

Do not copy without the express written consent of the instructor.

FIU DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES

**REL 3367: ISLAMIC FAITH & SOCIETY**

Tuesdays 2:00PM - 3:15PM in Green Library 165

Professor: Dr. Iqbal Akhtar (Edin.)  
TA: Imdat Oner ([ioner002@fiu.edu](mailto:ioner002@fiu.edu))  
Office: Deuxieme Maison  
Phone: +  
Office hours: By appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The Islamic tradition has played an important role in the social, economic, and political development of societies in Africa, Asia, and Europe since Late Antiquity. The theological core of Islam is the belief in the unity of God (*tawhīd*) as expressed in the central text of the tradition, the Quran. In addition to the Quran as Divine revelation, the sum total of Muhammad's (570-632 CE) actions, thoughts, and beliefs (*sunna*) form the foundation of Islamic law (*sharī'a*) which guides the lives of the world's currently estimated 1.6 billion Muslims. In the intervening 1400 years since the beginning of Muhammad's prophesy an immense body of jurisprudence has developed to meet the changing needs of Muslims in various cultural and historical contexts. While unified by a faith tradition, the historical development of Islam shall be historicized within local geographical contexts and through the impact of colonization and modernity.

Despite approximately 62% of Muslims living today in the Asia-Pacific region, many Islamic studies curricula in North America and Western Europe focus heavily on the 'central' Islamic lands while giving only cursory acknowledgment to the contributions and development of Islamic thought and civilization outside the Near East. This course attempts to correct this imbalance through emphasizing the diverse political and philosophical constructs of Islamic thought by paying attention to the lived realities of Muslims on the 'periphery' of Islamic civilization through engagement with primary texts.

It is through intensive study that we, as a society, are able to break popular ideological notions of 'the other,' particularly those of Islam and Muslims, which have come to predominate in popular discourse over the last decade. The study of complex and diverse worldviews promotes equality and respect for other societies ordered with organizational preferences very different from our own. Through this course being part of the Global Learning initiative, it is hoped that students at FIU will begin to engage with the beautiful complexity of contemporary Muslim societies and hopefully inspire them to seriously engage with other societies and civilizations outside the Western Hemisphere through the study of religion and politics.

This course is designed to be a comprehensive survey of Islamic civilization from the birth of tradition in seventh century Arabia to the contemporary period. Organization of this course is both topical and historical. Students shall be encouraged to engage with primary texts in consultation with the instructor and relevant secondary literature. The course will engage the

Do not copy without the express written consent of the instructor.

intellectual tradition of Islam as well minority discourses within the tradition, particularly from Asia and Africa as well as focusing on issues of contemporary relevance.

#### GLOBAL LEARNING COURSE OUTCOMES

GLOBAL AWARENESS- Students will be able to describe the complex interplay among key ideas, historical eras, and thinkers that have helped to shape and define the diversity of the Islamic world today.

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE- Students will be able to analyze contemporary issues in the Islamic world through their historical background, Western colonial engagement with modernity, and postcolonial politics that continue to shape the dynamics of Muslim societies in the international system.

GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT- Students will demonstrate a willingness to engage with other societies and civilizations outside the Western hemisphere through the study of religion and politics.

#### Global Learning *Graduation Honors*

FIU's Excellence in Global Learning Graduation Medallion is awarded to students who complete at least four global learning courses, participate in a variety of global co-curricular activities, and complete a capstone consisting of one of the following: a substantial original research project and presentation on a global topic; extensive foreign language study; long-term study abroad; or, a globally-focused internship. The Peace Corps Prep certification is conferred upon students who complete at least four global learning courses, extensive language study, and a global problem-solving project. For more information, visit [goglobal.fiu.edu](http://goglobal.fiu.edu).

#### REQUIRED TEXTS

- Cook, Michael. *The Quran: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Esposito, John L., ed. *The Oxford History of Islam*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- McAuliffe, Jane Dammen, and Jack Miles, *The Norton Anthology of World Religions: Islam*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2015.
- Nasr, Seyyed Hossein. *The Study Quran: A New Translation and Commentary Hardcover*. New York: HarperOne, 2015.
- Smith, Malise. *Islam: A Very Short Introduction*. 2nd. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- Singerstein, Adam J. *Islamic History: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.

#### SUGGESTED FURTHER READINGS

[http://www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/img/assets/5495/Islamic\\_Studies\\_bibliog.pdf](http://www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/img/assets/5495/Islamic_Studies_bibliog.pdf)

Do not copy without the express written consent of the instructor.

## GRADING

Class attendance and participation:	10%
Midterm:	20%
Class assignments:	25%
Site visits	15%
Final paper	30%

This will be the grading rubric for all your assignments.

[https://brockport.edu/academics/general\\_education/assessment/docs/rubric/GE%20Rubric%20Humanities%20Essay%20Grading.pdf](https://brockport.edu/academics/general_education/assessment/docs/rubric/GE%20Rubric%20Humanities%20Essay%20Grading.pdf)

### CLASS PARTICIPATION (10% OF FINAL GRADE)

Each student will endeavor to attend all class sessions on time and participate actively in class discussions. Students are expected to do all readings assigned in the syllabus. Handout readings will be available on Blackboard. Every student will also serve at least once as a *class discussant*, singly or in a pair depending on class size: class discussants will prepare notes on the assigned readings ahead of time and raise key points, discussion topics, important background issues, and questions *in order to facilitate class discussion*. Discussants are not expected or required to lecture but rather should prepare to complement the work of the professor through analysis and questions prepared on the topic of the day's lecture in advance. Consultation with the professor.

### MIDTERM (20% OF FINAL GRADE)

Online midterm examination will consist of the material presented hitherto.

### CLASS ASSIGNMENTS (25% OF FINAL GRADE)

Assignments must be completed fully with citations and submitted by deadline to receive full credit.

### SITE VISITS (15% OF FINAL GRADE)

There will be scheduled site visits to understand faith in praxis. As it is a hybrid course, you are expected to attend these site visits. If you need exemptions to miss classes before or after the visit, please email the professor well in advance so he can coordinate with the other professors.

### FINAL PAPER (30% OF FINAL GRADE)

Due by midnight on the assigned day of the final examination via Blackboard.

- Consultation with the teaching assistant is recommended. Whenever possible, the term paper should fit into the student's wider academic trajectory. Select from topics provided or provide topic of interest for instructor approval. Sample topics could include: Sufi poetry in Islam, the American Muslim experience after 9/11, women's and minority rights after the Arab Spring, etc.
- Proposals (1-2 pages of narrative, plus preliminary bibliography using a standard bibliographic style) are due no later than the date of the midterm. Some students may be required to submit a revised proposal.

Do not copy without the express written consent of the instructor.

- Final Papers are due by midnight on the assigned day of the final examination- electronic copies to be uploaded to Blackboard. *Please note that, due to the late due date, no extensions will be permitted and no late papers accepted.*

## 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.

95-100 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.
90-94 A-	
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. In the interest of fairness, deadlines are firm and will not be extended except in case of emergencies. Late assignments without authorized extensions may be penalized **five percentage points** for each *day* late, or part thereof, up to a maximum of 30 points. *Keep disk and paper* copies of all written work

Standards for citation and referencing must be adhered to. I recommend MLA style (see <http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/Documentation.html> and follow the link to MLA style), but any standard format is acceptable as long as you are consistent. Students may use abbreviated parenthetical references for assigned course texts, *i.e.*, (Girard, p. 90) 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.

Spelling, grammar, neatness, clarity, style, organization, etc. all *DO* count! Poor writing will affect your grade. Strive for clarity and use your computer's spell-check program wisely. Re-

Do not copy without the express written consent of the instructor.

write and revise your essays *before* turning them in; do not ask to do so afterwards. Ask yourself, Is this clear? Am I communicating my thoughts well? Would a friend in another class understand what I am saying?

Plagiarism and any and all forms of academic dishonesty will *not* be tolerated. Plagiarism 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.

Florida International University is a community dedicated to generating and applying knowledge through excellent teaching and research, the rigorous and respectful exchange of ideas, and community service. All students should respect the right of others to have an equitable opportunity to learn and to honestly demonstrate the quality of their learning. Therefore, all students are expected to adhere to a standard of academic conduct, which demonstrates respect for themselves, their fellow students, and the educational mission of the University. All students are deemed by the University to understand that if they are found responsible for academic misconduct, they will be subject to the Academic Misconduct procedures and sanctions <http://www.fiu.edu/~oabp/misconductweb/2cc/facainteg.htm>

Offenders will receive a grade of F for the plagiarized assignment, and possibly the course, and may be reported directly to the Office of Academic Affairs.

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 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.

#### EARLY ALERT

In an effort to help you succeed in your academic courses, FIU utilizes an Early Alert system. Instructors are now able to notify students' academic advisors if there are concerns about class performance. If an alert is submitted, your academic advisor will send you a message via your Student Dashboard (accessed via your MYFIU page) to discuss ways to improve your performance. Please respond to any communication you receive from your academic advisor about an early alert. Our goal with this program is to help you to be successful by identifying any issues as early on as possible and working to address them.

Do not copy without the express written consent of the instructor.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

### WEEK 1: INTRODUCTION AND THE LIFE OF MUHAMMAD

Thematic questions: *Who was Muhammad and in what socio-political environment did he emerge in 7<sup>th</sup> century Arabia? What technological and material changes to Arabian society make his message resonate among the Medinan tribes?*

Topics for class discussion: *Arabian geography, Byzantium, Persia, and Yemen*

August 22: Course Introduction

Watch: <https://www.ted.com/read/ted-studies/religion>  
Read: Entire Ruthven book  
Do: Begin Assignment 1

### WEEK 2: LEGACY OF THE PROPHET

Thematic questions: *How was the life of the Prophet reinterpreted by subsequent generations of Muslims? How did the early Arab conquests change the powers of the eastern Mediterranean? Can we search for a historical Muhammad?*

Topics for class discussion: *Jerusalem, the Wars of Apostasy, the Caliphate, and empire*

August 29: Muhammad as Prophet and Statesman

Watch: Video of [Muhammad](#)  
Read: Esposito book, Chapter 1  
McAuliffe book, Hadith and Sunna section  
Do: **Assignment 1 due**, upload to Blackboard by midnight

### WEEK 3: THE SUNNI-SHIA SCHISM

Thematic questions: *How was the life of the Prophet reinterpreted by subsequent generations of Muslims? How did Muslims interpret Prophetic authority after the death of Muhammad? Why is the family of Prophet revered by Shia and Sufi communities?*

September 5: Islam after Muhammad

Watch: Video on [Islam](#) after Muhammad  
Read: Entire Silverstein book  
Do: Begin Assignment 2

Do not copy without the express written consent of the instructor.

#### WEEK 4: QURAN AND SUNNAH

Thematic questions: *What is the Quran to Muslims? How was it collected and canonized? What does it mean to have Arabic as a sacred language to the authority of non-Arab Muslims? Who speaks for the Quran? How were the sayings of Muhammad (ḥadīth) recorded and canonized? How do the canon collections differ between the Sunni and Shia sects of Islam? What is the role of the Prophetic Traditions (sunna) in Islamic jurisprudence?*

Topics for class discussion: ḥadīth, revelation, inspiration, and jurisprudence  
Topics for class discussion: *The Arabic language, revelation, inspiration, and historicity*

#### September 12: The Quran as Divine Message

Watch: Video on the [Quran](#)  
Read: Entire Cook book and in McAuliffe book- Quran and Sunna section  
Do: **Assignment 2 due**, upload to Blackboard by midnight

#### WEEK 5: THE SHARIA

Thematic questions: *What is Islamic Law (sharī'a)? How did it develop and what are the major schools of thought? What is the relevance of the sharī'a in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?*

Topics for class discussion: *the process of devising Islamic law, fatwa, and ḥukm.*

#### September 19: Islamic Law

Watch: Video on [Islamic law](#)  
Read: Esposito book, chapter 2  
Do: Begin Assignment 3

#### WEEK 6: SUFISM

Thematic questions: *How did Islamic mysticism (taṣawwuf) develop as a reaction to Islamic legalism? What are the different forms of taṣawwuf in Africa, Asia, and the Near East? How have taṣawwuf and Salafism come to ideologically define modern Islamic societies?*

Topics for class discussion: Salafism, Sufism, legalism, and mysticism

#### September 26: Islamic Mysticism

Watch: Video on [Sufism](#)  
Read: Esposito book, chapter 6 and McAuliffe book- Tasawwuf section  
Do: **Assignment 3 due**, upload to Blackboard by midnight

Do not copy without the express written consent of the instructor.

#### WEEK 7: ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHY

Thematic questions: *How did Al-Ghāzalī attempt to reconcile the mystical and legal forms of Islam? What does his spiritual autobiography say about the personal journey in Islamic societies? What is the relationship between the individual and community in the journey towards spiritual gnosis?*

Topics for class discussion: *human nature and the Divine, gnosis, and communal religion*

October 3: Intellectual contribution of Islamic civilization

Watch: Video on Islamic [intellectual](#) heritage  
Read: McAuliffe book- Falsafa section and Blackboard handouts  
Do: Begin Assignment 4

#### WEEK 8: ISLAM IN AFRICA AND ASIA

Thematic questions: *How did Islam spread to South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa? How do the forms of Islam practiced in these regions differ from those in the Near East? What role does maritime trade play in the spread of culture and religion?*

Topics for class discussion: *Zanzibar, Swahili, and the Indian Ocean World*

October 10: Islam in the Indian Ocean

Watch: Video on Islam in [Africa](#) and Ted Talk on [Mansa Musa](#)  
Read: Esposito book, chapter 10  
Do: **Assignment 4** due, upload to Blackboard by midnight  
Site Visit: class will meet at 16000 Stirling Rd, Southwest Ranches, FL 33331. For guidance on temple etiquette, please visit [http://www.sikhwiki.org/index.php/Visiting\\_a\\_Gurdwara](http://www.sikhwiki.org/index.php/Visiting_a_Gurdwara)

#### WEEK 9: JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY, AND ISLAM

Thematic questions: *What was the status of Jews in the Islamic World? How did Islamic Spain come to define Judeo-Islamic intellectual exchanges in the medieval world?*

Topics for class discussion: *Maimonides, Islamic Spain, and the Convivencia*

October 17: 'People of the Book'

Listen: [Lecture](#) "How Islam Saved the Jews"  
Read: Esposito, Chapter 7- Islam and Christendom  
Do: **NO CLASS**- Midterm examination

Do not copy without the express written consent of the instructor.

#### WEEK 10: ART AND ARCHITECTURE

Thematic questions: *Why is Islamic art generally non-representational? What does the layout of a mosque say about Islamic spirituality and the human connection to the Divine? Why do maths, such as geometry, play such an important role in Islamic aesthetics?*

Topics for class discussion: *Islamic geometry, astrolabe, and mosque aesthetics*

October 24: Art and Architecture

Watch: Video on Islamic [art](#)  
Read: Esposito book, chapter 5 and Blackboard handouts  
Do: **Class will meet in GL 280 for library skills workshop**  
**Midterm due**, upload to Blackboard by midnight

#### WEEK 11: ISLAM AND MODERNITY

Thematic questions: *How did colonization affect various Muslim societies and how did they interact with modern social issues? 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' How does the global distribution of power and resources between the Global North and Global South affect state relationships of Muslim societies with the West?*

Topics for class discussion: *subaltern studies, postcolonialism, and gender studies*

October 31: The Colonial Legacy

Watch: [Colonialism and Islam](#)  
Read: Esposito book, chapter 13 and 14  
Do: Begin assignment

Guest Lecture: George Hart

#### WEEK 12: MINORITY DISCOURSES IN CONTEMPORARY ISLAM

Thematic questions: *How are Muslim minority groups understood in the wider Islamic World? How is authority and authenticity established in Islam?*

Topics for class discussion: *Shia Islam, Ahmadiyya,*

7 November: Islamic Pluralism

Watch: Video on Islamic [pluralism](#)  
Read: Esposito, chapter 13 and McAuliffe- Religious Pluralism  
Do: **Assignment 5 due**, upload to Blackboard by midnight

Do not copy without the express written consent of the instructor.

**SITE VISIT:** Visit Baitul Naseer Mosque for Friday services on 10 November at 12.30pm at 208 NW 7th Court, Hallandale Beach, FL 33009. For guidance on mosque etiquette, visit <https://www.tripsavvy.com/mosque-etiquette-for-visitors-1629901>

### Week 13: MILITANT-EXTREMISM IN THE MUSLIM WORLD

Thematic questions: What has led to the rise of a specific form of Muslim extremism in the last 20<sup>th</sup> century? What is their worldview, grievances, and vision for the *ummah*? How can we connect the history of neo-colonization to modern extremist groups, such as ISIS? What are the responses by Muslim states and communities to militant-extremism?

Topics for class discussion: *jihad*, militant-extremism, Islamic justice, and masculinity

November 14: Jihad

Watch: Watch video on [Holy Peace](#)  
Read: Esposito, chapter 15  
Do: Begin Assignment 6

Guest Lecture

### WEEK 14: THANKSGIVING WEEK

November 21: **NO CLASS**

### WEEK 15: ISLAM AND FEMINISM

Thematic questions: *What is Islamic feminism and how is it challenging patriarchal norms in Muslim communities? Is there freedom to critique and analyze the Quran and the foundations of Islam from a secular academic lens?*

Topics for class discussion: *Muslim feminism, pluralism, and secular critical theory*

November 28: Islamic Feminism

Watch: [Women](#) and Islam  
Read: McAuliffe book, section on “Women’s Voices”  
Do: **Assignment 5 due**, upload to Blackboard by midnight

Guest Lecture by Nadia Shoeb

**Final Paper Due- 8 December** at midnight, upload to Blackboard