ANTH 141A — Islamic Movements
Instructor: Pascal Menoret (pmenoret@brandeis.edu)
Office: Lemberg 227
Class hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 5-6:20pm
Classroom: Brown 224
Office hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 4pm-5pm

Course Description: In this class you will learn about Islamic movements from an anthropological perspective. You will read about field research conducted on some of today’s most visible yet mysterious political movements. You will study the emergence of powerful social movements claiming Islam as a motto and a program, and analyze Islamist politics, from peaceful activism to armed action.

During the semester, you will read two books informed by ethnographic fieldwork and anthropological theory, François Burgat’s Islamism in the Shadow of al-Qaeda and Faisal Devji’s Terrorist in Search of Humanity. You will not be passive learners: you will contribute to the material at hand by choosing a few research topics and presenting your findings to the class at the end of the semester. Along the way, you will learn how anthropology can be a potent tool to deconstruct received wisdoms and create solid knowledge about complex contemporary issues.

Learning goals: In this course you will learn:
- about the interplay between orientalism, colonialism, and anti-colonial and anti-imperial resistance;
- about the relationship between Islamism, liberalism, and democracy;
- about the main Islamist movements, including the Muslim Brotherhood and the various Salafi groups;
- about the complex relationships between Islamism and feminism;
- about fieldwork methods used to study Islamists;
- about the role of urban spaces in the rise of Islamism;
- about radicalization and terrorism, victimization, martyrdom, and the notion of “just war”.

Course plan:
Week 1 – Good Muslim, Bad Muslim
January 11 Introduction
January 16 Mahmood Mamdani, Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: America, the Cold War, and the Roots of Terror (Doubleday 2004), Introduction and Chapter 1, p. 3-62.

Week 2 – The Right to “Speak Muslim”

**Week 3 – Islamism and the Public Sphere**

**January 30**  

**February 1**  

**Week 4 – Islamism and Feminism**

**February 6**  

**February 8**  

**Week 5 – Islamism in the Arabian Peninsula**

**February 13**  

**February 15**  

**Week 6 – Studying Radicalization**

**February 27**  
François Burgat, *Islamism in the Shadow of Al-Qaeda*, Chapters 6-7, p. 89-120.  

**March 1**  

Week 7 – Terror and Humanitarianism

Week 8 – Victimhood and Sacrifice

Week 9 – Terrorism and Direct Action
March 20   Faisal Devji, The Terrorist in Search of Humanity, Chapter 3, p. 57-96.

Week 10 – Toward the Caliphate
March 27   Faisal Devji, The Terrorist in Search of Humanity, Chapter 4, p. 97-135.

Week 11 – Just Wars
April 10   Faisal Devji, The Terrorist in Search of Humanity, Chapter 5, p. 137-164.

Week 12 – Presentations
April 17   Oral presentations.
April 19   Oral presentations.

Week 13 – Presentations
April 24   Oral presentations.
April 26   Oral presentations.
**Evaluation:**

**Participation: 10%**

You are expected to read all the week’s texts in advance, to think about them carefully, and to participate actively in classroom discussions. You must complete all assigned coursework to pass the course. It is your responsibility to submit all assignments before the due date by email. No extension will be granted. Work not turned in, or turned in after the due date without a documented explanation will be downgraded (one grade level by day, from A to A- to B+, etc.). (Documentation includes a note from a physician or from the Brandeis health center.)

The following is a list of the written assignments. A full description of each assignment will be handed out as we go. All page lengths are for double-spaced text, Times New Roman, size 12. Please email your assignments to me. No hard copy needed.

**Reading notes: 20%**

Every week you will take notes about the week’s readings. Notes may include: brief summaries of the author’s arguments; quotations; reactions to the text; comparison with other texts, other ideas, other disciplines, etc. Assignment due every Monday at midnight.

**First assignment: 20%**

In no more than three pages (six for graduate students), you will write the biography of an important Islamic activist, dead or living, based on all the sources you can find (primary, secondary, written, visual, audio, etc.). Assignment due on February 8 before class.

**Second assignment: 20%**

In no more than four pages (eight for graduate students), you will write a brief history of an important Islamist movement. You will discuss the birth of the movement, its main figures, its political action, and its influence on other political formations. Assignment due on March 15 before class.

**Third assignment: 20%**

In no more than eight pages (sixteen for graduate students), you will analyze one aspect of Islamism that particularly struck you as noteworthy. You will choose your topic in consultation with me, and you will come to my office to discuss the direction of your research. Assignment due on April 30.

**Oral presentation: 10%**

You will present your final paper and get feedback from your classmates and myself. Presentation will be 10 min. long, followed by a 5 min. Q&A. Presentations will take place on April 17, 19, 24, and 26.

**No electronic devices:** Studies have shown that we perform better, as thinkers and writers, with pen and paper than when offered the possibility to check our email boxes and social media feeds. No use of laptops, tablets, or cellphones is allowed in class. Have doubts? Read this: [http://www.newyorker.com/tech/elements/the-case-for-banning-laptops-in-the-classroom](http://www.newyorker.com/tech/elements/the-case-for-banning-laptops-in-the-classroom).

**Disabilities:** If you are a student with a documented disability and wish to have a reasonable accommodation made for you in this class, please see me immediately.
**Academic integrity:** Academy integrity is the acknowledgment of what we owe to other writers and researchers. Plagiarism is the non-acknowledgment of our sources and ranges from improperly quoting to paraphrasing to copying an author without admitting it. Plagiarism will not be tolerated, and all cases will be submitted to the university. For more information on academic integrity at Brandeis University, see: [https://lts.brandeis.edu/courses/instruction/academic-integrity/index.html](https://lts.brandeis.edu/courses/instruction/academic-integrity/index.html).

**Statement of time required:** Success in this 4-credit course is based on the assumption that you will spend a weekly average of 9 hours of time outside of class in preparing and completing course assignments.

**Course material:** You will purchase Faisal Devji, *The Terrorist in Search of Humanity: Militant Islam and Global Politics* (Columbia University Press, 2008). All other readings are available on Latte.