

Religion 155
An Introduction to Islam
Reed College
Spring 2010

Instructor: Kambiz GhaneaBassiri
Office Hours: MW 10-11 and F 11-12 or by appointment
Course URL: <http://academic.reed.edu/religion/courses/rel155/>

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Course Description

This course is an introduction to Islam as a prophetic religious tradition. It explores the different ways in which Muslims have interpreted and put into practice the prophetic message of Muhammad b. 'Abd Allah through historical and phenomenological analyses of varying theological, philosophical, legal, political, mystical and literary writings. These analyses aim for course participants to develop a framework for explaining the sources and symbols through which historically specific experiences and understandings have been signified as Islamic. The course focuses in particular on the classical and modern periods of Islamic history.

Required Texts

Available on reserve and at the bookstore

- Ahmed, Leila. *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992.
- Attar, Farid ud-Din. *The Conference of the Birds*, trans. Afkham Darbandi and Dick Davis. New York: Penguin Books, 1984.
- Ayoob, Mohammed. *The Many Faces of Political Islam: Religion and Politics in the Muslim World*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2008.
- Berkey, Jonathan. *The Formation of Islam: Religion and Society in the Near East 600-1800*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Kourouma, Ahmadou. *The Suns of Independence*, trans. Adrian Adams. New York: Africana Publishing Company, 1981.
- Mottahedeh, Roy. *Mantle of the Prophet: Religion and Politics in Iran*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1985, (repr. Oxford: Oneworld Publications 2000).
- Qutb, Sayyid. *Milestones*.

Recommended Books

Koran, trans. N. J. Dawood, rev. ed. New York: Penguin Books, 1990.

Course Requirements

-- *Active participation in group discussions.* This requires you to read all assigned texts carefully so as to be an informed and thoughtful participant in discussions. It also requires you to attend class regularly.

--*Participation in a debate on the status of drinking alcohol in Islamic law.* In preparation for the debate, you are required to write a *fatwā* and post it on the course website. After the debate, you are required to write a reflection paper on the nature of Islamic law.

--*Site-visit paper.* Six- to ten-page paper (double spaced) analyzing a visit to an Islamic center or a mosque. **Due by April 23.** A list of Portland mosques and guidelines for the paper is available on the course website. This requirement could be fulfilled anytime between February 11 and April 22.

--*Short paper.* Two- to three-page paper (double spaced) on *The Suns of Independence*, using this novel to explore issues of local practice and diversity within Islam and the challenges these issues pose to defining or representing Islam. **Due in class on Tuesday, February 16.**

--*Take-home midterm exam.* This is a comprehensive examination of your knowledge of key concepts, events, and persons in early Islamic history. It will also require you to offer a synthetic analysis of everything covered in the course up until the time of the examination. Fair warning: Students in the past have reported that it takes them an entire weekend to complete the exam satisfactorily. **Due in my office by noon on Monday, March 29.**

--*Take-home final exam.* You will be asked to synthesize the content of the course by forming a thoughtful explanation of Islam and its role in the social and personal lives of Muslims. Part of the final exam will include a critical book review of Mohammed Ayoob's *The Many Faces of Political Islam*. The final exam will be handed out on the last day of class and it will be **due in my office by 5 p.m. on Thursday, May 13.**

Policy on Extensions and Late Assignments. Deadlines for course assignments have been carefully selected because the assignments directly complement the content of the course. A *fatwā* turned in after our debate, for example, will not serve its pedagogical purpose and thus will receive no credit. For this reason you must fulfill each course requirement by its respective deadline in order to receive credit. Extensions will *only* be granted in case of serious illness or extreme emergency that is verified in writing by the Student Health Services (in case of illness) or the Dean of Students (in case of extreme emergency). Having too many papers due at the same time does not constitute an emergency.

Course Schedule

Jan. 26 (Tu)—Dilemmas in Representing Islam

- Edward Said, *Orientalism*, 1-28 and 314-321.
- Bernard Lewis, "The Question of Orientalism" in *Islam and the West*, 99-118.
- Recommended: -Carl Ernst, "Islam in the Eyes of the West" and "Approaching Islam in Terms of Religion" in *Following Muhammad*, 2-69. (A thoughtful response to popular and media misrepresentations of Islam in the US, written for the general public.)

Foundations of Islam

Jan. 28 (Th)—The World into Which Islam Emerged

- Berkey, *Formation of Islam*, 3-53.
- Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam*, 11-37.

Feb. 2 (Tu)—Muhammad and the Qur'an

- Sura 12 of the Qur'an. (You could find three translations of the Quran presented alongside one another at <http://www.usc.edu/dept/MSA/quran/>.)
- Genesis 37-50.
- Berkey, *Formation of Islam*, 57-69.
- Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam*, 41-57.

Feb. 4 (Th)—Muhammad as Exemplar

- Berkey, *Formation of Islam*, 70-75.
- Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam*, 57-63.
- Hadith Selections.
- "Mohammed's Nocturnal Journey to Jerusalem and His Visit to the Seven Heavens and to Hell" in Jan Knappert, *Swahili Islamic Poetry*, vol. 3, 227-275.
- Süleymān Celebī, "The Mevlidi Sherif," 17-39.

Feb. 9 (Tu)— Individual Worship and Personal Piety

- Vincent Cornell, "Fruit of the Tree of Knowledge: The Relationship between Faith and Practice in Islam" in *The Oxford History of Islam*, 63-105.

Feb. 11 (Th)— Communal Worship and Religious Public Space

- Malcolm X (or Malik el-Shabazz), "Mecca," chapter 17 of *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*.
- Farid Esack, "Pepsi Shows the Way" in *On Being a Muslim*, 12-17.
- Paper topics for *The Suns of Independence* to be handed out.

Feb. 16 (Tu)— Lived Islam: Problematizing the Foundations

-Ahmadou Kourouma, *The Suns of Independence*, in entirety.

Short paper on *The Suns of Independence* due in
class on **February 16**

Formative Historical Experiences in Faith and Community

Feb. 18 (Th)—Birth Pangs: Factionalism and Religious Authority I

-Berkey, *Formation of Islam*, 76-129.
-Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam*, 64-101.

Feb. 23 (Tu)—Birth Pangs: Factionalism and Religious Authority II

-Berkey, *Formation of Islam*, 130-151 and 159-175.
-Muhammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, "The Account of the Murder [of 'Uthmān]" in *The History of al-Ṭabarī*, vol. 15, 181-223.
-Lewis Pelly, *The Miracle Play of Hasan and Husain*, vol. 2, 81-103.

Intellectual Traditions and Islamic Praxis

Feb. 25 (Th)—Islamic Philosophy and Theology: *Falsafa* and *Kalām*

-Majid Fakhry, "Philosophy and Theology: From the Eighth Century C.E. to the Present" in *The Oxford History of Islam*, 269-303.
-Recommended: Begin doing the reading to be discussed on Mar. 5

Mar. 2 (Tu)— Islamic Law: *sharī'a*, *uṣūl al-fiqh*, and *fiqh*

-Mohammad Hashim Kamali, "Law and Society: The Interplay of Revelation and Reason in the Shariah" in *The Oxford History of Islam*, 107-153.
-Berkey, *The Formation of Islam*, 179-223.
-Readings for debate on drinking alcohol to be handed out.

Mar. 4 (Th)— Debating Epistemology: Reason, Revelation, and Religious Experience

-Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazzālī, selections from *Deliverance from Error*.
-Averroës (Ibn Rushd), *The Decisive Treatise*.

Post your *fatwā* on the drinking case on the course website and turn in a hard copy at my office
by **NOON on Monday, March 8**.

Mar. 9 (Tu)— Religious Law in Practice: Is Drinking Divinely Forbidden? The Debate

Reflection papers on the debate due in class on **Thursday, March 11.**

Mar. 11 (Th)—An Overview of Sufism: A Reality without a Name or a Name Devoid of Reality?

-Berkey, *Formation of Islam*, 152-158 and 231-257.

-Qur'an 18:59-82. (You could find three translations of the Quran presented alongside one another at [http://www.usc.edu/dept/MSA/quran/.](http://www.usc.edu/dept/MSA/quran/))

Mar. 13-Mar. 21—SPRING BREAK

Mar. 23 (Tu)—A Journey through the Stations and States of the Sufi Path

-Farid ud-Din Attar, *The Conference of the Birds*, 29-153.

Mar. 25 (Th)—Edifying the Masses and Disciplining Initiates through Aesthetic and Devotional Practices: Signs and Symbols on the Path

-Farid ud-Din Attar, *The Conference of the Birds*, 153-229.

Take-home midterm handed out. Due in my office by **noon on Monday, March 29.**

Tradition, Colonialism, and Modernity

Mar. 30 (Tu)— Colonialism and the Emergence of Modern Muslim Societies

-S.V.R. Nasr, "European Colonialism and the Emergence of Modern Muslim States" in *The Oxford History of Islam*, 549-599.

-Tayeb Salih, "The Doum Tree of Wad Hamid" in *The Wedding of Zein*, 1-20.

Apr. 1 (Th)—Transmission of Knowledge as Religious Work: A View of Islamic Education, Past and Present I

-Berkey, *Formation of Islam*, 224-230.

-Mottahedeh, *Mantle of the Prophet*, 7-133.

Apr. 6 (Tu)—Transmission of Knowledge as Religious Work: A View of Islamic Education, Past and Present II

-Mottahedeh, *Mantle of the Prophet*, 134-247.

Apr. 8 (Th)—Reforming Muslims and Renewing Islam for the Modern Era

- Andrew Rippin, "Describing Modernity" in *Muslims: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices*, 167-188.
- Selections from the writings of al-Tahtawi, al-Afghani, ‘Abduh, Gökalp, Ahmad Khan, and Iqbal in *Modernist Islam, 1840-1940: A Sourcebook*, ed. Charles Kurzman, 31-39, 103-110, 50-60, 192-197, and 291-313.

Apr. 13 (Tu)—Participating in Modernity through Islam: A View from the Iranian Revolution

- Mottahedeh, *Mantle of the Prophet*, 248-end.

Apr. 15 (Th)—Participating in Modernity through Islam: A View from African America

- Curtis, *Black Muslim Religion in the Nation of Islam*, 1-34 and 68-93

Apr. 20 (Tu)—Participating in Modernity through Islam: An Islamist View

- Shepard, "Sayyid Quṭb" in *The Islamic World*, ed. Andrew Rippin, 403-408.
- Quṭb, *Milestones*, in entirety.

Post-Modernity, Feminism, and Islam

Apr. 22 (Th)—Postmodern Approaches to Islam: Progressive Islamic Identity and Practice

- Farid Esack, "In Search of Progressive Islam beyond 9/11" in *Progressive Muslims*, 78-97.
- Ebrahim Moosa, "The Debts and Burdens of Critical Islam" in *Progressive Muslims*, 111-127.

Friday, April 23—Last day site-visit papers will be accepted.

Apr. 27 (Tu)—Modern and Postmodern Issues in Feminism, Colonialism, and Islam

- Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam*, 127-248.
- Sayyida Shaikh, "Transforming Feminism: Islam, Women and Gender Justice" in *Progressive Muslims*, 147-162.

Conclusion

Apr. 29 (Th)—Revisiting the Dilemma of Representing Islam: A Roundtable Discussion based on Site Visits

- Recommended: Talal Asad, *The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam*, 1-17.