

Islam in the 21st Century: Resources and Challenges

Humanities Seminar, Fall 2017

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Course Description:

This seminar explores the religion of Islam and Muslim societies in the contemporary period. It begins with three weeks on the fundamentals of Islam, such as the life of Muhammad, the Qur'an, law, and theology. The resources we will discuss are Islamic spirituality (including Sufism), opportunities for Muslims in the United States, and successful Muslim-majority countries, such as Indonesia. The primary challenges we address include political authoritarianism, sectarianism, and religious extremism. The objective of this seminar is to provide accurate information about the religion of Islam and to demystify Muslim cultures that frequently are portrayed in the media as violent and irrationally hostile to the West. Seminarians are encouraged to bring their questions regarding Islam and Muslims to this class.

Textbooks:

Allen, Roger and Shawkat Toorawa. *Islam: A Short Guide to the Faith*. 2011.

Devji, Faisal. *Landscapes of the Jihad*. 2005.

Kahf, Mohja. *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf: A Novel*. 2006.

Additional readings will be available in PDF and online.

Syllabus:

Part I: Introduction to Islam

Sept. 28: The Prophet Muhammad

Allen and Toorawa, *Islam*, 28-37.

PDF: Omid Safi, *Memories of Muhammad* (2009), 97-125.

October 5: The Qur'an

Allen and Toorawa, *Islam*, 21-27.

PDF: Daniel Madigan, "Themes & Topics of the Qur'an," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Qur'an*, ed. Jane McAuliffe (2006), 79-95.

PDF: "The Sura of Mary" and "Legal Verses"

October 12: Islamic Law & Theology

Allen and Toorawa, *Islam*, 43-51 and 68-83.

PDF: "The Creed of al-Iji," in *Islamic Creeds*, trans. W. Montgomery Watt (1994), 86-89.

Part II: Resources

October 19: Islamic Spirituality

PDF: Rumi, "How a Hare killed the Tyrannical Lion," in *The Masnavi: Book One*, trans. Jawid Mojaddedi (2008), 66-87.

PDF: *Living & Dying with Grace: Counsels of Hadrat Ali*, trans. Thomas Cleary (selections).

Jane Ciabattari, "Why is Rumi the best-selling poet in the US?" *BBC*, 2014.
<http://www.bbc.com/culture/story/20140414-americas-best-selling-poet>

October 26: Muslims in the United States

Guest Lecturer: Dr. Maha Nassar, Asst. Professor, MENAS, University of Arizona
Mohja Kahf, *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf*, 2006.

November 2: Islam in Indonesia

PDF: Rachel Rinaldo, "Islam and Feminism in Jakarta," in *Mobilizing Piety: Islam and Feminism in Indonesia* (2013).

PDF: Azra, Afrianty, and Hefner, "Pesantren and Madrasa: Muslim School and National Ideals in Indonesia," in *Schooling Islam*, ed. Zaman and Hefner (2007), 172-98.

Part III: Challenges

Nov. 9: Political Authoritarianism

PDF: Fatima Mernissi, "Palace Fundamentalism and Liberal Democracy," in *The New Crusades* (2003), ed. Michael Sells, 51-67.

PDF: Ahmet Kuru, "Authoritarianism and Democracy in Muslim Countries," *Political Science Quarterly* (2014): 399-427.

PDF: Said Arjomand, *After Khomeini* (2009), 90-111; 172-191.

Nov. 16: Sectarianism

PDF: Bernard Haykel, "On the Nature of Salafi Thought and Action," in *Global Salafism*, ed. Roel Meijer (2009), 33-57.

Ian Black, "Sunni v Shia: Why the conflict is more political than religious," *The Guardian*, 2015.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/apr/05/sunni-shia-why-conflict-more-political-than-religious-sectarian-middle-east>

Nir Rosen, "An Iraqi Militia Tour of Baghdad," *Mother Jones*, 2008.

<http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2008/12/songs-mahdi-army/>

James Snell, "The Moderation of Muqtada al Sadr," *The New Arab*, 2017.

<https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/Comment/2017/5/9/The-moderation-of-Muqtada-al-Sadr>

Nov. 30: Muslim Extremism

Faisal Devji, *Landscapes of the Jihad* (2005).

Juan Cole, "How Islamic is the Islamic State?" *The Nation*, 2015.

<https://www.thenation.com/article/how-islamic-islamic-state/>

December 7: The Muslim World Right Now

Michael Lipka, "Muslims and Islam," Pew Research Center, May 2017

<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/05/26/muslims-and-islam-key-findings-in-the-u-s-and-around-the-world/>