)

Dec. 10: So what IS Islamic Thought???

REVIEW

### **FINAL EXAM ON MONDAY, DECEMBER 15<sup>th</sup>, FROM 11:00A.M. TO 1:00P.M.**

#### **Graded Assignments for Section 2H (The Honors section):**

Students in the Honors section are expected to attend all classes and communicate with me about their research paper. You will select a topic of your choice and prepare a succinct bibliography to be turned in to me on Friday, **October 17<sup>th</sup>**. This project should involve work on a topic covered in class, and you are encouraged (but not required) to look at primary sources in translation. The final paper is due in class, Monday, **December 1st**. You are also strongly encouraged to submit a draft to me at least one week prior to this due date, although this is not obligatory. The paper must be in 12-point Times New Roman font with 1-inch margins on all sides. Students in this section will not write the second short paper, but will be responsible for all other assignments.

Grade distribution is as follows:

- |                                |     |
|--------------------------------|-----|
| 1. Qur'an paper (4-5 pages)    | 20% |
| 2. Midterm                     | 30% |
| 3. Research Paper (8-10 pages) | 30% |
| 4. Final Exam                  | 20% |

**Final note:** With the exception of grade and absence policies, information in this syllabus may be subject to change with reasonable advance notice, as deemed appropriate by the instructor.