**POLS 335: MUSLIM POLITICAL THOUGHT**

Professor Smita A. Rahman smitarahman@depauw.edu

DePauw University Office Hrs: R 10:30-12:30 and also by Appt

Department of Political Science Office: 104 Asbury Hall

(765)658-4830 Skype: smita.a.rahman

**Course Description:**

This seminar is an exploration of the resurgent tradition of Muslim political thought. We begin with two works from the canon of political philosophy. The first is from Al Farabi, the Muslim philosopher recommended by Maimonides, whose work preserved Plato and Aristotle in a period of European neglect. The second is taken from one of the great philosophers of history and theorists of political change, Ibn Khaldun. This brief introduction will provide, I hope, a sense of the power of the traditional canon of Muslim political thought. We will then read Albert Hourani’s magisterial account of the confrontation and engagement of Arab theorists with a largely European liberalism. Their readings, critiques, adaptations, challenges to, and expansions of liberalism remain powerful in the shaping of contemporary Muslim political thought. The remainder of the course will be spent in exploring a small part of the extraordinary renaissance of Islamic philosophy. We will read the controversial work of Sayyid Qutb, who has been charged with providing the intellectual roots of modern Islamic fundamentalism and whose populist writing threatened the military dictatorship of Gamel Nasser’s Egypt. We will examine the work of Ayatollah Khomeini whose Islamic Revolution led to the foundation of an Islamic State in Iran and look at the recent tumultuous political events there. We will examine the question of women and Islam through an exploration of the contemporary debates surrounding the issue of veiling. We will close by examining the recent popular democratic movements in the Middle East.

# Course Rationale and Objectives

The fundamental rationale of the course is to bring past writings and concepts to bear on present realities in order to explore the complex relationship between Islam and the West. The thinkers we will read provide conceptual tools with which we can work to understand the many aspects of Islamic politics and identity. The course aims to critically analyze concepts such as freedom, power, justice, secularism, modernity, and democracy through a view from “the other side”.

The course is designed to help you:

* Understand the foundations of Muslim Political Thought
* Move beyond simple binaries to an understanding of the complex relationship between Islam and the West
* Ask and confront challenging and difficult questions about religion and politics
* Improve your ability to write in depth and speak clearly about complex theoretical concepts

**Course Requirements:**

As an advanced level seminar, this course requires active participation in class. You must come to class having not only done the reading, but also having actively engaged with it, explored its assumptions and implications, and questioned its premises. Regular attendance is a must. This course is a seminar, which requires active and engaged participation. The reading each week will be roughly 80-100pgs. This material is dense and complex and requires close attention on your part.

You will be required to write three essays for this course— the first, an open book in-class essay on the Muslim canonical tradition, a short 3-5 page essay, and a longer 8-10 page final essay that is cumulative and covers a variety of thinkers we will explore in the class. Topics for both papers will be distributed well in advance of the due date.

All students will be required to do an in-class presentation on the text of their choice. All days marked with a P on the syllabus are designated presentation days. Early in the semester you will be allowed to choose a date for your presentation. In addition to the oral presentation, you must submit a written version of the presentation to me before class. Detailed presentation instructions are available on the Moodle site for the course.

You will be graded on three criteria: (i) content (highlighting key concepts, analyzing them effectively and raising questions for discussion) (ii) structure (do your points flow together and are they connected to a set of arguments) (iii) style (speaking clearly and engaging others).

**If you fail to complete the exam, presentation, midterm, or final paper you will not pass the course.**

If you are permitted extra time during an exam because of a disability, you must inform me well in advance of the scheduled exam so alternative arrangements can be made for you. If you need to reschedule an exam because of an athletic or university event or because of illness, you must submit documentary evidence for my consideration in advance of the scheduled exam. If you miss an exam without prior notice you will not be allowed to make it up, except in rare cases, with detailed documentation from your doctor or DePauw Administration

Your grade for this course will be computed as follows:

In Class Exam 20%

Short Essay 15%

Final Essay 30%

Class Presentation 20%

Class Participation and Attendance 15%

**Academic Integrity:**

Violations of DePauw University’s Academic Integrity Policy will be taken very seriously and punished accordingly. All violations will be reported officially and the student will fail the assignment for which they are charged with the violation.

The complete Academic Integrity Policy can be found at: <http://www.depauw.edu/univ/handbooks/dpuhandbooks.asp?ID=101&parentid=100>

**Course Materials:**

The following books are compulsory for this class and are available for purchase in the DePauw University Bookstore. All readings marked with an asterisk (\*) will be available for you to download from the Moodle page for the course.

* Al-Farabi, *Political Writings*
* Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah*
* Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age*
* Sayyid Qutb, *Milestones*

**SCHEDULE OF READINGS**

Thursday, January 31, 2013 Introduction to Muslim Political Thought

Thursday, February 7 Al-Farabi, *Political Writings*, pp.11-67

Thursday, February 14 Al-Farabi, *Political Writings*, pp. 76-113

Thursday, February 21 Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah,* pp. 11-89

Thursday, February 28 Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah,* pp. 91-160 (P)

**Thursday, March 7 In Class Essay**

Thursday, March 14 Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age,*

Preface and pp. 25-102 (P)

Thursday, March 21 \*Roxanne Euben: *Travel in Search of Practical Wisdom* (P)

 Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age,* pp.130-161 (P) Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age,* pp 324-341 (P)

Thursday, March 28 No Class, Spring Break

**Thursday, April 4** **Short Essay Due in Class**

Sayyid Qutb, *Milestones*, pp. 7-76 (P)

Thursday, April 11 Sayyid Qutb, *Milestones*, pp.77-127 and 129-160 (P)

Thursday, April 18 Maududi, Islamic *Constitution,* pp. 40-92 and 124-152(P)

Thursday, April 25 Maududi, *Islamic Constitution,* pp. 201-252 and pp. 274-299 (P)

Thursday, May 2 \*Khomeini: *Islam and Revolution* (excerpt) (P)

 \*Selected Articles on Political Movement in Iran

 Film, *Persepolis* (Marjane Satrapi)

Thursday, May 9 \*Nilufar Gole: *The Forbidden Modern*, excerpt1 (P)

 \*Selected Articles on the “Veiling” Controversy in Europe

 Conclusion

**Thursday, May 16 Final Paper Due by Email only by 8PM\*\*\***

***\*\*\*All late papers will be assessed a penalty of a third of a grade for every day that they are late***