

RELIGION 125, Spring, 2009. **INTRODUCTION TO ISLAM: SYLLABUS**

Course Description: The course is an introduction/survey of the ideals and practices of Islam across its history. Included are the ritual (worship), theological, philosophical, mystical, ethical and political dimensions of Islam. Special attention is given to Islam's primary message and its implementation in the lives of Muslims, and to Islam's depictions of Muslims and peoples of other beliefs.

Course Objectives: At the end of the course, students are expected to be able to:

1. describe the significance of the Qur'an, articulate its major themes, and its views of the sacred scriptures of other religions;
2. understand the prophetic tradition in Islam and its relationships to religious and social developments in Islam;
3. understand Islam's chief mission and its universal principles;
4. explain the interaction of Islamic teachings with its cultural surrounding past and present so as to distinguish Islam's universal principles and their particular applications;
5. appreciate the major disciplines of Islamic intellectual traditions including Muslim law;
6. explain Islamic portrayals of and relations to other religions and their adherents;
7. explain the major historical periods of the Muslim community (*umma*); and
8. understand some key challenges Islam poses to and faces internally in the present and foreseeable future.

Required Texts:

1. *The Meaning of the Holy Qur'an* (in Arabic and English). Translation by Abdullah Yusuf Ali (usually called *Yusuf Ali*). Amana Publications.
2. *Opening the Qur'an* by Walter H. Wagner. University of Notre Dame Press
3. *The Garden of Truth. Vision and Promise of Sufism*. By Seyyed Hossein Nasr.
4. I will provide articles via Blackboard and Handouts in class. These will be the same as if they were part of a class presentation

Attendance Expectations and Policy:

Regular attendance, preparation for class sessions and meaningful participation are important. I intend to be on time (and will finish on time) at every class that the College is open. Some absences cannot be avoided and will be excused (illness, family emergencies, commitments to other College trips, really observed religious holy days etc.). Three unexcused absences (equal to one week of class) are not encouraged but permissible.

Course Doings:

1. Regular lectures-class presentations;
2. **Two quizzes on terms, names and ideas from class and readings,**
3. **Team Presentations** based on scenarios provided by the professor,;
4. **Essay exam on the Qur'an. To be submitted via Blackboard Digital Drop Box by**
5. A **Journal** to be kept by each student.. **DUE**
6. A **FINAL EXAM** to be taken in class.

I OFFER REVIEW SESSIONS PRIOR TO THE ESSAY AND FINAL EXAMS

ABOUT THE TEXTS AND READINGS

1. CONCERNING THE QUR'AN.

A. The Arabic text of the Qur'an (also spelled Koran) is considered by Muslims to be the literal revelation of God. Although one may not be a Muslim, it is appropriate to be respectful Muslim reverence for the text. Please cover the volume we use and do not write or underline on the Arabic side of the page.

B. The volume we are using (usually called *Yusuf Ali*) contains numerous appendices. Please read these throughout the semester. Yusuf Ali rendered his translation/interpretation in a poetic form that sometimes obscures the meaning. Patience and discernment are helpful. The single voice "speaking" in

the Qur'an is God. Sometimes the speaker uses "We" and "He" as well as "I." Note the distinction in English between "you" (singular, almost always Muhammad and "ye" (plural, meaning others).

C. The reading roster has you read many of the 114 Surahs. You are encouraged to read more.

2. CONCERNING THE QUR'AN: TOWARD UNDERSTANDING ISLAM'S HOLY BOOK. Yes, you know (sort of) the author.

3. CONCERNING THE GARDEN OF TRUTH. Written by one of the best known Muslim scholars in the United States. The book gives a spiritual perspective on Islam.

ABOUT OTHER MATTERS

1. ESSAY EXAM AND FINAL EXAM. You will receive the questions ahead of time. There will be a review of the questions. Feel free to study and discuss the exam with others. But the work that is posted on the Blackboard is to be yours. The Final Exam will be taken in class under exam conditions.

2. JOURNAL. To be kept in one of two ways. One way: Get a spiral notebook, 8½ by 11 or equivalent. Make at least a 3 page, hand-written, legible entry each week, include in addition to any newspaper, periodical or internet articles as you see fit. **Second way:** Use the computer and send the Journal to me via the Blackboard or regular e-mail. This may raise matters of including articles, etc., but it saves paper. The entries are to:

a. Reflect your academically-oriented thinking about class work, readings, items in the news.

This will be graded.

b. Questions you might have and to which you may want my responses.

c. Your personal reflections as to what has been covered, readings, Islam in the news, etc. Mark these clearly week-by-week as your own views. **This will not be graded.** The Journal is confidential and will not be shared, except as you may do so.

CLASS PRESENTATION SCENARIOS

SCENARIO 1: LISTENING TO AND QUESTIONING MOTIVES AND ACTIONS

An interview of and discussion with Osama bin Laden.

SCENARIO 2: THREE SPIRITUAL LEADERS SPEAK

A presentation-interview with Seyyid Qutb, Ayatullah Khomeini and Fethullah Gülen. Qutb (hanged by Egyptian government) was intellectual leader of the Muslim Brotherhood; Khomeini led 1979 revolution in Iran; Gülen is an influential Turkish sufi who advocates gentle peace among religions.

SCENARIO 3: WESTERN & ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVES ON WOMEN, MARRIAGE & FAMILY

A presentation/discussion on Western and Islamic perspectives on women, marriage and family with challenges and opportunities posed by both sides to one another.

READING ROSTER (BY WEEKS)

January 19-23 Getting Started. Read *Qur'an*, Surahs 1, 96-114. *Wagner, Introduction, Chapters 1-3.*

January 26-30 Read: *Qur'an*, Surahs 85-95. *Wagner, Chapters 4-5*

February 2-6 Read *Qur'an*, Surah 2 (be patient!). *Wagner, Chapters 6-7*

February 9-13 Read *Qur'an*, Surahs 3 and 24. *Wagner, Chapters 8-9*

February 16-20 Read *Qur'an*, Surahs 4, 58, 65; *Wagner, chapter 10.*

HALF-PERIOD QUIZ: FEBRUARY 20

February 23-27 Read *Qur'an*, Surahs 5, 12, 14, 19, 71. *Wagner, Chapter 11*

February 28-March 8: NO CLASSES. SPRING BREAK

March 9-13 Read *Qur'an*, Surahs 8-9, 48, 59. *Wagner, Chapter 12*

March 16-20 Read *Qur'an*, Surahs 50-56, *Wagner, Chapters 13-15*

March 23-27 CATCH-UP (MAR. 23-25). ESSAY EXAM REVIEW on Qur'an & Wagner (March 27) Essay Exam submitted via Blackboard or E-Mail by April 3 at 11:59 PM.

March 30-April 3 Read *Qur'an*, Surahs 17-18. *Nasr, Part 1.*

April 6-8 Read *Qur'an*, Surahs 40-46. *Nasr, Part 2*

April 9-13 NO CLASS

April 15-17 Read *Qur'an*, Surahs 61-64. *Nasr, Part 3*

April 20-24 Class Presentations of Scenarios. Catch Up on Readings

April 27-May 1 LAST CLASS AND REVIEW FOR FINAL EXAM

MAY 4 FINAL EXAM, 8:30 am

JOURNALS DUE IN CLASS ON MAY 1 IF IN NOTEBOOK FORM OR BY 9:00 AM BY E-MAIL/BLACKBOARD ON MAY 1 Journals will be returned at Final Exam.

GRADING MATTERS

Regular attendance and meaningful Participation are assumed.

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|-----------------------------------|---------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Quiz #1 | 10 | Scheduled for ½ period, February 20 |
| 2. Essay Exam | 20 | Scheduled for April 3, via computer |
| 3. Class Presentation | 15 | Scheduled for April 20-24 |
| 3. Journal | 15 | Scheduled for May 1 |
| 4. Final Exam | 30 | Scheduled for May 4 |
| 5. Meaningful Class Participation | 10 | All Classes! ☺ |
| | TOTAL: | 100 |

100-90 = **A** range

89-80 = **B** range

79-70 = **C** range

60-69 = **D** range

0-59 = **F**

COLLEGE ADVISABLE STATEMENTS ADAPTED FOR THIS COURSE:

1. Any student who wishes to disclose a disability and request accommodations under the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) for this course first MUST meet with either Ms. Laurie Roth in the Office of learning Services (for learning disabilities and/or ADD/ADHD) of Dr. Ronald Kline in the Counseling Center (for all other disabilities).”

2. Concerning Academic Honesty, please consult the relevant sections in the College Catalogue and the Student Handbook. Bottom Line: the work you do is to be your work. Essentially, by our being in the course together, you and I are in a covenant of trust with each other. Trust me to do my best with integrity and sound scholarship, and I trust you to do the same with the work that is submitted for a grade. I trust you. You may consult with one another, the internet, etc. – but woe to plagiarists and those who “lift papers” from the internet! **BE VERY CAREFUL ABOUT INTERNET SOURCES IN RESEARCH!!** If you have any questions about a source’s accuracy/integrity or the extent of using a source without attribution, please see me first.

WAGNERIAN OBSERVATIONS

While the syllabus includes a grading grid, I reserve the right to make a **one way qualitative judgment** in developing a final grade. That means, for example, if you have a disaster on a test but do super work on most other factors, I **may** go beyond the end-term numerical grade. The qualitative judgment **will not reduce** the numerical total of graded factors in composing a final grade. While the syllabus is intended to be similar to a contract between the student and the professor, there may be some changes or modifications, such as shifts of dates or changes in the anticipated subjects to be taken in class.

About Attendance. I intend to be on time at every class that the College is open, and I expect you to be there and on time, too. Legitimate reasons supported by credible evidence (from the Dean of Student’s Office, etc.) will be acknowledged. **More than 3 unexcused “cuts” will reduce the final grade.** If a religious holy day that you really observe and on which you are not to write or will be home for the observance, please inform me.

About “Meaningful Participation.” *That entails being present, plus keeping awake, alert, doing the readings being able to respond to questions, and making thoughtful contributions to class discussion.*