

RS 50

ISLAM

Fall 2002

UPDATED SEPT. 4, 2002

TU-TH 9:35-11:00 Breslin 20

Prof. Daniel M. Varisco

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Office Hours: Tues (4:00-4:30pm), Wed. (9:00-11:00 am) Thurs (9:00-9:30 am) or by appt.



Purpose of Course

Required Course Texts

Course Schedule

Course Requirements

Reading the Assignments

Class Attendance

Exams

Class Assignment Journal(CAJ)

Critical Analysis of Reading_(CAR)

Reflective Essay

Web Critique

Grading

Purpose of Course

This course will introduce the student to the diversity of religious beliefs and practices in Islam, one of the world's major religions and multi-cultural traditions. We will survey the origins and early history of the Islamic faith, with an emphasis on the role of Muhammad as Prophet and the revelation of the Quran. A major aim of this course is to give voice to Islamic texts and provide a window into how Muslims, in varying sociohistorical contexts, view themselves. Among the specific topics addressed are: core Islamic religious texts, Islamic doctrine and law, philosophy, Sufi mysticism, Islamic science and technology, gender and the role of women, politics, fundamentalism and *jihad*, the ongoing debate between secularism and traditionalism in contemporary Islamic societies and Islam in America. The course is oriented both to those who have little or no prior knowledge of Islam and those who already have a background in Islam. The ultimate aim of the course is neither to glorify nor critique Islam as a religion but rather to allow the student to see how Muslims view themselves and how we in the West have filtered these views over the centuries through the present. It is, in short, a course on the idea of Islam, an idea which continues to take shape.

Required Course Texts

- Sardar, Ziauddin and Zafar Abbas Malik (2002) *Introducing Islam*. Cambridge: Icon Books.
- Esposito, John L, editor (1999) *The Oxford History of Islam*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Chick, Jack T. (1988) *The Prophet. Alberto Part Six*. Chino, CA: Chick Publications. (comic book)
- RS50 Reader (This is available only at Sir Speedy (794-1234) at 2039 Hempstead Turnpike, across from Home Depot)

Course Schedule

I. PROLOGUE

9/3 Introduction to objectives and requirements of course.

9/5 Lecture: Imagining Islam: What Islam Is, Is Not, Could Be, Might Be

Read: Sardar/Malik (2002) and Cahill (2002) [professor's handout]

II. MESSAGE AND MESSENGER

[This part of the course will examine the Quran as the primary spiritual source for Muslims, the essence of its message, and the role of the Messenger, Muhammad.]

9/10 Faith and Practice: The Pillars of Islam

Read: Cornell in Esposito (1999:63-105)

9/12 The Holy Quran

Read: Brohi (1999:11-23), Cook (2000:8-20), Bellamy (1996:201-203) in RS 50 Reader

• CAR#1: Brohi and Bellamy Reading

9/17 Muhammad: The Life of the Prophet

Read: Donner in Esposito (1999:1-14) and Guillaume (1955:112-115,649-659) in RS 50 Reader

9/19 Sunna and Hadith: The Prophet's Deeds and Words

Read: Peters (1994:221-227) and Mernissi (1998:112-126) in RS 50 Reader

II. ISLAM IN HISTORY

[This part of the course will look at some of the important historical aspects of Islam over the past 14 centuries. The focus is on the historical interaction between Islam and Christianity.]

9/23 The Caliphate

Read: Donner in Esposito (1999:14-61)

9/26 Islam and Christendom

Read: Smith in Esposito (1999:305-345) and von Grunebaum (1961:42-49) in RS 50 Reader

• CAJ #1: Mangling Muhammad

10/1 Islam and the Rise of Colleges

Read: Makdisi (1989:175-182) and Charfi (2002) in RS 50 Reader

10/3 Colonialism's Wake: Islam Confronts European Hegemony

Guest Lecture: Prof. Magnus Bernhardssen

Read: Lapidus in Esposito (1999:371-393) and Nasr in Esposito (1999:549-599)

10/8 Science: Astronomy, Mathematics and Medicine

Read: Dallal in Esposito (1999:155-213) and Varisco (1994:253-261, 1995:263-271) in RS50 Reader

10/10 Law and Society in Islam

Read: Kamali in Esposito (1999:107-153)

• CAJ #2: Legal Rights: The Community vs. the Individual

10/15 Gender and Islamic History

Read: Tucker (1993:37-73) and MacFarquhar (2002) in RS50 Reader

10/17 Review for Midterm.

10/22 EXAM #1 (entire class period)

III. ISLAMIC DOCTRINE AND PRACTICE

[The Islamic faith has a wide-ranging theology, but the dominant theme is the unity of God. Here we look at Islamic doctrine, both in general and with a few specific examples. As a case study for Islam in practice, the Berti of Sudan are highlighted.]

10/24 Philosophy and Theology: An Overview

Read: Fakhry in Esposito (1999:269-303)

10/29 The Unity (Tawhid) of God

Read: Nasr (1991: 311-323) and Shari'ati (1979:82-87) in RS 50 Reader

• CAJ #3: The Muslim Concept of Allah

10/31 Religious Narrative: The Story of Joseph

Read: Mir (1986:1-15) in RS50 Reader; Quran, surah 12 (Yusuf)

11/5 Sufism

Read: Peters (1994: 310-315, 333-339), Arberry (1961:1-1-9. 108-113) and Kriteck (1964:111-115) in RS50 Reader

11/7 Apocalypse and Islamic Eschatology

Read: Chittick (1991: 378-409), Ibn Kathir (1991:5-7,14-23, 70-75) and Sack (2001) in RS50 Reader

11/12 Islam as a Missionary Religion: The Berti of Sudan

Read: Holy (1991:13-46) in RS50 Reader and Levtzion in Esposito (1999:475-507)

IV. THE POLITICIZATION OF ISLAM

[The political confrontation of Islam with the "West" is a constant concern in the media. This part of the course looks at issues of "fundamentalism," jihad, and democracy. As a case study, the focus is on the controversy over Rushdie's "The Satanic Verses" .]

11/14 Jihad: Holy War and Profane Rhetoric

Read: Voll in Esposito (1999:509-547) and Shaltut in Peters (1996:59-101) in RS50 Reader

• CAR# 2: Shaltut Reading

11/19 Islamic "Fundamentalism"

Read: Sardar (2001) and Sanneh (2002) in RS50 Reader

11/21 Islam and Democracy

Read: Esposito in Esposito (1999:643-690)

11/26 Islam and Tolerance

Read: Taha (1998), Rushdie (2001), Kinzer (1997), and Perlez (2002) in RS50 Reader

• last day to hand in draft or outline of reflective essay for comments without grade

11/28 Thanksgiving. No school.

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12/3 Apostasy and Western Values: The Case of Salman Rushdie

Read: Rushdie ("Mahound", pp. 91-126), Islamic Society of North America (1990:174-176) and Taylor (1990:245-248) in RS50 Reader

V. LOOKING AROUND AND LOOKING AHEAD

12/5 Muslims in America: A Dialogue

Read: Haddad in Esposito (1999:641), Turner (1999) and Goodstein (2001) in RS50 Reader

12/10 The Future of Islam: A Forum

Read: Sen (2001) in RS50 Reader

12/13 "The Prophet" Reflective Essay due today between 9-11:30 and 1:30-3:30 pm in 205E Davison. This must be handed to me by hand. Do not simply leave it in my office box.

12/17 EXAM #2 10:30am-12:30pm in Monroe 205

Course Requirements

1. **READING THE ASSIGNMENTS** by the date noted in the course schedule or as directed by the professor. It is important to read the assigned material before class so that you can participate fully in class discussion and bring up questions or explore issues you are not clear about. Bring the assigned text with you to class on the relevant day.

2. **CLASS ATTENDANCE.** Attendance will be taken each day at the start of class. If you are unable to attend class due to any reason (e.g., medical, traffic accident, sports travel, job interview, alarm didn't go off) you must provide a written note informing me of the reason you were absent. You are allowed up to 4 excused absences. For each absence over the limit, you will lose 3 points from your final grade points. It is my decision, as professor, whether an absence is to be excused or not. *Note that an excessive number of absences may cause you to fail this course.*

3. **EXAMS:** There will be 2 in-class exams with 2 essays and 18 short answers each. Each exam essay will be graded according to the following criteria:

- a. Demonstration that the information is understood*
- b. Use of relevant and appropriate information and examples from the course*
- c. Critical analysis of key concepts and perspectives*
- d. Synthesis and reformulation in your own words*
- e. Clarity , completeness and coherence of response*

Exams cannot be made up without advance notice for a legitimate reason.

4. CLASS ASSIGNMENT JOURNAL (CAJ):

Each student is required to write class assignment essays related to assigned reading and discussions in class. The student must hand in the journal assignment on the day due. These assignments must be typed and at least 2-3 pages (500-750 words) in length. The idea of the assignment is to show how you interact with the material you are reading or seeing. You must relate your ideas and opinions to the assigned reading or topic.

The grading for this journal is "outcome based," which means that a particular assignment can be revised or expanded as necessary to meet the established criteria for full credit of 3 points per assignment, assuming the first is handed in on time. No revisions will be accepted after the last official day (Dec. 10) of class. The criteria for grading the CAJ are:

- *a. Level of effort (appropriate length and degree you interact with the material)*
- *b. Appropriate and relevant examples*
- *c. Coherent argument and clear presentation of points*

The following are the specific class assignments for the CAJ:

CAJ #1 (due 9/26) Mangling Muhammad. Based on your reading of the Smith article, explain how Christians were treated in early Islam. Then, find three spurious and deflammatory claims made by medieval Christians about Muhammad in the von Grunebaum reading. Why do you think these Christian apologists were so antagonistic to Islam?

CAJ #2 (due 10/10) Legal Rights: The Community vs. the Individual. Based on your reading of the Kamali article, find two specific rights that apply to the community or ummah and two that apply directly to individuals. How does Islam (based mainly on the Quran) seek to combine both sets of legal rights?

CAJ #3 (due 10/29) The Muslim Concept of Allah. How is God (Allah in Arabic) defined by Muslims? It is important to explain why Islam is monotheistic and to know the characteristics Muslims assign to the one God. Compare and contrast what you have learned with your own understanding of God. If you are Muslim, explain how your concept is similar and different from other religions or secular explanations of God.

5. CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF READING (CAR):

Each student is required to complete a critical analysis of reading (CAR) for two of the assigned readings, as noted. The purpose of this assignment is to improve the student's ability to understand the the style and rhetoric of the text.

The grading for each CAR is "outcome based," which means that a particular assignment can be revised or expanded as necessary to meet the established criteria for full credit of 3 points per assignment, assuming the first is handed in on time. No revisions will be accepted after the last official day (Dec. 10) of class. The criteria for grading the CAR are:

- *a. Shows relative mastery of the author's main points*
- *b. Shows relative mastery of author's style of writing*
- *c. Ability to recognize relevant examples*

• **CAR#1 (due 9/12) Brohi and Bellamy Reading**

[Read the articles by Brohi and Bellamy through and mark what you think are the important points. With the book open, go back through the reading and answer the following questions or directions. Focus on the reading, but try to add other supporting information learned in the course. Number each response but do not repeat the question. Do not simply paraphrase what the text says, but put it in your own words.]

Answer these three questions:

1. According to Brohi, why is the Quran called "al-Furqan" (The Discernment)? Explain what it is that the Quranic message "discerns."
2. According to Brohi, what does the Quran teach is the most important fact of life for a human?
3. What kind of evidence does Bellamy cite from Islamic sources in order to argue his belief about the term "Sabi'una" in the Quran?

• **CAR# 2 (due 11/14): Shaltut Reading**

[Read through the article by Shaltut and mark what you think are the important points. With the book open, go back through the reading and answer the following questions or directions. Focus on the reading, but try to add other supporting information learned in the course. Number each response but do not repeat the question. Do not simply paraphrase what the text says, but put it in your own words.]

Answer these three questions.

1. Why does Shaltut believe that it is unnecessary to force someone else to convert to Islam? Be specific.
2. According to Shaltut's understanding of Surat al-Baqara 2:190-194 (The Verses of Fighting), for what reasons are Muslims allowed to fight?
3. What does Shaltut think is the role of forgiveness in fighting unbelievers?

6. **REFLECTIVE ESSAY: "The Prophet": Comic or Tragic?**

Purpose: The purpose of this essay is to recognize the bias and stereotypes in the comic book by Jack Chick about the claims of former priest Alberto R. Rivera regarding the origins, history and alleged motivations in Islam. Each student must write an original response identifying stereotypes about Islam and responding to these with information learned in the course. Address your argument to the following question: Is Chick's "The Prophet" comic or tragic or both? It is important in this reflective essay to show how Muslims react to absurd claims like those made in the comic book. You must draw on the various Muslim voices in articles read during the course. You should also address the point of why you think fundamentalists like Jack Chick are so antagonistic against Islam, as you reflect on the history of the two faiths. In addition to the course material, you are encouraged to use information obtained on Islamic websites or to become involved in an Islamic chat room.

Style: This is a reflective essay rather than a term paper. The idea is to put yourself into the role

of a Muslim defending his/her faith against absurd and stereotypical claims. One way to write the essay is in the first person as an open letter to Jack Chick or Alberto Riviera. All quotations must be properly footnoted (use the Hofstra Writers Guide or that provided by the professor). Avoid long quotes or using quotes to sum up material you could as easily put in your own words.

Grading: This essay is worth 20 points. The major criteria I will use to grade the essay are listed below. Each criterion is worth 2 points: 1 if your work is adequate and 2 if it is impressive.

a. demonstration that the information presented is understood

b. use of relevant and appropriate examples from the course

c. covers an adequate range of issues

d. effective critique of stereotypes about Islam

e. inclusion of Islamic perspectives

f. ability to synthesize rather than merely repeat or describe

g. clarity and coherent explanation of points made

h. level of effort (including length)

i. originality and creativity

j. relevant use of information from an internet site

Length: 7-9 pages or 1750-2250 words. Remember to attach the essay cover sheet handed out by the professor.

Due Date: You may hand in a draft or outline up until Nov. 26 for comments without a grade. The final copy of your essay is due no later than DEC. 13 between 1:30-3:30 pm in 205E Davison. Remember to attach the essay cover sheet handed out by the professor. This must be handed to me by hand. Do not simply leave it in my office box. You are encouraged to hand in your essay on the last day of class. Late papers will have 3 points automatically taken off.

7. WEB CRITIQUE. Each student will conduct a web critique on the internet regarding sites on Islam, according to the guidelines on the web critique webpage at http://people.hofstra.edu/faculty/daniel_m_varisco/rs50web.html. You may hand this in at any time either as a draft or for a grade. The final version of your critique is due no later than Dec.10, the last formal day of class.

8. EXTRA CREDIT OPTIONS

EXTRA CREDIT. Each student in the class has an opportunity to earn 6 extra-credit points. Attend the event or do the option and write up a 2-3 page discussion of what you got out of it and how it relates to the course material. I am not interested in a lot of descriptive information, but rather your reflections on what were the important points and how these relate to the class material and themes. All extra-credit assignments are due no later than the day of the final exam in this class.

OPTIONS:

- Study Guide for Exam# 1 Concepts (see [handout](#))
 - Visit any Islamic religious service. Details available from professor.
 - Interview a Muslim friend or relative.
 - View "The Message" (a Hollywood film about the life of Muhammad) in Media Center
 - Option you suggest and I approve in advance. This could be a relevant outside lecture, relevant documentary, etc.
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Grading

Grading in this course is based on a 100 point scale (although the student has the opportunity to earn 107 points in the course). In general, the "A" range will extend from 90-107, the "B" range from 80-90, the "C" range from 70-80, the D-range starting at 64. The point accumulation breaks down as follows:

Exam #1	28
Exam #2	28
Class Assignment Journal (CAJ)	9
Critical Analysis of Reading (CAR)	6
Reflective Essay	20
Web Critique	10
Extra Credit	6
TOTAL	107

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A photograph of a man with dark, curly hair and a mustache, wearing a light-colored shirt, is positioned on the right side of the card.