

## REL 252

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### **Introduction to Islam: The Qur'an, The Prophet Muhammad, & Ritual Practice**

As is the case with any religious tradition, Islam entails a complex web of history, culture, and practice. Islamic history spans more than 1400 years, has changed and adapted to various contexts, and now boasts over 1.6 billion followers; it is simultaneously a religion, a culture and a civilization. Needless to say an "Introduction to Islam" course can take multiple paths. This course approaches Islam by examining the variety of ways that Muslims view and practice their religion. By focusing on the Qur'an and the ways (Sunna) of the Prophet Muhammad, the two foundations of Islamic belief, we examine Muslim history and practice not in a vacuum, but as it relates to the lives of contemporary Muslims. In this way, we can make historically and culturally distant subject matter relevant, so as to develop an understanding and undertake research, aware of the social aspects of religious belief and practice that transcend time and place.

By understanding Muslim intellectual and cultural diversity, we can question the ways in which popular culture and the media present Islam, and develop and improve our ability to think critically and write clearly. By understanding the nuances involved in terms like jihad or Shari'a, the relationship between Sunni and Shiite Muslims, and the treatment of women in the Qur'an, we can advance a holistic view of Islam. As a consequence, larger themes like gender or sectarian difference are not treated in isolation, but dealt with throughout the course in various contexts. One of our primary goals is to examine what it means to be a Muslim in the modern world, contextualizing religious practice given the social and political environment of the period and community being studied. Throughout we will approach our subject matter as scholars of religion, who appreciate the divergent arguments and the disagreements that arise from informed and introspective analysis.

### **Class Structure:**

Although there is no set structure to class, in general I will begin each class with a lecture on subject matter relevant to the reading, filling in gaps and adding sources as necessary. The second half of class will be dedicated to discussion, group work, and presentations. On occasion I will bring in audio or video to augment our discussion. If there are pressing questions, I encourage you to ask them, and I will do my best to address and clarify them during the course of class.

## **Goals of Class Discussions:**

Seminar is an important opportunity to discuss the week's themes and readings. It is a chance for us to think critically and question some of our own assumptions. We will aim at a thoughtful and thought-provoking discussion. As we go through the semester I want you to develop a sense of responsibility for class discussion, making sure it is robust, on-topic and well thought out. We will cover a lot of material each week and you should approach the readings with the goal of allowing certain sources to speak to you, challenge you, and inspire further reflection. Our discussions will be shaped, to a significant degree, both by the content of your Moodle postings, and by questions and ideas you bring to class. While we will generally stick to the course outline, I may change readings or subject matter to better address your concerns or interests. Make sure to address others, both in classroom discussions and in writing, in a way that takes the religious diversity of our scholarly community into account.

## **Readings:**

On average you will have 85-90 pages of reading per week. I have done my best to provide you with texts that tell a story, while at the same time building an understanding of Islam and the lives of Muslims. The relaying of stories is an important part of Islam, and I hope that we can replicate some of that experience through the texts I have chosen. Although a majority of our reading will be from secondary sources, we will read primary source material in translation; Qur'an, Hadith (traditions of the prophet), and stories of the prophet. Since translations are flawed recreations, especially in the case of the Qur'an, I will supply you with a variety of translation styles, so as to develop your understanding of the complexities involved.

While reading an assignment, keep asking:

What does the author mean by that?

Why should I believe that?

So what?

These are the same questions that we will be asking in class, and that I will ask when reading your work. When you find something in the readings that seems vulnerable to criticism, try to formulate the criticism precisely, but then try to imagine how the author might want to respond to your question or objection.

*\* - Please be aware that the reading for any given week may change, and I will inform you of these changes in advance.*

## **Class Requirements & Grading:**

Participation 10%: Participating includes actively and thoughtfully contributing to the conversation, as well as actively listening and respecting your classmates' input. Articulating ideas through participation will help you to formulate ideas, take exams, and write your papers; as well as reinforce the lectures and reading material.

Weekly Postings 15%: Before each class you will post comment(s) and question(s) about the readings to our Moodle forum. In your post you should refer to specific ideas presented by the author(s), quoting them directly and commenting with questions or thoughts you may have. Postings are due **Tuesday evening by 7:30pm**. It is important that posts are submitted on time so that I have a chance to address them in class and others have the chance to read and possibly comment on them. Please see or email me if something in your schedule makes it difficult to meet this deadline. You should be prepared to comment on your posting or raise additional questions during class, and I encourage you to read one another's submissions before class. (There is no need to exceed 250 words per post.)

Presentations 5%: Each student is expected to give a brief 5 minute presentation on a reading(s) for one class session. These presentations are not meant to be all encompassing, but are meant to enhance your understanding of a given subject and improve the way in which you relay and explain information to your colleagues and others. Aside from introducing the class to the reading you are presenting, you can use this as a forum to develop your own opinion or to ask the class a question (you have the floor). In addition you may decide to use your presentation as a basis for one of your review papers. I will post a list of subjects/weeks on Moodle from which to choose.

2 Review Papers 20% total (10% each): For each half of the semester you are required to write a review paper on one of the assigned readings (not the assigned shorter excerpts). Think of these review papers as a critical summary and evaluation to someone who has not read the article or book chapter. Just as with the presentation these papers will help enhance your understanding of a given subject, as well as helping you to organize your ideas clearly and succinctly in writing. I will be posting a guided instruction sheet to help you configure these papers. **Papers are due on March 9<sup>th</sup> & April 20<sup>th</sup> by 5:30PM in both electronic and hardcopy form (hardcopies to be placed in my departmental mailbox).**

Midterm Exam 20%: The Midterm will be a combination of short identifications and longer essays based on the readings and lectures from the first half of the course. The Midterm will be given in class on **March 21<sup>st</sup>**.

Final Assignment 30%: Write a 10-15 page research paper addressing one of the subjects we have addressed during the semester. I will provide you with some writing guidelines and grading criteria. Papers are due on **May 15<sup>th</sup> by 5:30PM in both electronic and hardcopy form (hardcopies to be placed in my departmental mailbox)**. You should be thinking about your final paper topic as early as possible. As we approach week 12, I ask that you all meet with me so that we can discuss the topics or ideas you have for your papers (feel free to begin this discussion with me earlier if

you want to). See below for more comments on papers.

### **Expectations:**

Attendance: Punctual attendance is required. If you must be absent, please send me an e-mail in advance with an explanation, and provide a doctor's note when necessary. (More than 2 unexcused absences will affect your final grade.)

Preparation: Being prepared means you have read and taken notes on all of the week's required reading assignments, have arrived to class with all of the relevant texts, and have brought questions and ideas to class that are important to you, prepared to discuss a range of issues.

Papers: Before the first writing assignment, we will discuss paper requirements, grading policies and additional resources available to assist you in the writing process. I will be available to discuss drafts and paper ideas during my office hours. However, drafts should be brought in no less than 1 week prior to the paper due date. The best papers are often generated out of the liveliest seminar discussions. If a particular session interests you greatly, and you find yourself wanting to argue for one side against another or wanting to resolve a debate by showing that both sides make incorrect assumptions, you probably have a good topic on your hands.

Laptops: I prefer that you do not use laptops during class and particularly during discussion. We should be listening and commenting on what others have said, keeping a good focus on the direction of the conversation. If, however, you prefer to have e-reserve materials on your computer as opposed to printed copies, that's fine, as long as you avoid the temptations that come with having a laptop in front of you, i.e. email, blogs, etc.

Office Hours: Outside of our weekly meeting, I will be available to address any questions, concerns or suggestions you have by e-mail and during office hours. I will do my best to respond to your e-mails within 24 hours, and I encourage you to meet with me to discuss questions you might have about the course material or your broader interests.

**Please make an appointment to see me, during my office hours if possible, at least once over the next two weeks.** This is just an informal one-on-one to address any concerns you might have and to get better acquainted.

I'm looking forward to a rich and exciting semester.

### **Books:**

Allen, Roger, and Shawkat M. Toorawa, ed. *Islam: A Short Guide to the Faith*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2011.

Armstrong, Karen. *Muhammad: A Prophet for Our Time*. New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2006.

Aslan, Reza. *No God But God: The Origins, Evolution, and Future of Islam*. New York, NY: Random House, 2005.

Esack, Farid. *The Qur'an: A Beginner's Guide*. Oxford: One World, 2002.

Hammoudi, Abdellah. *A Season in Mecca: Narrative of a Pilgrimage*, trans. P. Ghazaleh. New York, NY: Hill and Wang, 2006.

Primary texts in translation (Qur'an and Hadith) to be provided.

For supplementary reading outside of class:

<http://www.usc.edu/schools/college/crcc/engagement/resources/texts/muslim/quran/> contains three translations (Yusuf Ali, Pickthall, Shakir) for easy comparison. It is searchable by keyword, and can provide an alternate version of difficult passages. The site also contains searchable hadith collections.

## Course Outline

### Part I:

Introduction: In this first section we begin our exploration of Islamic belief and practice, contextualizing it within the study of religion. The readings are meant to help us breakdown and define large categories like religion, tradition and Islam, aimed at illuminating what religious diversity means and how it is experienced.

**Week 1: Introduction to Islam: Many or One?**

January 30 – February 3

Feb. 1

Aslan, Reza, *No God But God*, xi-xx

Allen, Roger, and Shawkat M. Toorawa, ed. *Islam: A Short Guide to the Faith*, 3-17

Feb. 3

See Moodle for:

Geertz in Rippin, 104-115

William Graham, 495-507

**Part II:**

Muhammad: In week 2 and 3 we will be introduced to the Prophet Muhammad considered the final prophet or “seal of the prophets” by most Muslims. In week 2 we will be introduced to the religion and culture of pre-Islamic Arabian society in order to contextualize the society into which Muhammad delivered the message of Islam. To better appreciate the importance of pre-Islamic paganism, we will evaluate the episode of “The Cranes” or the “Satanic Verses,” in which Muhammad deals directly with the cult of goddess worship among the tribes in his birthplace, Mecca. Week 3 further develops our understanding of Muhammad’s life, and the beginning of his experience with revelation.

**Week 2: Muhammad’s Environs – Pre-Islamic Arabia**

February 6 – 10

Aslan, Reza, *No God But God*, 3-34 (top)

Armstrong, Karen. *Muhammad: A Prophet for Our Time*, 13-20, 21-35

Esack, Farid. *The Qur’an: A Beginner’s Guide*, 37-42.

**(Week 2 Continued)**

See Moodle for:

Ibn Ishaq, *The Life of Muhammad*, 35-40, 165-167

Karen Armstrong, *Muhammad: A Biography of the Prophet*, 108-112

W. Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca*, 100-109  
Qur'an: An Najm: The Cranes – 924-930 from Muhammad Asad Translation.

Suggested Reading: Carlyle, Thomas. *The Hero as Prophet*  
(<http://tinyurl.com/carlylehero> for public domain PDF)

**Week 3: Muhammad and Revelation**  
February 13 - 17

Aslan, Reza, *No God But God*, 34-74  
Armstrong, Karen. *Muhammad: A Prophet for Our Time*, 53-88  
Allen, Roger, and Shawkat M. Toorawa, ed. *Islam: A Short Guide to the Faith*, 105-115

**Part III:**

The Qur'an: Although we were introduced to revelation and its relationship to the Prophet Muhammad in week 3, week 4 will look more specifically at the Qur'an's structure and the import that it has for Muslims. The Qur'an is fundamental to Islamic belief and practice, and as such will be part of our discussion throughout the course. In this week we will also discuss the Qur'an as it pertains directly to women in Islam.

**Week 4: The Qur'an as Miracle**  
February 20 – 24

Esack, Farid. *The Qur'an: A Beginner's Guide*, 14-37, 45-51, 61-64, 65-72, 75-90, 102-109, and 182-190

See Moodle for:

Kecia Ali, *Sexual Ethics & Islam*, 112-131

Kecia Ali, <http://www.chowk.com/Saminasha/iLogs/life/wwwmuslimwakeupcom>

Excerpts from the Quran TBA

**Part IV:**

The Story of Departure and Return: In week 5 we will follow Muhammad as he establishes Islam in Medina and then returns to Mecca as a political and religious leader. Here again we will discuss issues relating to gender and Islam by examining Muhammad's relationship with his wives, especially his favorite wife, Aisha, and the relevance she has had for Muslim women, then and now.

**Week 5:** Islam: Departure and Return, from Medina to Mecca  
February 27 – March 2

Armstrong, Karen. *Muhammad: A Prophet for Our Time*, 89-149, 165-174  
Aslan, Reza, *No God But God*, 75-106

See Moodle for:

Kecia Ali, *Sexual Ethics & Islam*, 135-150  
Excerpts from the Qur'an

### **Part V:**

Prophetic Example: This week focuses on the ways in which Muhammad through his traditions (Sunna and Hadith) serves as an example for Muslims in their daily lives. This week explores the way that traditions are used to understand beliefs and practices not fully elaborated on in the Qur'an. A significant part of this discussion pertains to the five pillars of Islam, as they are a fundamental part the Muslim belief system.

**Week 6:** The Prophet as an Example & the Five Pillars of Islam  
March 5 – 9

Allen, Roger, and Shawkat M. Toorawa, ed. *Islam: A Short Guide to the Faith*, 38-40  
Esack, Farid. *The Qur'an: A Beginner's Guide*, 224-232

See Moodle for:

Tariq Ramadan, *In the Footsteps of the Prophet*, 9-27, 211-216  
Jonathan Brown, *Hadith: Muhammad's Legacy*, 269-275  
Jamal J. Elias ed., *Key Themes for the Study of Islam*, Prophecy ch. 15, 281-303  
Vincent Cornell in *The Oxford History of Islam*, 72-90  
Selected short Hadith TBA

**March 9 First Review Paper Due by 5:30PM**

### **Part VI:**

What Now? What happens after Muhammad's death? Who will lead the Muslim community and how? These are the questions we will be asking in week 7. We begin with the Prophet Muhammad's death, move onto the four "Rightly Guided" Caliphs, and the eventual split between the partisan's of Ali (Shi'a) and the Sunni Muslim community.

Here we will also discuss the relevance that this history has for contemporary relations between Shiite and Sunni Muslims.

**Week 7: The Death of a Prophet and the Shiite-Sunni Split**  
March 12-16

Allen, Roger, and Shawkat M. Toorawa, ed. *Islam: A Short Guide to the Faith*, 68-83  
Aslan, Reza, *No God But God*, 107–139, 171-193

See Moodle for:

A. Guillaume's Translation of Ibn Ishaq, *The Life of Muhammad*, 678-690

**Part VII:**

Practicing Islam: Although much too broad a subject to confine to one week, week 7 will provide an overall structure in which to better understand Islamic Law, ethics and practice. These are themes encountered throughout the semester, but which are given more specific treatment here. Some of the topics covered are Islamic notions of the hereafter, Muslim rites of passage, dietary laws, etc. As always these topics are viewed through their treatment in the Qur'an and the prophetic traditions, but will also broaden our discussion of Islamic law and jurisprudence.

**Week 8: Shari'a and Islamic Belief**  
March 19 – 23

Esack, Farid. *The Qur'an: A Beginner's Guide*, 176-181, 190 (bottom) – 224 (top)

See Moodle for:

- Tahira Naqvi, "Thank God for the Jews," *Dying in a Strange Country*, 17-28.
- Vincent Cornell in *The Oxford History of Islam*, 90-95 & Hashim Kamali, 107-110, 118-124, 130-136, 140-153.
- Selected Fatwas & Qur'anic Verses

**March 21 Midterm Exam**

Break: March 24 – April 1

**Part VII (continued):**

Muslim Spaces: Week 9 is a continuation of our discussion in week 8, but with an emphasis on prayer and the mosque. One part of this is an examination of the ways in which Muslims pray and another is a discussion of the places in which they pray. A

specific part of this examination is the role of Muslim women in the American mosque. Finally a discussion of the mosque as a prayer space leads to a larger discussion about Islamic art and architecture, and the Islamic restrictions regarding pictorial representation.

**Week 9:** Mosque and Prayer, Art and Architecture  
April 2 – 6

Allen, Roger, and Shawkat M. Toorawa, ed. *Islam: A Short Guide to the Faith*, 87-94

See Moodle for:

Jamillah Karim, *American Muslim Women*, 163-205

Gulzar Haider in *Making Muslim Space*, 31-45

Jamal J. Elias ed., *Key Themes for the Study of Islam*, 263-280

Blair & Bloom, " *The Oxford History of Islam*," 230-236

**Part VIII:**

The Many Meanings of Pilgrimage: Weeks 10-13 will center on the book, *A Season in Mecca*, by Abdellah Hammoudi. This story, told by a Moroccan professor who teaches at Princeton University, of his experience performing the Muslim pilgrimage (Hajj) is our entry into not just the Islamic practice of pilgrimage, but into the world of Islam in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries; colonialism, reform, fundamentalism, and Islam in the West. In these weeks we will grapple with the ways that Islam has been interpreted and lived in modern times.

**Week 10:** Hajj Part I:

April 9 – 13

Abdellah Hammoudi, *A Season in Mecca: Narrative of a Pilgrimage*, 3 - 66

See Moodle for:

Autobiography of Malcolm X, 366-393

**Week 11:** Hajj Part II: Colonialism and Wahabism

April 16 – 20

Abdellah Hammoudi, *A Season in Mecca: Narrative of a Pilgrimage*, 67 – 118

Aslan, Reza, *No God But God*, 220-248

**April 20 Second Review Paper Due by 5:30PM**

**Week 12:** Hajj Part III: Sufis & Salafis

April 23 – 27

- Aslan, Reza, *No God But God*, 194-219

- Abdellah Hammoudi, *A Season in Mecca: Narrative of a Pilgrimage*, 119 -166, 183 (bottom) – 189, 190 – 220, 251-262, 282 (bottom) – 293

- Allen, Roger, and Shawkat M. Toorawa, ed. *Islam: A Short Guide to the Faith*, 61-67

**Week 13:** Reformers and Tradition

April 30 – May 4

- Abdellah Hammoudi, *A Season in Mecca: Narrative of a Pilgrimage*, 190 – 220, 251-262, 282 (bottom) – 293

- Aslan, Reza, *No God But God*, 249-266

See Moodle for:

Al-Wahab in Rippin, 19-23

Zaman, M. Q. *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam: Custodians of Change*, 1-15.

**Part IX:**

The End & the Beginning: Week 14 is the end of the course's narrative, but only the beginning of the story of Islam and the lives of Muslims in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. This week explores some of the new ways that Islam is being experienced in both Muslim and non-Muslim countries, asks whether such a bifurcation is relevant in contemporary globalized society, and reflects upon the desire for a continuum between these lived experiences and the beginnings of Islam in 6<sup>th</sup> century Arabia.

**Week 14: Islam in the Contemporary World: Moving Beyond Borders**  
May 7 – May 9

See Moodle for:

- Yvonne Y. Haddad, "Sayyid Qutb: Ideologue of Islamic Revival," *Voices of Resurgent Islam*, pp. 67-98
- Qutb in Rippin, 24-29
- J. Esposito and J. Donohue, eds., *Islam in Transition*, pp. 103-108; 361-381; 394-408
- Herbert Berg, "Mythmaking in the African American Context: The Moorish Science Temple, the Nation of Islam, and the American Society of Muslims," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, September 2005, Vol. 73, No.3, pp. 685-703.

Fatwa on Muslims in the Military  
Excerpts from Bin Laden's Speeches

**May 15 Final Paper Due by 5:30PM**