HRS 144 - Fall 2014

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Office Hours: TH 12-1:30PM & 4-5:30PM or by appointment

Course Info:
T,TH: 10:30-11:45AM
Room: MND4004

Introduction to Islam

Catalogue Course Description: This course is meant to be a survey of the Islamic way of life: its beliefs, traditions and practices from Qur’anic origins and the Sunna of the Prophet Muhammad. The historical development of Islamic law, religious sects, mysticism, and intellectual thought of the global Muslim community from medieval to contemporary times.

Further Details: 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. We will 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.

We will learn to 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 this is primarily a lecture course, we will do our best to include discussion and group work. Lecture will focus on subject matter relevant to the reading, filling in gaps and adding sources as necessary. 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:

Class 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 by the 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.

Readings:

On average you will have 50-100 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: Although not assigned percentage, participation is an important part of your grade. In a class this size it is difficult to evaluate participation and so your grade will only be affected by extreme absence (dropping your grade as much as a + or -). Participation, can also positively affect your grade. In this sense participation, is actively and thoughtfully contributing to the conversation, as well as actively listening and respecting your classmates’ input. Articulating ideas through participation will also help you to formulate ideas, take exams, and write your essays; as well as reinforce the lectures and reading material.

Quizzes 6 for 6% each (Drop lowest): You will be given 6 short quizzes as labeled in the syllabus (Quiz dates: Sept. 18, October 2, October 9, Nov. 6, Nov. 20, & Dec. 4). These we be 5-10 minute quizzes consisting of 10 questions, testing your basic knowledge of terms and ideas. The lowest grade will be dropped.

Midterm 30% (In-class 15%, Take home 15%): 1) The in-class portion of the midterm (October 16) will consist of identification questions. You will be given 7 IDs from which you will choose 5. These are not simple definitions, but longer identifications. These identifications will deal with the terms, history, figures, and philosophical & religious trends that we have discussed. Things you might consider when writing definitions are: Dates, names, importance, meaning, stories/history, relevance and connection to the development of Islam, central themes, different understandings across sects, etc. 2) For the take home portion (Due end of day on October 19), you will choose 2 of 3 questions and write a 3-4 page essay for each (typed double spaced). Late Essays: Essays turned in after the deadline will lose 1/3 grade (A to A-; A- to B+; B+ to B, etc.) for each 24-hour period late up until the end of the second day. Papers turned in any time after the second day will lose 1 full letter grade (A to B; A- to B-, etc.)

Final 40%: The final exam will be cumulative and include IDs, essays, and a map quiz. The exam date is December 19 from 10:15-12:15PM.

Grading Scale:

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Statement on Academic Integrity
Plagiarism and academic dishonesty constitute serious offenses that undermine your education and violate Sacramento State’s policy on academic integrity and may result in penalties ranging from a lowered grade to course failure. All work submitted in this class must be your own, and must be completed specifically for this class. You may not turn in work previously written for another class. Any use of another’s work without proper attribution constitutes plagiarism. Plagiarism ranges from copying someone else’s work word for word, to rewriting someone else’s work with only minor word changes (mosaic plagiarism), to summarizing work without acknowledging the source. For more information see the library’s page on plagiarism: (http://library.csus.edu/content2.asp?pageID=353)

Expectations:

Attendance: I will not be taking attendance, but excessive lateness and/or absence will negatively affect your performance on exams as well as the participation component of your 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. On occasion I will give you a list of “terms to define/identify” before a week’s readings. You should come to class aware of these definitions, having used your class texts and outside materials if necessary.

Laptops & Cell Phones: Laptops and cell phones are not allowed during class. We should be listening and commenting, keeping a good focus on the direction of the conversation. As we all know, laptops and cell phones can be a serious means of distraction for you and those around you.

Office Hours: Outside of our weekly meetings, 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.

Accommodations for Recognized Disabilities: I will make every effort to accommodate your needs as they apply to the above policies. Please come see me in the event that you will need special accommodation so that we can figure out an acceptable solution.

I’m looking forward to a rich and exciting semester.
Books:


This text is an extremely useful and insightful look into the history of Islam and how Muslims and non-Muslims use this history to explain current events. One of the book’s main arguments is that what we see happening is much more about an internal debate between Muslims than it is a conflict between Islam and the West. **Reza Aslan** is President and CEO of Aslan Media Inc., focused on entertainment about the Greater Middle East and its Diaspora communities. He is Associate Professor of Creative Writing at the University of California, Riverside. For insights into his thought and political perspectives see: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6-bLZbkYk-I](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6-bLZbkYk-I)


Through short chapters this text will provide explanation and elaboration on the themes we will deal with throughout the semester. About the editors: Roger Allen was Professor of Arabic and Comparative Literature in the Department of Near Eastern Languages & Civilizations at the University of Pennsylvania for 43 years. From 2009-2010 he served as president of the Middle East Studies Association of North America (MESA). Shawkat M. Toorawa is Associate Professor of Arabic Literature and Islamic Studies at Cornell University.

This book provides a good introduction to the Qur’an, its creation, debates about it, and its place in the history of Islam and Muslim life. Michael Cook has written widely on Islam and is Professor of Near Eastern Studies at Princeton University.

For supplementary reading outside of class: 
[http://www.usc.edu/schools/college/crcc/engagement/resources/texts/muslim/quran/](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 to Islam: Many or One?**

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 begin our intellectual journey.

**Week 1**
September 1-5

**September 2**
Introductions

**September 4 Reading:**
- Aslan, Reza, *No God But God*, xiii-xxvi

See Blackboard for:

**Part II: Muhammad**

In weeks 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. Week 3 further develops our understanding of Muhammad’s life, and the beginning of his experience with revelation. Here we will also begin to explore Islamic notions of representation and the sanctity of the prophets.

**Week 2: Muhammad’s Environs – Pre-Islamic Arabia**
September 8-12

**Sept. 9 Readings**
Aslan, Reza, *No God But God*, 3-34 (top)

**Sept. 11 Readings**

See Blackboard for:
- Jamal J. Elias ed., *Key Themes for the Study of Islam*, Prophecy Ch. 15, 281-294
**Week 3: Muhammad and Revelation**  
September 15-19

**Sept. 16 Readings**  
Aslan, Reza, *No God But God*, 34-74

**Sept. 18 Readings**  

See Blackboard for:  
*Jamal J. Elias ed., Key Themes for the Study of Islam*, Prophecy Ch. 15, 295-303

**Quiz 1 on September 18**

**Part III: The Qur’an**

Although we were introduced to revelation and its relationship to the Prophet Muhammad in week 3, week 4 and 5 will look more specifically at the Qur’an’s structure and the import that it has for Muslims, then and now. The Qur’an is fundamental to Islamic belief and practice, and as such will be part of our discussion throughout the course.

**Week 4**  
September 22-26

**Sept. 23 Reading**  

See Blackboard for:  
Mattson, Ingrid, *The Story of the Qur’an*, 76-85

**Sept. 25 Reading**  

**Week 5**  
September 29-October 3

**Sept. 30 Reading**  
Oct. 2 Reading

See Blackboard for:
- Excerpts from the Quran
- Sardar, Ziauddin, Reading the Qur’an, xiii-xx, 3-11

Quiz 2 on October 2

Part IV: Women in Islam

Although gender in Islam will be a recurring theme throughout the semester, in week five we will look specifically at some of the issues that relate specifically to women and the Qur’an and women in Islam more generally.

Week 6:
October 6-10

Oct. 7 Reading

See Blackboard for:
Kecia Ali, Sexual Ethics & Islam, 112-131

Oct. 9 Reading

See Blackboard for:
Jamillah Karim, American Muslim Women, 1-21

Quiz 3 on October 9
Part V: The Story of Departure and Return

In week 7 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 7
October 13-17

October 14 Reading
Aslan, Reza, No God But God, 76-108

See Blackboard for:
The Night Journey and the Ascension of Muhammad: pg. 68 (3.2.2) - 72 (end of first paragraph) in Textual Sources

October 16

In-class Midterm Exam - October 16
Essay Papers Due – End of Day on October 19

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 8. We begin with the Prophet Muhammad’s death, move onto the four “Rightly Guided” Caliphs and the first dynasties that came after. In week 9 we will examine 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 8: The Death of a Prophet and What Followed
October 20-24

Oct. 21 Reading
Aslan, Reza, No God But God, 109–141
Oct. 23 Reading  

See Blackboard for:  
Tariq Ramadan, In the Footsteps of the Prophet, 211-216

Part VI (Continued):

Week 9: Sunnis and Shiites, Is there a difference?  
October 27-31

Oct. 28 Reading  
- Aslan, Reza, No God But God, 174-198  

Oct. 30 Reading  
See Blackboard for:  
Varzi, Roxanne, Warring Souls, 1-7, 15-17, 44-75

Part VII: Sufism: A Path to God

Sufism: In week 10 we will begin our exploration of Islamic mysticism, a theme to which we will return throughout the semester. Sufism has had a deep and lasting impact on Islam throughout its history from the time of Muhammad until today.

Week 10  
November 3-7

Nov. 4 Reading  
- Aslan, Reza, No God But God, 199-224  

Nov. 6 Reading  
See Blackboard for:  
- Excerpts of Sufi Poetry  
- Esposito, John L. Islam the Straight Path, 124-134  

Quiz 4 on November 6
Part VIII: The Five Pillars, Shari’a, and Islamic Practice

Weeks 11, 12, 13 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. These weeks explore 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 11: The Five Pillars**
November 10-14

Nov. 11 Reading
See Blackboard for:
- Vincent Cornell in *The Oxford History of Islam*, 72-90

Nov. 13 Reading on Hajj:
See Blackboard for:
Autobiography of Malcolm X, 366-393

**Part VIII (continued): Muslim Spaces and Prayer**

Week 12 is a continuation of our discussion in week 11, 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.

**Week 12: Mosque and Prayer**
November 17-21

Nov. 18 Reading on Mosques

See Blackboard for:
Gulzar Haider in *Making Muslim Space*, 31-45

Nov. 20 Reading on Prayer
See Blackboard for:

Quiz 5 on November 20
Part VIII (Continued): Islamic Law

In week 13 we will seek to understand the mechanisms of Islamic law and discover the ways that the Qur’an and Hadith are used as a basis for legal decision making.

Week 13: Shari‘a
November 24-28

Nov. 25 Reading

See Blackboard for:

- Vincent Cornell in The Oxford History of Islam, 90-95
- Companion to the Article: Fatwa on Military Service

November 27, Happy Thanksgiving!

Part IX: Reformers, Fundamentalists and Tradition

Here we enter into the world of Islam in the 19th and 20th centuries and engage with the issues surrounding colonialism, reform, & fundamentalism. In these weeks we will grapple with the ways that Islam has been interpreted and lived in modern times.

Week 14:
December 1-5

Dec. 2 Reading
Aslan, Reza, No God But God, 225-254

Dec. 4 Reading
Aslan, Reza, No God But God, 255-277

Quiz 6 on December 4
Part X: The End & the Beginning: Week 15 is the end of the course’s narrative, but only the beginning of the story of Islam and the lives of Muslims in the 20th and 21st 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 6th century Arabia.

Week 15: Islam in the Contemporary World: Moving Beyond Borders
December 8-12

Dec. 9 Reading
Aslan, Reza, No God But God, 278-292

See Blackboard for:
Jose Casanova in Secularism Religion and Multicultural Citizenship, 139-163

Dec. 11
Review and wrap-up

Final Exam Thursday December 19th 10:15-12:15PM