Islam: Civilization and Institutions
IMES 104a
Fall 2019

M, W, Th 11:00 – 11:50 a.m.
Location: Schwartz Hall, 301

Instructor: Prof. Carl Sharif El-Tobgui
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Office Hours: Tues., 10:30–12:30 (and by appt.)

Teaching Fellow: (Location: Lown 115):
Office Hours: TBA

Course Description: This course explores the main constituent elements of the Islamic religion, the characteristic worldview, value system, and form of living it has engendered, and the main contours of the worldwide civilization constructed upon and inspired by the Islamic vision. The first part of the course will look at the rise of Islam in 7th-century Arabia, with particular emphasis on the Qur’an: its genesis, preservation and transmission, its major themes, and its role in Muslim life and worship. An overview of the fundamental beliefs and practices of Islam will then be followed, in the second part of the course, by a more detailed exploration of Islamic law, theology, philosophy, and Sufism. Having mastered the fundamentals of Islamic religion, we will then briefly explore the crowning achievements of Islamic civilization in the realms of science, art, calligraphy, and architecture. Both of the aforementioned segments of the course will be interspersed with individual historical lectures covering the main watershed events of Islamic history, including the initial period of conquest, the Golden Age, the Crusades, the Mongol invasions, the later imperial empires, and the rise of the modern period. The third and final segment of the course will look at Islam in the modern context, exploring issues of Islamic law, state and government in the modern period, the question of human rights, and the contemporary relationship between Islam and the West. The purpose of the course is to provide students with an integrated understanding of the ideals and realities of Islam as a religion, as well as the dynamics of Islamic civilization both past and present.

Learning Goals: This course is designed and conducted in the objective of enabling students to:
- understand the historical circumstances surrounding the rise and spread of Islam in the 7th century, as well as watershed historical events of the Middle Ages and the great Muslim empires of the immediately pre-modern period;
- gain a nuanced understanding of Islam as a religion in its creedal, legal-ethical, and spiritual dimensions (including an appreciation of the diverse expressions of Islamic thought and practice, as well as the underlying unity that ties these all together as “Islamic”);
- explore the cultural achievements of classical Muslim civilization, particularly in the realms of the natural sciences, the visual and sonar arts, and architecture;
- appreciate the impact of the rise of modernity and of Western colonialism on various Muslim lands and the variety of Muslim responses to these phenomena in the 19th and 20th centuries;
- become familiar with the key problems and debates (intellectual, social, political) currently taking place within the Muslim world and Muslim communities;
- acquire the competence to think critically about the key elements that make up a person’s—or a civilization’s—Weltanschauung and to understand the implications of differing worldview perspectives for contemporary intercultural and inter-civilizational exchanges;
• hone their ability to develop nuanced and informed perspectives on critical issues of the day concerning Islam, the Muslim world, and the East-West relationship, and to articulate and defend these perspectives competently both orally and in writing.

Readings: You are required to complete all the readings assigned for a given day before coming to class on that day. The lectures will expand upon and complement the readings, not merely outline or paraphrase them, and will be conducted on the assumption that the assigned readings have been completed and assimilated by students beforehand. You should come to class prepared to engage actively the materials you have read and to participate intelligently in class discussions on them. The specific reading assignments for the entire semester are given below, so you may plan your reading schedule ahead of time for periods when you anticipate greater demands on your time due to exams and projects in other courses. You will be responsible (on exams and papers) for demonstrating familiarity with the content of both the readings and the lectures.

Lectures & Attendance Policy: This course covers a lot of ground, and a number of the topics we will be dealing with are rather subtle and, on occasion, complex. We will be exploring concepts, ideas, ways of thinking and experiencing the world that do not always line up with the categories and assumptions we may take for granted. True comprehension of the material will therefore require a willingness, as well as a patient and systematic effort, on the part of students to build new conceptual tools for conceiving of things in hitherto unfamiliar ways. Although the course readings have been carefully selected to help you do this, the lectures are nonetheless vital for drawing the materials together and crystallizing them for you in a meaningful and digestible form. For this reason, daily attendance is obligatory. Students will be allowed no more than two unexcused absences during the semester, after which each additional unexcused absence will result in the subtraction of one point from the Attendance & Participation component of your final grade. Please communicate with the instructor well beforehand regarding any anticipated absences you may incur for valid reasons (such as participation in off-campus academic tournaments and the like).

Time Commitment: Success in this 4-credit hour course is based on the expectation that students will spend a minimum of 9 hours of study time per week in preparation for class (readings, papers, discussion sections, preparation for exams, etc.).

Required Materials:
3. Fazlur Rahman, Major Themes of the Qur’an, Second Edition
4. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, The Heart of Islam
5. Supplementary readings (available on LATTE)
6. Assigned videos (All videos available on YouTube or via links in syllabus.)

Course Evaluation:
Attendance & Participation 10%
Reflective Video Summaries & Targeted Responses 15%
Mid-semester Paper 15%
Midterm Exam 15%
Final Paper 20%
Final Exam 25%
TOTAL 100%
Reflective Video Summaries (RVSs): On various occasions throughout the semester, students will watch a video or a portion thereof as part of their required preparation for class. On each such occasion, students will submit a one- to two-page (typed, double-spaced) summary of the video’s content followed by at least one paragraph of a personal reflection on, evaluation of, or reaction to the video. Students’ RVSs (“reflective video summaries”) are, unless otherwise stated, due in class on the day for which the video was assigned.

Targeted Responses: On a handful of occasions, students will be asked to respond to a given reading in writing by addressing a set of directed cues. Such assignments are marked by the phrase “Targeted response due” in the syllabus. The cues to which students should respond will be posted on LATTE. Targeted responses should be submitted in class the day on which the corresponding reading is due. Students should expect to participate in discussions actively—either as a class or in break-out groups—based on the thoughts and perspectives they have developed in their targeted responses.

Papers: The mid-semester paper—due on Friday, Oct. 4—is a 5- to 6-page essay meant primarily to gauge students’ absorption of the class readings as they pertain to a discrete topic. The final paper—due on Saturday, Dec. 7—is a 7- to 8-page position paper in which you are asked to develop your own engaged and critical perspective as pertains to one of the major themes of the course.

Exams: Both the midterm and the final are in-class exams. Each will have identifications and essay questions. All identifications on the final exam will come from the material covered after the midterm exam. The essays for the final exam will, however, be comprehensive. The final for this course is a comprehensive, 3-hour exam administered during the official finals period on a date set by the registrar. Be sure to verify the date of the final exam before making your holiday travel arrangements!

Extra Credit: Students will have three opportunities to earn extra credit over the course of the semester. Two of these involve submitting an RVS for two optional videos (on syllabus). The third opportunity involves submitting a rewrite of the mid-semester paper. Each extra video summary will be worth up to 0.5 points added to the final grade. The paper rewrite is worth up to one full point.

Policy on Late Work and Incompletes: Late work will be penalized half a letter grade for each day overdue (including weekends and holidays). Extensions will be granted only in exceptional circumstances, and in no case retroactively (i.e., after the original deadline for completion has passed). Students who anticipate difficulty in meeting deadlines should contact the instructor as far in advance of the due date as possible. A course grade of incomplete will only be granted for highly 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: 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.
Grading Scale: To avoid any misunderstandings, please familiarize yourself with what is expected in order to obtain good marks in this course:

**A: Outstanding Work:** a firm and active grasp of the material in lectures and readings and an ability to offer sound and insightful analysis.

**B: Solid Work:** a good grasp of the material in lectures and readings and significant effort to interpret the material in an analytical fashion.

**C: Decent Work:** a fair grasp of the material in lectures and readings, but analysis and effort are lacking.

**D: Poor Work:** a simplistic understanding of the material with little or no effort towards analysis.

**F: Unacceptable Work:** little grasp of the subject matter and no attempt to engage the material or respect the parameters of the course and assignments.

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**Schedule of Lectures and Assigned Readings**

**Introductory Overview Reading:**


**Aug. 28: Introduction: Arabia before Islam**

*Review Readings (to be completed over Labor Day weekend):*


**Aug. 29: The Prophet Muhammad at Mecca**

Ingrid Mattson, *The Story of the Qur’an*, pp. 4–16, 27–34 (on historical issues related to the sources of the prophetic biography), and 16–22 (early life up to the Call)

**Sep. 4: From Mecca to Medina**

Mattson, pp. 34–61

*Video: Islam: Empire of Faith – Part 1: The Prophet Muhammad and the Rise of Islam (0:00–29:13)*
Sep. 5: The Prophet Muhammad at Medina

Mattson, pp. 61–74

Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *The Heart of Islam*, pp. 27–39

**Video:** Islam: Empire of Faith – Part 1 (28:50–42:53)

*(2-pg. RVS on 0:00-42:53 due on LATTE by Fri., 9/6 at 6:00 p.m.)*


Sep. 9: The Qur’an: God & Nature

Fazlur Rahman, *Major Themes of the Qur’an*, Introduction, Chs. 1 & 4

Sep. 11: The Qur’an: Man as Individual

Rahman, Ch. 2

Sep. 12: The Qur’an: Man in Society

Rahman, Ch. 3

Sep. 16: The Qur’an: Prophethood & Revelation

Rahman, Ch. 5


Sep. 18: The Qur’an: Eschatology & Evil

Rahman, Chs. 6 & 7

Sep. 19: Collection, Codification, and Transmission of the Qur’an

Mattson, Ch. 3 (pp. 79–135)
Sep. 23: Qur’an Interpretation and Related Disciplines

Mattson, pp. 193–215

Audio: Listen – in their entirety – to the various examples of Qur’an recitation. (Links in LATTE) (1.5- to 2-pg. reflection due in class)

Sep. 25: Sunna and Hadith

David Waines, An Introduction to Islam, pp. 33–43


Sep. 26: Pillars of Practice (islam)


Nasr, pp. 130–142

* Extra Credit Video: ABC Nightline: The Hajj Pilgrimage (RVS 2+ pgs., due on LATTE Sun., Sep. 29 by 6:00 p.m.)
  Part I: www.youtube.com/watch?v=7dOiGoiGrSA
  Part II: www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pv_BPa12xZ

Oct. 2: The Expansion of Islam, the Early Muslim State & the Early Coalescence of the Tradition


Oct. 3: The Expansion of Islam, the Early Muslim State & Early Coalescence of Tradition (cont’d)

Mattson, pp. 185–193

Video: Islam: Empire of Faith – Part 1 (41:58–end) (RVS 1 pg. due in class)

** MID-SEMESTER PAPERS must be submitted on LATTE by Friday, Oct. 4 no later than 6:00 p.m. **
Oct. 7: Islamic Law: Formation, Theoretical Foundations, and Sources

Bernard Weiss, *The Spirit of Islamic Law*, pp. 1–52

Oct. 10: Content and Objectives of the Law

Nasr, 129–156

(* Targeted response due *)

** Please note that next week’s readings are a bit on the heavier side. You may want to get a head start on Thursday’s readings (Women in Islam) over the weekend, if you have time. **

Oct. 15: The Islamic Vision of Community and Society

Nasr, pp. 157–199

“Women,” in Wael B. Hallaq, *Introduction to Islamic Law*, pp. 64–71

Oct. 16: Catch-up Day / Exam Review

(Please come to class with specific questions regarding content to be covered on the mid-term exam.)

Oct. 17: Women in Islam

Read the following sections from *al-Muhaddithat: the women scholars in Islam*, by Mohammad Akram Nadwi:

(a) Preface; (b) Introduction; (c) “The Manners of the Women Scholars” (pp. 149–155)


Oct. 23: Peace, Justice & the Question of War

*Jihad and the Islamic Law of War*, The Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, Jordan

Oct. 24:

** MIDTERM EXAM **
Oct. 28: Overview of Shi‘ism

Waines, Ch. 6 (pp. 155–172)

[Review reading for after class: Nasr, pp. 65–76]

Oct. 30: Disciplined Theological Reflection

Waines, pp. 103–124


Oct. 31: Philosophy in the Classical Islamic World

Waines, pp. 124–132


** Mid-semester paper optional rewrites due on LATTE Friday, Nov. 1 at 6:00 p.m. **

Nov. 4: Sufism I: Rectifying the Character & Purifying the Soul

Waines, pp. 133–141


Sufism and Good Character: Prophetic Guidance on the Spiritual Path, Imam Zafar Uthmani, pp. 1–4 and 25–48

* Extra Credit Video: Al-Ghazali: The Alchemist of Happiness  (RVS 2.5 to 3 pgs. due on LATTE, Fri. Nov. 8 by 6:00 p.m.) Link: www.youtube.com/watch?v=aL4A-r3xA-Q

Nov. 6: Sufism II: Knowledge & Enlightenment; Sufism Organized

Waines, pp. 141–146


Nov. 7: Islam’s Artistic Signature I: Music & Calligraphy

Nasr, pp. 227–236


Nov. 11: Islam’s Artistic Signature II: Architecture & Arabesque

Mattson, 147–154

Waines, 196–201

Video: Paradise Found: Islamic Architecture and Arts (entire video): RVS should be 2 to 2.5 pages (due in class), covering the main principles of Islamic architecture (i.e., what makes architecture “Islamic”), as well as your personal thoughts on and reactions to the video.

Nov. 13: Science in Classical Islamic Civilization

Video: Science and Islam (BBC), Parts I & II (RVS 2.5 pgs., due in class)

* Watch Part III after class and submit 1.5-pg. RVS via LATTE by Friday, Nov. 15 at 6:00 p.m.

Nov. 14: The Crusades and the Mongol Invasions


Nov. 18: The World of Ibn Battuta and the Later Empires

Waines, pp. 175–196

Nasr, pp. 87–100

Video: Islam: Empire of Faith – Part 3: The Ottomans (RVS 1.5 to 2 pgs., due in class)
Nov. 20: Pre-Modern Reform Movements: The Eighteenth Century

Waines, 201–210


Nov. 21: Nineteenth-Century Responses to Modernity

Waines, 211–233

Nov. 25: Twentieth-Century Responses to Modernity

Waines, 233–257

Nasr, 100–112


Nasr, Ch. 7 (pp. 275–306) (*Targeted response due*)

Dec. 4: Contemporary Issues II: Islamic Law, the Modern State & Secularism


Dec. 5: Contemporary Issues III: Islam & the West

Waines, 257–297 (*Targeted response due*)

**FINAL PAPERS must be submitted on LATTE by Saturday, December 7 by 11:59 p.m.**

Dec. 9: Concluding Lecture & Course Wrap-Up (attendance required)

Mattson, 247–264

Nasr, Epilogue (pp. 309–316)