

**ARBC/HIST/RELS 3030: Introduction to Islam
Fall 2015**

Instructor: Abdulkafi Albirini
Time and place: 3:30-4:45 p.m. MW; 304 Old Main
Office hours: 9:30 to 10:30 MW
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I. Description:

This course provides a survey of the historical development, texts, beliefs, ethics, laws, sciences, politics, and practices of Islam. In addition, the course aims to examine the spiritual dimensions, theological and philosophical discourses, and legal maxims that emanated from the Muslim tradition. Such tradition is represented in a complex set of dimensions rendering Islam's concept of "religion" much broader than it is for most westerners.

II. Objectives:

The main objectives of this course are:

1. to familiarize students with the historical context of Islam in the past and present
2. to introduce students to the basic belief system in Islam
3. to help students understand the common practices of Muslims and the rationale behind them
4. to raise students' awareness of the role that religion plays in the everyday lives of Muslims,
5. to enable students to weigh the strength of generalizing statements concerning Islam and Muslims, and
6. to equip students with the basic skills needed for conducting research about Islam or Muslims.

III. Course resources:

Required Text:

Esposito, John (2005). *Islam: The Straight Path* (3rd Ed.). Oxford University Press

Online Translation of the Meaning of the Qur'an:

Students should have access to a translation of the meaning of the Qur'an, e.g., <http://quran.com/>. If you prefer a hard copy of the meanings of the Qur'an, then you may consider *The Qur'an: A New Translation*, translated by M. A. S. Abdel Haleem (Oxford University Press, 2004).

Supplemental readings:

The rest of the required readings are posted on the course website (canvas).

Class Notes:

Students can access the lecture notes on the course website. The slides are organized by weekly themes. The slides will be posted on the website immediately after we finish the theme of each week.

IV. Course Requirements:

The major five requirements of the course include:

- **Classroom participation and attendance (10% of final grade):** Students enrolled in this course are expected to come prepared to class. Preparation includes reading the assigned materials, bringing questions to be asked in class, and being ready to participate actively in discussions regarding the theme of the week. Carefully reading the articles and book chapters will (a) allow you to contribute meaningfully to in-class discussion/ activities, (b) allow you to think critically about the topic of the reading, and (c) better prepare you for quizzes and other assignments in this course. Students are **HIGHLY** urged to be in class on time and not to miss classes except in cases of illness, family emergency, and things of that nature. According to the attendance policy of this course, students are allowed two undocumented absences per semester. However, after the second absence, students must provide **legitimate university or physician documentation** to justify their absence; otherwise, one percentage point will be deducted from their attendance grade for every undocumented absence. Your attendance grade is 10 minus any undocumented absences.
- **Short Essays (21% of overall grade):** Students will be asked to write *three* short essays that involve researching and critically responding to particular issues related to Islamic belief and practice. While students are encouraged to present their own ideas in responding to these questions, they are simultaneously required to include ideas from the class discussions and the readings. You must turn in the assignment as a **Text Entry on Canvas**. **Do not send the assignment as an email.** The essays will be evaluated based on the following:
 - ✓ Content: accuracy, originality, and depth of information as well as the use of **examples**
 - ✓ Organization: cohesion and coherence of the ideas presented
 - ✓ Length: 2-3 double-spaced pages
- ✓ **Two Quizzes (24% of final grade):** The students will take two 30-minute quizzes, each requiring short answers to questions about a number of topics discussed in the class or in the readings. While answers to some of these questions can be found in the readings or in the class notes, others may not be answered without understanding class discussions. The dates of the quizzes are 21 October and 2 December.
- **In-class Presentation (15% of final grade):** for this assignment, you will develop a 15-minute presentation to the class about one aspect of Islamic life or communities. The content of the presentation can be research- or experience-based. Please do not replicate the readings or the lecture notes. It is highly recommended to use PowerPoint and to include images, video, or other illustrations in your presentation. If you do not use PowerPoint, please prepare enough handouts for the whole class. On 2 September, I will pass a sign-up sheet with the topics

specified. Please be prepared to answer questions that students might ask in class about your presentation. The presentations will be evaluated based on

- ✓ Content: accuracy of information, comprehensiveness, and use of examples
- ✓ Organization: coherence and cohesion of the ideas presented
- ✓ Delivery and length: Smooth delivery within 10-15 minutes.

- Final Paper (30% of final grade): for this assignment, students will work individually to produce a 10-page doubled-spaced paper about one aspect of Islam or Muslims. A brief (100 words) abstract of the paper will be due on 18 November. I will return these abstracts promptly with comments and my approval (or suggestions for modifications). Students will prepare a 3-minute presentation of their papers to be made on 9 December. In the presentation, you need to tell us about your topic, approach, main arguments, and conclusions/findings. The paper will be due on Friday, 11 December. The breakdown of the Final Paper's grade is: Abstract (3 points), Presentation (2 points), and Full Paper (25 points). The Final paper will be evaluated based on the following:

- ✓ Content: accuracy and originality of information as well as use of examples
- ✓ Organization: coherence and cohesion of the ideas presented
- ✓ Format and length: follow an official citation form (e.g., MLA) and around 10-pages long

Assignment Policy:

- All assignments should be turned in by 11:59 p.m. on the due day.
- All assignments should be typed in a 12-point Times Roman font.
- All assignments should be submitted through Canvas. **Please do not send your assignment through email and do not bring a hard copy to the classroom.**
- If your assignment is between one and 24 hours late you will be penalized 20% of the assigned points. After one day of the due date, the assignment will be considered missing and zero points will be the official grade.
- Plagiarism is highly discouraged. Students are expected to acknowledge source materials. Please let me know if you have any questions about this issue.

V. Schedule:

Week/day	Topics & Assignments	Readings
Week 1		
31 Aug. & 2 Sept.	Historical Context: - Near East situation before Islam - Pre-Islamic Arabia Choose a presentation topic (2 Sept.)	-TB: introduction (pp. xiii-xvii) - Peters: The Arabian Oikoumene & The family and city of Muhammad (pp. 57-104)
Week 2		
9 Sept.	Who is Mohammad? - Before the Message - After the Message - Sunnah	-Williams: Hadith: the news of God's Messenger (pp. 57-69) -Rahman: Prophethood and revelation (80-105)

Week 3		
14 & 16 Sept.	<p>God and Humankind</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The concept of God in Islam - Attributes of God - God's Relationship with humans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Armstrong: Unity: The God of Islam (pp. 132-169) - Murata & Chittick: God (pp. 47-79)
Week 4		
21 & 23 Sept.	<p>The Qur'an:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Revelation - Survey of contents - Qur'an today <p>Essay # 1 due (23 Sept.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - TB: The Qur'an: The Word of God (pp. 19-35) - Zakaria: an explanatory statement (63-93) & (pp. 94,95, 341, 342)
Week 5		
28 & 30 Sept.	<p>Basic Beliefs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Angels - Books - Prophets - Last Day - Destiny (good and evil) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Al-Ghazaali: The foundations of the articles of faith (pp. 1-52).
Week 6		
5 & 7 Oct.	<p>Basic Practices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Prayer - Fasting - Charity - Pilgrimage <p>Essay # 2 due (7 Oct.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Watt: The Five Pillars (pp. 78-86) - Murata & Chittick: The Five Pillars (pp. 8-22)
Week 7		
12 & 14 Oct.	<p>Islam after Mohammad:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The 'rightly-guided' period - The Umayyad period - The Abbasid period - Post-Abbasid period till present 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - TB: The Caliphate (pp. 40-60) - Armstrong: Rashiduun (pp. 23-37)
Week 8		
19 & 21 Oct.	<p>Jurisprudence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - History Islamic Law - Main schools of Fiqh - Similarities and Differences <p>Quiz 1 (21 Oct.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - TB: Islamic Law (92-124) - Kamali: Law and society (pp. 107-153)
Week 9		
26 & 28 Oct.	<p>Theology & Philosophy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Faith vs. Reason - Islamic Philosophy - Sufism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - TB: Theology (85-92) - TB: Popular religion (pp. 124-140) - Brown: Islamic theology and Philosophy (pp. 135-153)
Week 10		
2 & 4 Nov.	<p>Social relations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Brotherhood; 'Umma' - Family Laws - Man-Woman relationships <p>Essay # 3 due (4 Nov.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rahman: Man in society (pp. 37-64) - Barlas: The family and marriage (pp. 167-202)
Week 11		
9 & 11 Nov.	<p>Knowledge:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Importance of knowledge - Science and Medicine - Technology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dallal: Science, Medicine and Technology (pp. 155-213)
Week 12		

16 & 18 Nov.	Muslim Expressions: - Art - Architecture - Literature Final Paper Abstract (18 Nov.)	- Blair and Bloomz: Art and Architecture (pp. 215-267)
Week 13		
23 Nov.	Contemporary Islam: - Modern Islamic movements - Political Islam - Islam and democracy	- TB: Modern Islamic Reform Movements (pp. 141-184)
Week 14		
30 Nov. & 2 Dec.	Islam in the West: - Immigration - Muslims in the US and Europe - Advantages and challenges Quiz # 2 (2 Dec.)	- TB: Islam in the West (pp. 73-84) - Halliday: Islam and the West (107-125)
Week 15		
7 & 9 Dec.	Review & Presentations Final Paper (11 Dec.)	

VI. Assessment:

The students' final grades will be the culmination of their grades on all class requirements. A student's final grade will be calculated as follows:

Attendance and participation	10%
In-class Presentation	15%
Essays (7 * 3 essays)	21%
Quizzes (12 * 2 quizzes)	24%
Final paper (3 points for <i>abstract</i> ; 2 for <i>presentation</i> ; 25 for <i>paper</i>)	30%
Total	100%

VII. Grading:

This course will be graded based on the following scale:

A= 93-100%	A-= 90-92%	B+= 87-89%
B= 83-86%	B-= 80-82%	C+= 77-79%
C= 73-76%	C-= 70-72%	D+= 67-69%
D= 63-66%	D-= 60-62%	F= below 60

VIII. Important Dates:

Monday, 31 August	Beginning of instruction
Monday, 7 September	Labor Day (no class)
Wed-Fri, 25-27 November	Thanksgiving Holiday (no class)
Wed, 9 December	Last day of instruction
Fri, 11 December	Research Paper due by 11:59 p.m.

IX. Academic Integrity, "The Honor System"

(http://www.usu.edu/provost/faculty/teaching/syllabus_resources.cfm)

Each student has the right and duty to pursue his or her academic experience free of dishonesty. The Honor System is designed to establish the higher level of conduct expected and required of all Utah State University students. The Honor Pledge: To enhance the learning environment at Utah State University and to develop student academic integrity, each student agrees to the following Honor Pledge: "I pledge, on my honor, to conduct myself with the foremost level of academic integrity." A student who lives by the Honor Pledge is a student who does more than not cheat, falsify, or plagiarize. A student who lives by the Honor Pledge:

- Espouses academic integrity as an underlying and essential principle of the Utah State University community;
- Understands that each act of academic dishonesty devalues every degree that is awarded by this institution; and
- Is a welcomed and valued member of Utah State University

X. Disability Services:

(http://www.usu.edu/provost/faculty/teaching/syllabus_resources.cfm)

The Americans with Disabilities Act states: "Reasonable accommodation will be provided for all persons with disabilities in order to ensure equal participation within the program. If a student has a disability that will likely require some accommodation by the instructor, the student must contact the instructor and document the disability through the Disability Resource Center (797-2444), preferably during the first week of the course. Any request for special consideration relating to attendance, pedagogy, taking of examinations, etc., must be discussed with and approved by the instructor..."

XI. Classroom Etiquette:

- The materials created by the instructor for this course are not for public distribution. Please do not use the class materials for any purposes outside this class because, if you do so, you violate **the instructor's copyrights**.
- Please do not engage in activities that may disrupt the instructional process, negatively influence the learning of your classmates, or convey disrespect to your colleagues or instructor. Examples of disruptive classroom activities include:
 - ✓ **Use of cellphones**
 - ✓ **Late arrival to class** (except in extenuating circumstances)
 - ✓ **Early departure from class**
 - ✓ **Side conversations**
 - ✓ **Using class time to review or read materials that are not related to this course.**
 - ✓ **Sleeping inside the classroom**
 - ✓ **Use of insulting or discriminatory language**