

REL 4363:

SUFISM: ISLAMIC MYSTICISM AND SPIRITUALITY¹

Department of Religious Studies, FIU

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Office hours: Before class or by appointment

Overview: At the heart of the religion of Islam is its mystical tradition, Sufism. This major tendency within Islam is comparatively understudied in the United States, where attention tends to be concentrated on other aspects of Islamic religious life. Sufis often departed from Islamic law and traditional orthodoxy and followed various paths towards a mystical union with the divine. Sufis strove for spiritual progress through an array of meditative practices, mystical recitations, music, and dances. Affecting poetry, painting, and other arts, Sufism is a major force in international Islamic culture, both in the past and presently. Ultimately the spread of Islam into south and southeast Asia and sub-Saharan Africa was almost exclusively through the teachings of these mystics who formed bridges between indigenous philosophies and the Islamic tradition by a focus on love of the Divine. Sufi networks were truly international in scope, connecting Muslim believers across the world. Today Sufi mysticism remains a vitally important aspect of contemporary Islam – one that is not always visible on the global stage. To study and learn about Sufism brings the student into an encounter with an aspect of Islam that serves as a useful counterweight to contemporary images of Islam in popular media and culture.

Aims: This course aims to use primary and secondary texts to give students a thorough grasp of the Islamic mystical perspective, its terminology, and the social histories of its practitioners.

By the completion of this course, students shall be able to

- Recognize the major ethical and philosophical precepts that unite Sufism across its many manifestations.
- Become aware of key variations within the varied panorama of Islamic mystical thought and practice.
- Be able to place Sufism within a historical and global cross-cultural perspective.

Global Learning Outcomes:

- Students will develop an repertoire of crucial information that will build awareness of how the beliefs and practice of Islamic mysticism are living and vital aspects of global Islam of the past and present. (**Global Awareness**)
- Students will demonstrate empathy for Sufi perspectives by entering in the mindset of Sufi believers and practitioners across the world. This includes

¹ This is a Global Learning discipline-specific course that counts towards your Global Learning graduation requirement.

creating an intuitive understanding of the guiding principles of Sufi belief, as well as the problems faced by Sufi believers and practitioners across the globe. (*Global Perspectives*)

- Students will be able to use a Sufi perspective to depict and engage with diverse communities' approaches to contemporary global challenges. (*Global Engagement*)

Texts: ALL texts will be provided as PDF's on the Canvas site and will be uploaded at least one week prior to the class in which they will be discussed. Note that we will be returning often to portions of Annemarie Schimmel's *The Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975. (ISBN 978-0-8078-1271-6)

Evaluation:

Attendance Participation and Reading Responses (20%):

Each week you will be required to produce one or two questions that the primary source readings stimulate for you. You may post these on Canvas in the appropriate place or bring them typed to class. Please label them with your name and ID.

Midterm Quiz (20%):

The midterm will be a short answer exam based on the material covered in lectures and readings up to that point.

Poetry/Art Assignments 1 and 2 (15% +15% = 30%):

Twice during the semester and on their own, students will choose a piece of poetry, literature, or other art related to the Sufi traditions of the past or present. In light of what has been learned so far about Sufi thought and Sufi community life, students will produce a two-page, double-spaced observation and interpretation of this cultural product.

Community History Assignment (30%):

As a final project, students will choose a Sufi community and analyze its history and, if possible, its contemporary situation. While this is intended to be an exercise in academic writing, students are encouraged to be creative about how they design their paper and how they learn about its subject matter. Students may also cooperate on this assignment, but length and scope will be adjusted accordingly. Ideally, students will integrate a narrative of the history of this community with insights about doctrine, practice, and contemporary global challenges.

Grading Criteria

All student work will be assigned numerical grades, corresponding to the following letter grades, according to the criteria below. Final grades will be calculated according to the percentages outlined above and converted to final letter grades for the course.

94-100	A	“As” are awarded for excellent to exceptional work, free of technical and stylistic errors, showing sustained thought and engagement with the material on an appropriate but impressive academic level.
87-89	B+	“Bs” are awarded for good to very good work, with some occasional errors, but nonetheless clearly indicating a good grasp of the material and assigned task.
83-86	B	
80-82	B-	
77-79	C+	“Cs” are awarded for average to above average work, meeting minimal standards but marked with errors, and exposing gaps in student performance and/or fulfillment of the assignment.
70-76	C	
60-69	D	“Ds” are awarded for barely passing to below average work, usually riddled with errors and seriously deficient in fulfilling the assignment.
Below 59	F	“Fs” are awarded for unacceptable work.

Course Regulations and Expectations

Readings must be completed by the date for which they are assigned. Careful preparation of readings is essential for success in this course! As this is a seminar-style class, students will be expected to actively participate in class discussions of the readings.

Late assignments without authorized extension may be penalized **five percentage points** for each *day* late, or part thereof, up to a maximum of 10 points. *Keep disk and paper* copies of all written work

Standards for citation and referencing must be adhered to. I recommend MLA or Chicago style. Students may use abbreviated parenthetical references for assigned course texts but must provide full bibliographic information for all other sources used for written work. Internet sources are generally *unacceptable* as references, but if you do use them, citations must include full url details and date accessed. All written assignments must be typed, formatted in 10-12 point standard fonts, double-spaced, with one-inch margins.

is stealing someone else's words or original ideas. Plagiarism occurs in three forms:

- Written work that is entirely stolen from another source;
- Using quotations from another source without properly citing them; and
- Paraphrasing from another source without proper citations

In all cases, to avoid plagiarism, students must properly cite the source material. Only commonly known facts and concepts, general material learned in the course of research and study, and students' original ideas do not require citation.

For useful guidelines, go to the **Plagiarism Prevention** section on the FIU Library's website:

<http://libguides.fiu.edu/plagiarism>

Attendance and punctuality in class are required. Each unexcused absence after **ONE** will

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adversely affect your final grade, deducting up to 15 points from your class participation grade for each occurrence. Students with more than *three* absences will receive a *zero* for class participation.

Week 1: Introduction, Basic Themes & The Origins of Sufism

What is Islam?

No readings.

Week 2: Background: Jewish and Christian Mysticism

Readings from Peter Brown, *Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity*.

The Roots of Sufism in the Qur'an

Qur'an 24:35, 101-114. (<http://al-quran.info>) use the translation by N. J. Dawood)

Hadith Qudsi of "The Hidden Treasure"

Week 3: Early Sufism

Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 23-97. (PDF)

Michael Eens, "Early Muslim Spirituality and Mysticism" in *The Muslim Almanac*, ed. Azim Banji. (PDF)

Sufi Communities

al-Ghazali, passages from *Deliverance from Error*, trans W. M. Watt. (PDF)

Week 4: Communities and Ideas

Excerpts from the *Letters* of Ibn 'Abbad of Ronda, trans. John Renard. (PDF)

Sufi Interpretation

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Selections from Kristin Sands, *Sufi Commentaries on the Qur'an in Classical Islam*, Routledge, 2008. (PDF)

Week 5: Sufi Metaphysics: Love and Knowledge I

William Chittick, *Sufi Path of Knowledge*, ix-xxii, 3-30. (PDF)

Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 259-86

Sufi Metaphysics: Love and Knowledge II

Excerpts from Suhrawardi, *Forms of Light* and Ibn ‘Arabi, *Bezalel of Wisdom*. (PDF)

Excerpts from Shabistari, *The Rose Garden of Mystery*. (PDF)

Week 6: Sufi Practices: Recitation and Music

“Dhikr”, Encyclopedia of Islam 2

“Sama,” Encyclopedia of Islam 2

Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 67-86.

Sufi Practices: Prayer and Meditation

Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 148-67.

Week 7: Sainthood and Ziyara

Excerpts from hagiographies. (PDF)

Poetry I: The Persian Tradition

Jalal al-Din Rumi, *Swallowing the Sun*, trans. Franklin Lewis. (PDF provided).

Omid Safi, *Radical Love*

Week 8: Poetry II: Other Traditions

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Poetry of Yunus Emre, Sultan Bahu, al-Busiri. (PDF)

Midterm Quiz

Week 9: Sufi Brotherhoods I

Spencer Trimingham, *Sufi Orders in Islam*, 31-66 (PDF)

Sufi Brotherhoods II

Ahmet T. Karamustafa, *God's Unruly Friends*, Chs. 5-8. (PDF)

Week 10: Sufism in Society

Readings TBA

Women in Sufi History (**Poetry/Art Assignment 1 due**)

Readings on Rabi'a al-'Adawiyya and the poems of Mihri Hatun, Fatima Jahan-Ara, and 'Aisha Ba'uniyya. (PDF)

Week 11: Mysticism in Politics

Readings from the writings of Shah Ni'matullah Vali, Shah Isma'il, and others. (PDF)

Mysticism's Critics

"Ibn Taymiyya," Encyclopaedia of Islam, ed. 2.

Week 12: Sufism and the Spread of Islam

Richard Eaton, *The Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier*

Sufism and Islam in Europe

Nikolay Antov, *The Ottoman 'Wild West'*, selections TBD. (PDF)

H. T. Norris, *Popular Sufism in Eastern Europe*, excerpts (PDF)

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Week 13: Sufism and Islam in South and Southeast Asia

Richard Eaton, *Eight Indian Lives*, Ch. 2, “Gisu Daraz” (PDF)

Sufism in Africa (Poetry/Art Assignment 2 due**)**

Readings TBA

Week 14: Sufism and Magic

Readings TBA

Islamic Spirituality in the Modern Era

Elizabeth Sirriyeh, “Contemporary Sufism & Anti-Sufism” in *Sufis and Anti-Sufis*. (PDF)

Week 15: Islamic Spirituality in the Modern Era II

Mark Sedgwick, *Western Sufism*, pp. 135-263

G. Webb, “Sufism in America” in *America’s Alternative Religions*, ed. J. Miller. (PDF)

Final Review

Community History essay due by e-mail

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