Islamism (ANTH141a)  
Instructor: Pascal Menoret (pmenoret@brandeis.edu)  
Office: Lemberg 227  
Class hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 3:30pm-4:50pm  
Classroom: Shiffman Humanities Center 201  
Office hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 5pm-6pm

Why has Islamism become the most visible political movement in the Arab world since the 1980s, and a crucial phenomenon worldwide? Why do political parties need to include the letter I (for Islam) in their name to win elections? How have anthropologists, historians, and political scientists constructed Islamism as an object of study? This course studies the emergence of Islamism and analyzes Islamic political action. It advocates for ethnographic work in political science and shows that hanging out with Islamists is crucial to the comprehension of their politics. The course is devoted to examining and problematizing concepts and themes that are central to understanding Islamism: the Muslim Brothers and the Salafis, Islamist feminism, the role of urban spaces, political violence, and the influence of the war on terror.

1. Teaching and Learning Methodologies: This course is organized around readings, lectures, and classroom discussions. The required readings are often difficult, and the aim of the course is to help you understand the broader anthropological, historical, and political debates that our authors are part of, and to offer a lucid interpretation of their texts and positions. Close reading of the texts and class discussion are at the core of this course’s methodology: you are expected to read all the week’s texts in advance, to think about them carefully, and to participate actively in our discussions. The learning outcomes will be assessed through in class participation, weekly reflections, three written assignments, and one oral presentation. You are expected to attend all classes and to engage in critical discussion of the texts.

Submit work on time. You must complete all assigned coursework to pass the course. It is your responsibility to submit all assignments before the due date by email. Work not turned in, or turned in after the due date without a documented explanation will receive an F.

Be there. Full attendance is required to pass the course. Exceptions include documented illness, documented family emergency, and force majeure.

No tolerance for plagiarism. 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

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 Twitter and Facebook feeds. Let’s be better thinkers. No use of laptops, tablets, or cellphones is

**Address your concerns and issues during office hours.** If you experience difficulties with the readings and the assignments, see me as soon as possible. Office hours are opportunities to discuss the course material, get my advice and help on how to best work on assignments, and inform me of issues you may have with the course.

2. **Learning Outcomes:** There is no prerequisite for this course. You will learn how to describe precisely complex arguments about politics in the Middle East. You will acquire knowledge of most of the prominent issues related to Islamism, with a focus on Arab societies and politics. You will be expected to interpret the texts, to understand their context, and to reconstitute the fieldwork that gives them meaning and content. Under my supervision, you will conduct a recorded interview and analyze it for one of your assignments.

3. **Disabilities:** If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and wish to have a reasonable accommodation made for you in this class, please see me immediately.

4. **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.

5. **Assignments:**
   a) Full attendance and in class participation are required. *(20% of the final grade)*
   b) Weekly reflection: you will write a short reflection on the week’s readings. Feel free to discuss what intrigued you, interested you or shocked you most in the texts. Any length between one line and one page – the shorter the better. **Assignment due every Monday at midnight. (10% of the final grade)**
   c) First assignment (around 1,500 words): you will write the biography of an Islamist activist, dead or living, based on all the sources you can find (secondary, primary, written, visual, audio, interviews, etc.). **Assignment due on September 27 before class. (20% of the final grade)**
   d) Second assignment (around 2,500 words): you will write a research paper that presents one Islamist movement, its history, geography, sociology, and politics. You will come to my office to discuss your topic and methodology. **Assignment due on November 1 before class. (20% of the final grade)**
   e) Third assignment (around 3,000 words): you will conduct a recorded interview, in person or over Skype, with an Islamist activist. You will come to my office to discuss the choice of your interviewee and your methodology. Your paper will be an edited transcription of the interview (around 2,500 words) with an introduction (around 500 words). **Assignment due at the end of the semester. (30% of the final grade)**
   f) Oral presentation: you will present your interview project while finalizing it. Presentations are 10 min. long and are followed by a 5 min. Q&A. **Presentations on November 29, December 1, and December 6. (Ungraded)**
6. Course Schedule:

August 25  Introduction

Week 1 – For the Muslims

August 30  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 – Colonialism, Nationalism, Islamism

September 8  No class

Week 3 – Colonialism, Nationalism, Islamism, Take Two

September 13  François Burgat, *Face to Face with Political Islam*, Chapters 3-5, p. 43-80.

Week 4 – Islamism in Egypt


**Week 5 – Islamism in North Africa and Palestine**

September 27 François Burgat, *Face to Face with Political Islam*, Chapters 8-9, p. 102-121.


**Week 6 – Islamism in the Arabian Peninsula**

*October 4* No class


**Week 7 – Islamism and Democracy**


October 13 François Burgat, *Face to Face with Political Islam*, Chapter 10, p. 122-139
Week 8 – Islamism and Women

October 18  François Burgat, *Face to Face with Political Islam*, Chapter 11, p. 140-151


Week 9 – Islamism and Modernity

October 25  No class

Week 10 – Terrorists in Search of Humanity


Week 11 – Just Wars

November 8  Faisal Devji, *Landscapes of the Jihad*, Chapter 2, p. 33-60

**Week 12 – Representations**


**Week 13 – After God**

November 22  Faisal Devji, *Landscapes of the Jihad*, Chapter 5-6, p. 112-164
November 24  No class

**Week 14 – Oral Presentations**

November 29  Oral presentations
December 1  Oral presentations

**Week 15 – Oral Presentations**

December 6  Oral presentations