

RELIGIOUS STUDIES 171-00: ISLAM AND OTHER FAITHS

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Course Description

This course is a study of Islam's interaction with major world religions such as Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism and Buddhism. We examine how Islam theological contrasts with other religions and how Muslim communities have lived among other religious communities for centuries. Special attention is given to how politics and the rise of the modern nation-state affect the relationship between various communities and to new interfaith initiatives that aim to bring peace between the world's religions. A key question is how the different religions can be true to their own faiths while living in a peaceful pluralistic world.

Learning Objectives

- ▶ To think critically about what you hear and read regarding the course topic,
- ▶ To identify questions and to have the necessary research skills to answer those questions,
- ▶ To compare and contrast different points of views in the process developing your own,
- ▶ To present your ideas in an appealing and coherent fashion, and
- ▶ To write a well-organized, concise, and convincing research paper.

¹ In consultation with the author, this syllabus has been edited for length, removing details particular to the author's context such as office hours and location, absence policies, honor codes, and other instructor-specific (or institution-specific) details.

Course Objectives

- ▶ Demonstrate knowledge of the basic content of Islam's relationship with other religions,
- ▶ Think critically about portrayals of Islam and other religions in the media,
- ▶ Critically respond to these representations in ways that can bring about real change,
- ▶ Demonstrate knowledge of the historical context in which Islam interacted with other religions,
- ▶ Demonstrate knowledge of the multiple meanings and practices associated with Islam's relationship with other religions, and
- ▶ Write and speak thoughtfully and critically about issues and concerns relevant to Islam and other religions.

Required Texts and Materials

- ▶ *Muhammad: A Very Short Introduction* by Jonathn A. C. Brown
- ▶ *The Qur'an* by M. A. S. Abdel Haleem

Resources

- ▶ *Oxford Encyclopedia of Islam*
- ▶ *Encyclopedia of the Qu'ran*

Films

- ▶ *Inside Mecca*, 2003
- ▶ *Kingdom of Heaven*, 2005
- ▶ *My Name is Khan*, 2010
- ▶ *One Hand*, 2016
- ▶ *Cities of Light*, 2007
- ▶ *Enemy of the Reich*, 2014
- ▶ *Four Lions*, 2010

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND ASSIGNMENTS

Field Trips to Refugee Centers

We will be visiting a mosque in Erie which has a sizable refugee population. Erie is one of the few centers for the US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants and is thus expected to host a good number of the 10,000 Syrian refugees that will be accepted to the United States this upcoming year. I would like you to contemplate how you can help the refugees, who come from both Muslim and Christian backgrounds, adjust to American society. The challenge of refugee resettlement is a living case study where we can move from religious literacy to that of civic engagement and transformation. I do not want you to simply learn about religious difference, but rather be able to interact with people of different faiths and contribute to the larger social good.

Midterm Exam

The midterm will reinforce the material that has accumulated through the first half of the semester. The exam will be in the form of short essays and the questions will be based on material presented in lectures, class discussions and the assigned readings.

Group Project

Students will present on a topic related to the course material at the end of the semester. The projects will allow students to explore topics of their interests and help develop team-building skills.

Response Papers

You will write two 500-750 word responses to the readings that will help you synthesize the readings and demonstrate how they are relevant to your fellow students. You should provide your insights into the readings and demonstrate that you have critically engaged the materials. In the response, you should not summarize the readings but rather critically present an argument that you found interesting, useful, problematic, or confusing. You should relate the new material to previous readings and class sessions.

Quizzes

There will be six quizzes on our course website that will help you review your knowledge of the readings and lectures. Each quiz will be brief with only five multiple choice questions and be assigned approximately every two weeks. Your lowest quiz grade will be dropped. Studies show that frequent and shorter quizzes are better for learning and retention than infrequent, longer tests.

Final Papers

A 10-12 page double-spaced paper is due at the end of the course that will be based on each student's specific interests. Please discuss the topic of the final paper with me beforehand, preferably after week 7. Please take advantage of the writing center. Optional drafts are due the last week of class. Final papers are due during the final exam period. Half a letter grade will be subtracted from late papers (A to B+...etc.).

Course Grading

- ▶ Class Participation/Participation on Online Forums/Attendance: 20%
- ▶ Discussion Pieces: 15%
- ▶ Midterm: 15%
- ▶ Final Presentation: 15%
- ▶ Quizzes: 15%
- ▶ Final Paper: 20%

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1 – Introduction

Tuesday

- ▶ Introduction of the Professor
- ▶ Introduction of Students
- ▶ Ice Breaker
- ▶ Discussion of Syllabus
- ▶ Questions and Comments

Thursday: What do we mean by “Religion”?

- ▶ Reading: *Encyclopedia of Islam*, “Ahl-Kitab”
- ▶ Reading: *Encyclopedia of Islam*, “Polytheism”

Week 2 – The Qur’an and Others

Tuesday: Qur’anic Christians

- ▶ Reading: *Encyclopedia of the Qur’an*, “Christians”
- ▶ Reading: *Encyclopedia of the Qur’an*, “Qur’anic Christians”

Thursday: Qur’anic Jews

- ▶ Reading: *Encyclopedia of the Qur’an*, “Jews”
- ▶ Reading: *Encyclopedia of the Qur’an*, “Ishmael as Abraham’s Sacrifice”

Week 3 – Muhammad and Other Religions

Tuesday: The Prophet Muhammad and the Other

- ▶ Reading: *Muhammad: A Very Short Introduction*, Chapters 1-2

Thursday: The Legacy of Muhammad

- ▶ Reading: *Muhammad: A Very Short Introduction*, Chapter 3

Week 4 – Islamic Ritual and Other Religions

Tuesday: Prayer

- ▶ Readings: Marion Katz, “Prayer in Islamic Thought and Practice”

Thursday: Pilgrimage

- ▶ Assignment: Watch the film *Inside Mecca*
- ▶ Reading: Muhammad Asad, “Reflection on Pilgrimage”

Week 5 – The Islamic Hereafter and Other Religions

Tuesday: Islam and the Fate of Others

- ▶ Reading: Khalil, “Islam and the Fate of Others”, Chapter 1
- ▶ Groups will be announced

Thursday: Islam and the Fate of Others

- ▶ Reading: Khalil, “Islam and the Fate of Others”, Chapter 3

Week 6 – Islamic History and Other Religions

Tuesday: Crusades

- ▶ Reading: Catlos, *Infidel Kings and Unholy Warriors*

Thursday: Crusades

- ▶ Assignment: Watch the movie *Kingdom of Heaven*

Week 7 – Spiritual Biographies and Other Religions

Tuesday: Spiritual Autobiographies

- ▶ Reading: Rose, *My Neighbor's Faith*

Thursday: Spiritual Autobiographies

- ▶ Reading: Stedman, *Faithist*

Week 8 – Islam and Hinduism

Tuesday: Fall Break

- ▶ Assignment: Watch the film *My Name is Khan*

Thursday: Islam and Hinduism

- ▶ Reading: Afsar Muhammad, "Festival of Pirs"

Week 9 – Islam and Christianity

Tuesday: Christian-Muslim Relations

- ▶ Attend John Kaltner Lecture on "Muslim-Christian Relations" at 7pm in Chapel
- ▶ Reading: Sayyid Hussein Nasr, "Muslim-Christian Relations"
- ▶ Assignment: watch [One Hand](#) (documentary)

Thursday: Muslim-Christian-Jewish relations in Medieval Spain

- ▶ Assignment: Watch [Cities of Light](#) (documentary)

Week 10

Tuesday: No Class

- ▶ Assignment: Work on your midterms

Thursday: Islam and Buddhism

- ▶ Reading: Obuse, "Is Buddha a Prophet"
- ▶ Reading: Habito, "Muslim-Buddhist Dialogue"

Week 11 – Islam and Judaism

Tuesday: Muslim-Jewish Relations

- ▶ Reading: Firestone, "Muslim-Jewish Relations"
- ▶ Reading: Satloff, *Among the Righteous*
- ▶ Assignment: Watch the film *Enemy of the Reich* (optional)

Thursday: Abrahamic

- ▶ Reading: Peters, *Children of Abraham*
- ▶ Reading: Levenson, *Inheriting Abraham*

Week 12 – Group Presentations

Tuesday: Group Presentations

- ▶ Assignment: Work on group presentations

Thursday: Group Presentations

- ▶ Assignment: Work on group presentations

Week 13 – The Concept of Interfaith

Tuesday: Interfaith Relations

- ▶ Guest speaker in class: Noah Silverman from Interfaith Youth Core
- ▶ Reading: First two chapters of the online book *Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Inter-Religious Dialogue*

Thursday: Interfaith Relations

- ▶ Reading: Eboo Patel, *Sacred Ground*

Week 14 – Thanksgiving

Tuesday: No Class

Thursday: No Class

Week 15 – Current Affairs: Muslim Students, Other Religions, & Islamophobia

Tuesday: Discussion with Zaytuna College students regarding “Islam and Other Faiths”

- ▶ Reading: Read pages 1-19 of Zaytuna’s [educational philosophy](#), America’s first Muslim liberal arts college
- ▶ Assignment: Watch the [promo video](#) for Zaytuna College

Thursday: Islamophobia and Discussion of Your Blogs

- ▶ Reading: Shyrock, “Attack of the Islamophobes”
- ▶ Assignment: Post to your blogs and then comment in 100-200 words on the different articles that you have posted throughout the semester. Do you see any themes? What have you discovered about your interests?

Week 16 – Islamic Extremism and Other Religions

Tuesday: Islamic Extremism and Review of Course

- ▶ Assignment: Watch the film *Four Lions*