Islam and Religious Diversity
Joseph Lumbard
NEJS 188b
Fall 2014

Course Description and Objectives
The position of Islam vis-à-vis other religious and secular traditions and its place in a pluralistic world has become an important topic of discussion. Questions such as the place of religious freedom, the rights of women and minorities, and the Islamic doctrine of jihad are discussed in many outlets. Some maintain that Islam bears a tradition of tolerance testified by theological, legal and historical realities. Others maintain that there is a fundamental hostility in Islam towards non-Muslims, some have even compared Islam to totalitarian ideologies.

The course will examine the panorama of varying Muslim discourses about the self and the other throughout Islamic history. It will underline the significance of understanding, the manner in which Muslims have seen Islam and themselves instead of relying primarily on the evaluations of non-Muslims. The guiding premise is that in order to understand the other, whether it is a system of thought, a religion, or a culture, it is necessary to learn to see the world through the eyes of the other to the extent that one is able.

After situating Islam in the world today, the course will examine the Quran, the foundational source of Muslim belief and practice, focusing on verses that deal with questions of religious diversity. It will then examine the concept of prophecy, which undergirds the Islamic conception of religious pluralism, and the particular example of Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam, in relation to religious others. We will then look at the manner in which different schools of Islamic thought and practice have dealt with religious others, specifically Christianity, Judaism, Hindu traditions, Buddhism, and the Chinese religions. This historical and theological foundation will serve as the foundation for examining the manner in which new discourses on religious diversity are being developed in the contemporary period by Muslim intellectuals and scholars and how they relate to global issues of identity, otherness, and pluralism.

By the end of the course, students should be able to understand the multiplicity of ways in which Muslims have theorized religious difference and approached religious others, through specific disciplinary methodologies and interpretations and through historical encounters. Students should also be able to draw their own conclusions about the possibilities of engagement between Muslims and others in the contemporary world.

Required Texts
All other required readings will be posted on Latte

Assignments and requirements
Each class will be focused on a particular topic with a specific assigned reading. All students are required to submit a short reflection paper (500 to 700 words) once a week on any of the week’s readings that demonstrates their engagement with the material and answers the question(s) the instructor will provide to navigate each reading. Reflections are due by 5PM on Sunday of each week. Each student may skip two of these short reflections over the course of the semester.

All students must submit a final paper (or two shorter papers) or a final project. The topic of the paper or project must be decided in conversation with the instructor for which the student must set up a conference with the instructor. The final paper must be 10-12 typed double-spaced pages and use a consistent citation format (preferably from the Chicago Manual of Style: see [http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html](http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html) for examples). If the option for two shorter papers is taken, each paper should be 5-6 typed double-spaced pages with consistent citation and answer a specific question that is raised in the readings and discussed with the instructor. Further instructions on the papers or project will be provided in class.

Class discussion is a central element of this class and all students are required to participate in it. If you have any reasons for difficulty with this requirement, please discuss it with instructor.

Grades
40% Final paper or 2 shorter papers or project
35% Weekly assignments
25% Participation

Attendance
Attendance is part of participation and is thus necessary. For excused absences, which include but are not limited to illness, health emergencies, family emergencies, and participation in university sports or other activities, the instructor must be informed in advance. Any more than two unexcused absences will result in an adverse effect on your grade. It is your responsibility to acquire notes of the class lecture/discussion if absent.

Policy on Late Work and Incompletes:
Late work will be penalized by half a letter grade for each day overdue (including weekends and holidays). Extensions will be granted only in very exceptional circumstances, and in no case after the original deadline for completion has passed. Students who anticipate difficulty in meeting deadlines should contact me as far in advance of the due date as possible. A course grade of incomplete will only be granted for compelling reasons.

University Statement on Academic Integrity:
“Academic integrity is central to the mission of educational excellence at Brandeis University. Each student is expected to turn in work completed independently, except when assignments specifically
authorize collaborative effort. It is not acceptable to use the words or ideas of another person—be it a world-class philosopher or your lab partner—without proper acknowledgement of that source. This means that you must use footnotes and quotation marks to indicate the source of any phrases, sentences, paragraphs or ideas found in published volumes, on the internet, or created by another student. Violations of University policies on academic integrity, described in Section Three of Rights and Responsibilities, may result in failure in the course or on the assignment, or in suspension or dismissal from the University. If you are in doubt about the instructions for any assignment in this course, it is your responsibility to ask for clarification.”

Disabilities:
A student who requires accommodation for a documented disability of any type should see the instructor immediately to discuss modifications for any assignments.

Syllabus

Week 1—Sept. 3
Introduction: review syllabus and course overview

Week 2—Sept. 8–10
Islam as the other: Islam and the West, Islam in the West

Week 3—Sept. 15–17
9/30 The Quran: pluralism or exclusivity?
Readings: Quran: Sūrah 3 and 5.
— Joseph Lumbard, “Covenant and Covenants in the Quran.”

Week 4—Sept. 22–24
The Islamic tradition: A religious tradition and its many interpretations

Week 5—Sept. 29–Oct. 1
The Doctrine of prophecy: self and other in Islam

Week 6—Oct. 6–8

The other according to Islamic Law

Week 7—Oct. 15

Islam, Judaism, and Christianity

Week 8—Oct. 20–22

Theological Perspectives Regarding the Question of salvation:
Reading: Muhammad Hassan Khalil, Islam and the Fate of Others, Intro and Chs. 1 and 3

Week 9—Oct. 27–29

The Question of salvation: metaphysical perspectives
Readings: Muhammad Hassan Khalil, Islam and the Fate of Others, Ch. 2.

Week 10—Nov. 3–5

The Question of salvation: modern and contemporary perspectives
Reading: Muhammad Hassan Khalil, Islam and the Fate of Others, Ch. 4

Week 11—Nov. 10–12

Islam and the East:
Readings: Yohanan Friedmann, "Islamic Thought in the Indian Context"
— Carl Ernst, "The Limits of Universalism in Islamic Thought: in Relation to Indian Religions."
— Zvi Ben-Dor Benite, The Dao of Muhammad: A Cultural History of Muslims in Late Imperial China (Cambridge, MA, 2005), Ch. 4: "Muhammad and His Dao: Knowledge and Identity in the Han Kitab," 163–213.

Week 12—Nov. 17–19

Contemporary Muslim discourse on self and other: dialogue or polemic

Week 13—Nov. 24
**Contemporary Muslim discourse: Salafism, Jihadism and Pluralism**


Week 14—Dec. 1–3
**Muslims and Interfaith Dialogue in the contemporary U.S.**


Week 15–Dec. 8
**Conclusion**