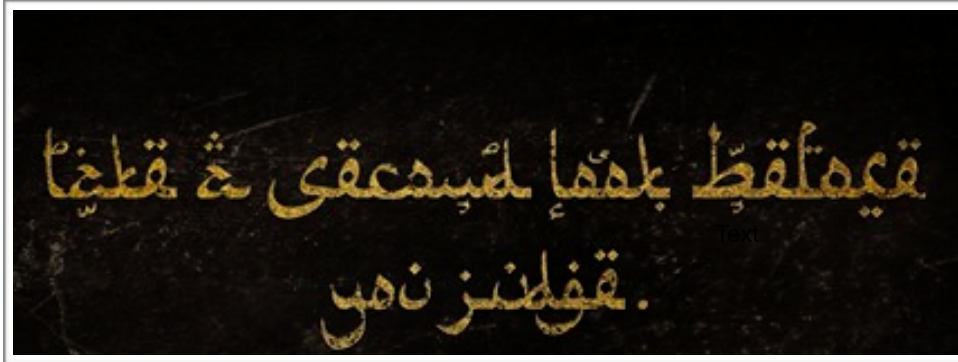


REL 365: Islam (Fall 2016)



Instructor: Dr. Elliott Bazzano
When: MWF 10:00 a.m. – 10:50 a.m.
Where: RH 338
Email Address: bazzanea@lemoyne.edu
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Office Hours: MWF 9:00 – 9:50 and MW 4:00 – 5:00 (and by appointment)

**“DOUBT TRANSPORTS YOU TO THE TRUTH. WHO DOES NOT DOUBT FAILS TO INQUIRE.”
– ABU HAMID AL-GHAZALI, PERSIAN THEOLOGIAN AND MYSTIC (D. 1111)**

WELCOME TO REL 365: ISLAM!

My name is Syllabus, and I will be your friend and guide for the rest of the semester. I’m here to make your experience in this course efficient, organized, and clear—all so that you can fully enjoy and appreciate your learning experience, in this course specifically and in college more generally. Unfortunately, many students don’t pay attention to me. Not only does that make me feel lonely, but it puts those students at a disadvantage compared to the students that do give me proper attention. Importantly, college is about asking questions. Some questions don’t have easy answers, but some do. And you’re in luck, because I’m in the business of answering many of your easy questions. “Reading through a gazillion pages doesn’t sound fun!” you might think, but please give me a chance before judging me too harshly. In return, I promise I’ll do my best to help you in this course. Even though you will read me thoroughly in time for the quiz on the second day of class, you will not memorize my contents completely; and neither will your professor. You should therefore consult me as a reference throughout the entire semester. Because your instructor has about 75 current students, wouldn’t it be a logistical disaster if he had to constantly repeat information on the syllabus to students who don’t consult the document on their own? (Hint: Yes.) Your instructor will often consult me as well, to reference assignment due-dates, evaluate course policies, and even enjoy some late-night pleasure reading.

Lastly, your instructor wants you to learn how to ask meaningful questions. So I encourage you to ask your professor questions throughout the semester. But do check me first, especially if the question is logistical. If I can’t answer your question, then please ask a classmate. And if you’re still at a loss, Professor Bazzano is happy to respond to your query. In fact, he appreciates your curiosity. On that note, I am not an arbitrary document and your professor considers it a duty to make sure his Syllabus makes sense and offers reasonable expectations. It’s also your right as a student to understand the syllabus, so I always encourage you to question my logic. (Professor Bazzano is authorized to speak on my behalf.)

Please note: there are several hyperlinks throughout this document, which are [underlined in blue](#). Keep in mind that you’ll need an electronic copy of this document handy to access those links.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Followers of Islam, called Muslims, number at well over a billion and span the globe from California to Cairo to Kuala Lumpur. Their languages, practices and geographical centers are diverse, complex, and require more than a lifetime to understand fully. This course will nonetheless guide students through a modest survey of that diversity and complexity. We will explore multiple dimensions of Islam, including political, ethical, and mystical dimensions—with attention to demographic diversity and questions of social justice. This course, moreover, will give attention not only to Islam per se, but also how to metacognitively study Islam, including attention to popular media and power dynamics in the dissemination of knowledge. We will approach a variety of texts, people, and concepts, from multiple angles—a process that should prove both challenging and rewarding. Because our approach stems in large part from 21st-century America, we will also consider the implications of our subject on the modern world and America in particular. Your ability to benefit from this class will neither be hindered nor aided by your religious affiliations or lack thereof. What will benefit you is your ability to seriously entertain a multiplicity of worldviews—some of which may strike you as illogical, grotesque, and strange, and others beautiful, compelling, and natural.

COURSE GOALS: WHY STUDY ISLAM?

You probably hear about it on the news, but “the news” is not always the best place to get information. This course, therefore, is designed to equip you with a basic understanding of Islam and Muslims in order to help you become a more informed and well-rounded college student and citizen who can form meaningful opinions about current events. The course aims to develop skills for critically evaluating textual and non-textual sources, including academic articles, blogs, popular media, films, and political discourse. You should leave this class with the ability to engage conversations about Islam with intelligence, integrity, and sophistication—verbally and in writing. We will spend time developing our faculties of written and oral expression by focusing on rhetoric, style, and audience in the sources that we study. We will apply what we learn to writing and speaking in a variety of contexts.

LEARNING OUTCOMES: At the end of this course, students will be able to

- demonstrate an understanding of Islam as a discourse
 - provide accurate descriptions and examples of Islamic rituals, beliefs, and practices
 - relate Muslim worldviews to broader understandings of the search for meaning
 - demonstrate understanding of relationships between religion, politics, society, and the individual
 - explain ways that religion promotes alienation and as well as belonging
 - demonstrate an understanding of power dynamics between different social groups and individuals
 - work cooperatively with others on various tasks in a group context
 - take an active role in and responsibility for their learning
-
- Core Learning Outcomes to be met: Religious Inquiry; Reading, Writing, and Literacy.
 - Institutional Learning Outcomes to be met: Academic Excellence, Jesuit Identity, and Diversity

GRADING

Participation and Presence (20%)

See page 4 for details.

Response Papers (25%)

You will write 5 300- to 500-word essays in response to prompts, posted on Canvas.

Homework Quizzes (15%)

They will always be at the beginning of class, and you may use notes. You cannot make up quizzes. (Hint: arrive on time.)

Email Discussion Threads (15%)

All students will participate in 3 email discussions in response to open-ended questions. Stay tuned for details.

Attending a Muslim Religious Service (10%)

See details on Canvas. If you are absolutely unable to attend, please speak with me and we can arrange an alternative assignment.

Final Project (15%)

See Canvas for details.

EXTRA CREDIT

You may earn one point of extra credit up to 5 times via the following 3 methods:

- 1) Visit a writing tutor in at the library for feedback on a written assignment from this class and ensure that the tutor emails me proof of your visit.
- 2) Be the first to locate and notify me about a typographical error or formatting inconsistency in this syllabus, other course documents, or in any of my official class correspondences. (Please let me know via email.) I reserve discretion to grant these points, but it can't hurt to point out something you think is an error.
- 3) Attend an on-campus event related to religion and write 1-2 pages about the event. (See Canvas for details).

GRADING SCALE

A: 93 + A-: 90-92 B+: 87-89 B: 83-86 B-: 80-82 C+: 77-79 C: 73-76 C-: 70-72 D: 60-69 F: 0-59

REQUIRED COURSE MATERIAL

PDFs to be downloaded from Canvas. (Note that some films are required for this class. I've made suggestions, e.g., Amazon or YouTube, for locating and renting films. How you view them, however, is up to you.) As noted, a number of texts are also located online, and linked on this syllabus.

LATE WORK

Your instructor does not accept it without prior arrangement. If you have an emergency that may jeopardize your ability to complete your work on time, please contact me ASAP so we can try to work something out.

PARTICIPATION AND PRESENCE

Group discussion and interaction will drive this course and students need to get accustomed to speaking in front of others. Not only will this skill help you in your college classes, but in many professions as well. There is no way to “make up” for missing class, but copying the notes of a colleague is a good idea if you cannot attend a session. Please note that you must attend class to participate, but attendance does not necessarily equal presence. In addition to regular participation, groups of 2–3 students will also lead two 15–20 minute in-class discussions based on that day's homework assignment. (See details on Canvas.) This portion of your grade is theoretically the easiest to earn or forfeit. Obviously, your instructor can't measure your net eye contact with the clock throughout the semester but he will notice patterns in participation and evaluate you accordingly.

- Some signs that you are present and participating: eye contact with instructor and classmates; contributing your thoughts to discussions; asking thoughtful questions, taking notes; responding to questions; responsive facial expressions; drawing connections to cumulative course material; referring to particular ideas, texts, and authors.
- Some signs that you are not present and participating: habitual lack of preparation; glancing repeatedly at the clock; sleeping; distracting the class; routinely ignoring course policies.

ABSENCES

You can expect your professor to show up to every class meeting, on time and prepared, as a commitment to your learning process. He expects you to do the same. That said, he also understands that life happens. Therefore, you may miss **THREE** classes during the semester with no direct penalty to your grade. However, a full letter grade will be deducted from your total grade for your 4th absence, and each absence after that will incur a 1/3 grade deduction (B to B-, C+ to C, etc.) The only excused absences are classes missed for documented Le Moyne College athletic events, or other pre-arranged occasions, authorized in advance by the instructor. Arriving late will negatively affect your participation score. Your instructor will take roll promptly at the beginning of every class.

ON UNIVERSITY EDUCATION

Any book is always implicitly about writing, regardless of explicit themes it may convey. Similarly, any university course is about learning and education, regardless of the apparent course content. In this course, we will pay particular attention to the learning process, which may include evaluation exercises, discussions of pedagogy, and review of study skill techniques. Also, learning takes time. Therefore, this course requires your in-depth participation not only in the classroom, but also outside of the classroom. Many public and private universities across the country maintain that students should spend 2-4 hours on out-of-class work for each hour of in-class time. This [article from an education journal](#) speaks to the topic as well. Finally, this course is designed to foster critical thinking and argumentation skills. It is neither designed to funnel information from the teacher to the student nor only to entertain you—rather, the learning process should be dialectic, a result of creative and active participation. Part of developing these skills requires verbal participation, and because part of learning about our topic involves our ability to discuss our topic, it is crucial that you speak up in class. Most importantly, you will probably find it rewarding to contribute to class discussions, and the instructor and other students will likely appreciate your contributions.

OFFICE HOURS

I encourage you to see your professor during office hours or by appointment. You never need to make an appointment to come to office hours; they will be regular. Although there will almost always be time during class for questions and discussion, it will be impossible to always address individual concerns in detail. Therefore, office hours offer something that the classroom simply cannot. Please consider my office hours as an open door for us to discuss things related to the class, other classes, academics in general, the meaning of life, tofu vs. tempeh, Oxford commas, or pretty much anything. Your professor sincerely welcomes your visits. There will always be tea; there might be cookies.

CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE

You're in college, so your instructor will assume that you're awesome, talented, and want to learn. That said, even minor distractions can impact a class negatively. Learning is a social process that we undertake as a group. It's thus integral that we are courteous toward one another. We should expect each other to be able to speak without interruptions from other classmates or the instructor, and when we disagree we should give criticism constructively. Think of disagreements as learning opportunities. Please silence your cell phones before class. Feel free to eat and drink in class. Doodling is also fine. Finally, **do not arrive late. It distracts everyone in the class.**

A special note about sensitivities: religion is a sensitive topic. Therefore, it is imperative that we give due attention to the language we use in class, in order to foster an environment of respect. Surely, there will be disagreements—and disagreements are encouraged—but they need not occur at the cost of respect. Learning to speak respectfully is a skill and one we will strive to build in this class.

Phones, laptops, and other electronic devices

While in class, please put away all electronic devices, with the exception of wristwatches and medical aids. Unacceptable devices include but are not limited to laptops, phones, iPads, iPods, turntables, walkie talkies, defibrillators, Gameboys, Neo Geo arcade units, theremins, laser pens, and remote control cars. Please note that this policy does not prevent you from taking notes on your computer; it simply prevents you from taking notes on your computer in class. You are encouraged to transfer your handwritten notes to your computer after class, as it is an excellent way to review material and commit it to memory. (If you have circumstances that require you to use a computer or another generally unacceptable electronic device, please let your professor know privately and special arrangements can be made.)

Warning: Everyone will begin the course with one extra-credit point. “That sounds great!” you might say, but why is that a ‘warning’? What’s the catch?” Here it is: if your professor sees any of you fiddling with electronic devices in class, the class will receive a warning; if it happens again, everyone in the class will lose the point of extra credit.

EMAIL ETIQUETTE

For the purposes of this class, email should be treated as a formal means of communication. When replying to or sending emails, please write in proper English and do not use phonetic language, such as abbreviated words and symbols that are often used in text messages. Check spelling (including your instructor's name—“Elliott,” “Doctor Bazzano,” and “Professor Bazzano” are equally acceptable), punctuation, and grammar. Always include a greeting and sign your name. You are responsible for regularly checking your university email and Canvas for class announcements. Consistent inattention to email etiquette may affect your participation grade. Remember, this is a college class, and email, like formal writing, is an opportunity to demonstrate your competency to the instructor. Likely, expect your professor to adhere to the same guidelines he expects from you. He will also try to respond to emails within 24 hours, or sooner (usually by the end of the business day); if he does not, please feel free to email him again. He does not generally check email between 5:30 p.m. and 7 a.m., so please plan according to the time-sensitivity of your concerns. Lastly, please always include the course and meeting times in the subject heading of your email (e.g., REL 365, 10:00-10:50).

ON USING TECHNOLOGY

A few things about Canvas: 1) It is your job to develop a healthy relationship to Canvas. If you need help with a technical issue, please contact [Information Technology](#) (315-445-4579). They are super helpful and happy to troubleshoot with you, in person or on the phone. You are also welcome to stop by your professor's office to address a Canvas-related issue. 2) If you realize you are having trouble with Canvas at the last minute before an assignment is due, please know that procrastination has consequences and that it's your responsibility to accept them. 3) Develop a healthy relationship with Google. If you have perused course documents and Canvas for answers to a course-related question, consider using Google before contacting your classmates or instructor. You will likely find it empowering to problem-solve on your own.

PLAGIARISM AND ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

Learning how to effectively incorporate outside materials into your writing is a crucial ability that you will develop throughout college. Any student caught plagiarizing may face consequences including failure of the assignment in question, failure of the course, and notification of the administration. The two most common plagiarism errors are quoting assigned readings verbatim without putting the borrowed words or phrases in quotation marks, and paraphrasing information without citing the source. Review the discussion of [Academic Integrity](#) (also see pg. 10 of the College Catalog), and familiarize yourself with the proper ways to cite texts. Ask if you have any questions. It is much better to ask for help than to plagiarize and risk expulsion from the college. On how to avoid plagiarism, see [these excellent guidelines](#). **Like traffic laws, you are responsible for this information. Learning it may require time and effort, but it's worth it considering the consequences.**

FAQs

Q: I missed class. Did you cover anything important?

A: Yes. If I didn't have anything important to cover, I would have cancelled class.

Q: I tried really hard in this class; why didn't I get an A?

A: Trying hard doesn't always help. Earning high scores results from any number of strategies, including efficient time management, adhering to instructions, and seeking help when you need it.

Q: I need to pass this class in order to graduate. It's *really* important to me. What can I do?

A: You should have this conversation with me at the beginning of the semester, not the end.

Q: I never talk in class, but I always pay attention. Will that lower my participation score?

A: Yes. I expect students to speak during class, as a variety of views makes for a more effective learning experience.

Q: I'd like to discuss a grade I received on my paper, but I haven't reviewed the instructions for the assignment or the paper itself since I submitted it; will we be able to have a productive conversation?

A: No. If you want to discuss your grade, you need to review your work, my feedback, and the assignment itself before we chat.

Q: Why do you have such high expectations of students for a required course that should be easy?

A: Required courses shouldn't necessarily be easy. Secondly, the vast majority of people in the world don't have the privilege of attending college, so I expect students to get the most out of their experiences and reach for excellence.

Q: Can you really tell when I'm texting in class?

A: Yes.

Q: Really?

A: Yes.

Q: If I have a learning disability or think I have a learning disability, and might need accommodations, what should I do?

A: You should contact [Accessibility and Disability Support](#).

A FINAL NOTE ON MUTUAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Learning is a team effort. Just as I have articulated certain expectations for students, you too are entitled to certain expectations of your instructor. Expect your professor to come to class on time, prepared, awake, and responsive—just as he expects of you. Your professor should refrain from texting his friends while students are speaking with him. Your professor should not stare listlessly into space during a group discussion. Students deserve respect from their instructors and each other, just as instructors deserve respect from their students. It is our obligation to keep each other accountable for this pillar of our learning experience.

SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS AND IMPORTANT DATES

(This syllabus is subject to change. Any changes will be announced in class, via email, and/or via Canvas. For this reason, you are advised to retain copies of all emails sent for this class, as you are responsible for knowing their content. You are also responsible for checking your email daily.)

Date: Topics and Activities	Work Due Readings and films in this column should be completed before class. Also note that many assignments are due on non-class days, so please plan accordingly.
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LOOKING IN THE MIRROR

August 29: what is our context? How should we study religion? Islam as discourse; “the media.”	Welcome! Sign up for leading discussions (see details on Canvas).
August 31: no class meeting , Mass of the Holy Spirit.	Response Paper 1 due via Canvas by 11:59 p.m.
September 2: Syllabus Quiz; maps of the Muslim world; discuss film.	Film: Wadjda (for rent on Amazon/YouTube, ~90 minutes).
September 5: Labor Day, no class.	No class.
September 7: Islamophobia.	Podcast interview with Todd Green (~60 minutes). Special homework assignment, TBA.
September 8: not a class day.	Email Discussion Thread 1 due by 11:59 p.m. Sign up for mosque visit.

ORIGINS, MUSLIMS, AND NON-MUSLIMS

September 9: origins of Islam.	Denny, “Muhammad and the Early Muslim Community” (49-73).
September 12: Qur’an.	Film: Koran by Heart (~80 minutes).
September 14: Qur’an.	Read the following sections from the Qur’an: 1, 3:7, 97-114 (don’t worry, they’re short!). You can access reliable translations at www.quran.com (any translation is fine).
September 16: Hadith of Gabriel.	Chittick and Murata, “Hadith of Gabriel” (xxv-xxvii); hadith selections, TBA.
September 19: 5 pillars, Jerusalem.	Khalek, “Jerusalem in Medieval Islamic Tradition” (624-29).
September 21: 5 pillars.	Film: Haji video (~15 minutes).
September 23: Sunni-Shi’i split.	Safi, “Life After the Prophet, Death After Hossein” (217-261).
September 25: not a class day.	Response Paper 2 due via Canvas by 11:59 p.m.
September 26: one G/god?	Halton, “ Which Abrahamic Religion? ” Abd-Allah, “One God, Many Names” (1-9).
September 28: afterlife.	Khalil, “Mercy and Salvation” (34-40).

GENDER

September 30: gender, fashion, and identity politics.	Abu-Lughod, “Do Muslim Women Need Saving?” (783-90).
October 3: gender, fashion, and identity politics.	Ahmed, “Backlash” (199-232).
October 4: not a class day.	Email Discussion Thread 2 due by 11:59 p.m.
October 5: gender, fashion, and identity politics.	Adiba, “A Prayer Answered,” (19-27); El-Naggar, “ Practicing Islam in Short Shorts. ”

DRUGS

October 7: coffee.	Knight, “From Islam to Islam” (240-45); “Coffee Consciousness” (69-82).
October 10: Fall Break, no class.	No class.
October 11: not a class day.	Response Paper 3 due via Canvas by 11:59 p.m.
October 12: drugs and visions.	Knight, “Al-Najm” (212-35); Yusuf, “ The Sunna and Health. ”
October 14: alcohol.	Razi, “The Prohibition Against Wine” (200-9).
October 17: qat in Yemen.	No additional homework.

MOSQUES

October 19: TBA.	TBA.
October 21: field trip to mosque: 1:00 – 3:00.	No additional homework.
October 24: Muslims on TV.	TV series: “Little Mosque on the Prairie,” episode 1 and 2 (~22 minutes per episode).
October 26: Syria.	Film: The Light in Her Eyes (for rent on Amazon/YouTube, ~90 minutes).

VIOLENCE

October 27: not a class day.	Email Discussion Thread 3 due by 11:59 p.m.
October 28: what is terrorism?	Obeidallah, “ Are All Terrorists Muslims? It’s Not Even Close ,” Fish, “Are Muslims More Violent?”
October 31: the so-called “Islamic State.”	Wood, “ What Isis Really Wants. ”
November 2: Muslims in/and the US military.	Jacobsen, “How to Teach about Islam.”
November 4: violence and Islamic thought.	Bazzano, “Ibn Taymiyya, Radical Polymath, Part II: Intellectual Contributions” (117-30).

MYSTICISM

November 7: mysticism and spiritual experience.	Bazzano, “Sufism” (1228-32); “ The Retreat: Part I ” (~60 minutes).
November 9: aphorisms.	Sells, “Rabi‘a” (151-59).
November 11: Qur’an commentary.	Dakake, “Where Waters Meet” (21-32).
November 13: not a class day.	Response Paper 4 due via Canvas by 11:59 p.m.
November 14: literature.	Jami, “Yusuf and Zulaykha,” abridged and trans. Bayat and Jamnia (145-67).

ISLAM IN AMERICA

November 16: TBA.	TBA.
November 18: Islam in the contemporary US.	Safi, “The times they are a-changin’ – a Muslim quest for justice, gender equality and pluralism” (1-29).
November 21: peer review.	Bring draft of final project to class.
November 23: Thanksgiving Break, no class.	Thanksgiving Break, no class.
November 25: Thanksgiving Break, no class.	No class.

November 27: not a class day.	Religious Service Assignment due via Canvas by 11:59 p.m.
November 28: traveling.	Grewal, "Choosing Tradition" (219-53).
November 30: Qur'an in US history.	Jerome, "The Jefferson Qur'an;" Moore, "The Qur'an and American Politics" (81-101).
CONCLUSIONS	
December 2: panel discussion.	No additional homework.
December 5: Media Day.	Special homework assignment. (Stay tuned for details.)
December 6: not a class day.	Response Paper 5 due via Canvas by 11:59 p.m.
December 7: music.	Film: <i>Deen Tight</i> .
December 9: concluding reflections.	No additional homework. Last day to submit extra credit.
December 12: not a class day.	Final Projects due via Canvas by 11:59 p.m.
December 13: 12 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.	Final Project presentations.

Reflecting on the below questions will help you prepare for assignments and in-class discussions. For any of the questions, there are likely dozens of avenues you can take to answer the questions. But remember, just because a question doesn't have only one right answer doesn't mean it has no right answers or that all answers are equally good. Not all opinions are good opinions.

Cumulative Study Questions

- Is there a difference between religion and spirituality?
- How does the media affect American views of Islam and religion more generally?
- Where is the "Muslim World," "Arab World," "Middle East"?
- What are differences between descriptive and prescriptive/normative approaches to the study of religion?
- How can what I'm learning in college make me a more compassionate person?
- Can one study Islam without also studying Muslims?
- Can one study Islam (or any religion) without also studying other religions?
- Why should non-Muslims care about Islam?
- Can non-Muslims understand Islam as well as Muslims?
- Why would a Catholic college offer courses on Islam?
- Can you understand religion without also learning about social topics like politics, race, and gender?
- Is Islam a violent religion?
- Is Islam a patriarchal religion?
- Who has the authority to speak for Islam?
- Are all people entitled to their opinions on all subjects?
- Are all interpretations of religion equal in value?
- Could a Muslim be president of the United States?
- What does (studying) religion have to do with a liberal arts education?
- Should all Le Moyne students really have to take a religious studies course?