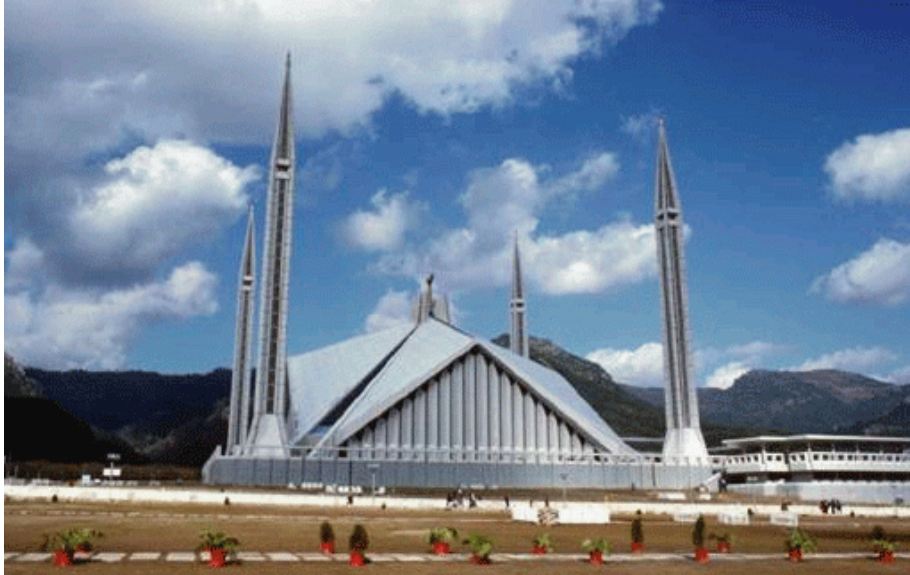


# Islam and Modernity



Faisal Mosque, Islamabad

## About this Course **Islam and Modernity**

REL 315; Fall 2005  
Mondays and Wednesdays  
10:25 AM to 11:40 AM  
Fanning Hall 417 B

## About the Instructor **Ahmed Afzaal**

Office: Blaustein Hall 305  
Ext: 2940; Box: 5273  
Email: [aafzaal@conncoll.edu](mailto:aafzaal@conncoll.edu)  
Office Hours: Mondays 12:00 PM to 2:00 PM

### **Why this Topic?**

This course will systematically explore an ongoing debate that has often been oversimplified in popular media, particularly in the aftermath of 9/11, i.e., *whether or not Islam is compatible with modernity*.

There are multiple and complex ways in which the central terms “Islam” and “modernity” are used. If both of these words represented one-dimensional, unchanging, easily identifiable, and non-controversial entities, the answer to the above question might have been a simple “yes” or “no.” In fact, our understandings of both “Islam” and “modernity” are arenas of intense contestation. Therefore, complete, precise, and agreed-upon definitions do not exist for either “Islam” or “modernity,” in the way such definitions exist for “retina” or “triangle” or “momentum.” In other words, one reason why people disagree about the compatibility between “Islam” and “modernity” is that they often do not have the same sense of what these terms mean.

What makes this topic particularly intriguing is precisely the fact that “Islam” and “modernity” are multi-dimensional and shifting terms that are used by different individuals to carry various shades of meanings. Indeed, the very act of defining these terms, explicitly or implicitly, sets the parameters of the debate in certain ways, leading to one set of conclusions rather than other. This will become apparent as we analyze the writings of both Muslim and non-Muslim intellectuals on this subject.



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## Outline of the Course

Our course will start with an examination of the thesis that “Islam” is experiencing a major crisis today, and that this crisis stems from its inability to “modernize,” which is a direct result of certain inherent characteristics of the religion itself. In other words, something has gone terribly “wrong” with the “Islamic world.” This is often accompanied by the explicit or implicit assumption that things have gone just right for the modern “West,” which has reached the virtual “end of history” in the form of liberal-democracy and free markets. We shall explore this thesis in the writings of Bernard Lewis, Samuel P. Huntington, Francis Fukuyama, Thomas Friedman, and, finally, in a report on “Islam” by the RAND Corporation. We shall focus not on determining whether the thesis is true or false, but on exploring its subtle meaning, its historical roots, the assumptions on which it is based, and its socio-political consequences.

The nature of “modernity” and its problematic relationship with religion will be explored in the third week from a sociological perspective, through the writings of Max Weber and Peter Berger. In the fourth week, the phenomenon of European colonialism in the predominantly Muslim nations will be examined, as it forms a central part of the socio-historical context within which the encounter between “Islam” and “modernity” has unfolded. The fifth week is reserved for a particularly illuminating article by sociologist Robert N. Bellah.

Starting from the sixth week, we will examine the contributions of selected Muslim voices to this debate. Through this examination, some of the central questions that have emerged as topics of debate and fierce contestation during the last 150 years will be explored. These include, but are not limited to, issues relating to religious faith, tradition, life-style, resistance to imperialism, political authority, legal reforms, the duty of jihad, role of the Scripture, relationship between religion and politics, and the status of women.

## Grading and Evaluation

Here are the details of how I will evaluate your performance in this course.

**Attendance: (10%)** I take your physical presence in the class very seriously. Frequent late arrivals and early departures will negatively affect your grade; so would un-excused or habitual absence.

**Participation: (20%)** In addition to bringing your body into the classroom, you must come to the class mentally prepared. This means having read the assigned readings thoroughly, preferably more than once, and having done at least a basic analysis of the central thesis and supporting arguments/evidences presented in each reading. Our first task is to sympathetically understand what each author is saying. Evaluation or criticism of an author or text must follow, and not precede, this understanding. Furthermore, most learning takes place between, rather than during, the class meetings. Your participation in class discussion is the single most important factor that will demonstrate to me whether or not you are engaging with the texts *in between classes*.

**Online Discussion: (20%)** Because of limited time available in the classroom, most of our discussion will have to spill over into the “Comments and Questions” part of the course webpage. I expect a minimum of ONE (and preferably more) well thought-out posting from each student per class meeting, either before or after the class period but definitely within the same week. You can either post your own comment or question, or you may choose to respond to another student’s posting. The advantage of online discussion over class participation is that you will have plenty of time to think, revise, amend, or otherwise improve your input before you post it. Online postings are not informal email messages, so you must use proper grammar and punctuations. Your performance in the online discussion will further demonstrate to me the degree and quality of your engagement with the assigned readings.

**Biography and Bibliography: (10%)** Understanding the mind of an author requires not only reading the text itself but also knowing something about the author and his/her socio-historical context. This part of the course will be supplied by the students, rather than the instructor. Depending on the final number of enrollment in this course, you will be required to write one or two short essays about the author(s) whose writings we

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will be studying in this course. Your essay should consist of a 2 page biography of the author and a 1 page bibliography of his/her works as well as works about him/her. You will email this essay to me at least one week before the class in which that author will be discussed. I will revise your essay, if necessary, and include it in the "Course Readings" section of the course webpage. Your essay will then become part of readings required for all students. Please refer to the sign-up sheet.

**Research Paper: (40%)** At the end of the course, you will write a 10-12 pages long research paper, due December 20, which will represent your own synthesis of the course material. Try to come up with a theme for your paper as early in the course as possible; keep me informed regarding your progress and any problems you may be facing in writing it. You can choose a particular issue and trace it in the works of several authors, choose two authors and compare their views on several issues, or choose a particular geographical location and historical period to do your analysis.

## Syllabus and Schedule

### First Week: The Problem of Compatibility

*Monday, September 5: Optional Reading:* John Gray.

"Three Mistakes about Modernity"

*Wednesday, September 7:* Bernard Lewis.

"The Roots of Muslim Rage"



Lewis

### Second Week: The Triumph of Modernity

*Monday, September 12:* Samuel P. Huntington. "Clash of Civilizations?" (from Foreign Affairs)

*Wednesday, September 14:* RAND Corporation. "Civil & Democratic Islam"; Francis Fukuyama. "The West has Won" (from The Guardian); *Optional Reading:* Fukuyama. "The End of History?" (from National Interest)



Huntington

### Third Week: The Decline and Rise of Religion

*Monday, September 19:* Max Weber. "The Vocation of Science"

*Wednesday, September 21:* Peter L. Berger. "Secularism in Retreat" (from National Interest); "From the Crisis of Religion to the Crisis of Secularity" (from Religion and America)



الدين ← → العلم ← →



Weber

### Fourth Week: Colonialism

*Monday, September 26:* Sarah Ansari. "The Muslim World in the Era of Western Domination: 1800 to the Present" (from The Cambridge Illustrated History of Islam)

*Wednesday, September 28:* As above.

### Fifth Week: Dreaming Innocence & the Secular City

*Monday, October 3:* Robert N. Bellah. "Islamic Tradition & the Problems of Modernization" (from Beyond Belief: Essays on Religion in a Post-Traditional World)

*Wednesday, October 5:* As above.



Abduh

### Sixth Week: Early Islamic Modernism

*Monday, October 10:* Jamal Al-Din Al-Afghani. "Lecture on Teaching and Learning" and "Answer to Renan; Muhammad Abduh. "Laws Should Change in Accordance with the Conditions of Nations" (from Modernist Islam)



Al-Afghani

*Wednesday, October 12:* Sayyid Ahmad Khan.

"Lecture on Islam" (from Modernist Islam)



### Seventh Week: Modern Islamic Revivalism

*Monday, October 17:* Sayyid Abul A'la Mawdudi. "Fallacy of Rationalism"; "The Islamic Political Theory"; (from Fundamentalist and Modernist Debates in Islam) *Optional Reading:* Selection from "Purdah and the Status of Women"

Mawdudi



Qutb

*Wednesday, October 19:* Sayyid Qutb. Selection from Milestones. *Optional Reading:* Zaynab Al-Ghazali. Selection from Return of the Pharaoh: Memoir in Nasir's Prison

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## **Eighth Week: Defenders of Tradition**

*Monday, October 24:* Abul Hassan Ali Nadwi. Western Civilization: Islam and Muslims, pp. 143-199.

*Wednesday, October 26:* Shaykh Yusuf Al-Qaradawi. Interview (from Between Jihad and Salam: Profiles in Islam)



Al-Qaradawi

## **Ninth Week: Islamic Self-Criticism in Turkey and Tunis**

*Monday, October 31:* Namik Kemal. "And Ask their Counsel in the Matter"; Ziya Gokalap. "Islam and Modern Civilization"; Halide Edib. "Turkey faces West" (from Modernist Islam)

*Wednesday, November 2:* Rachid Al-Ghannouchi. "Secularism in the Arab Maghreb" (from Islam and Secularism in the Middle East); "Shaping the Islamist Movement" (from Middle East Affairs Journal)



Mernissi

## **Tenth Week: Islamic Feminisms**

*Monday, November 7:* Leila Ahmad. Women and Gender in Islam, pp. 127-167; 235-248; *Optional Reading:* Amina Wadud. Qur'an and Women, pp. 1-43

*Wednesday, November 9:* Fatima Mernissi. Veil and the Male Elite, pp. 25-61; Asma Barlas. Believing Women in Islam, pp. 93-128.

## **Eleventh Week: Transcending Modernity Vs. Traditionalism**



Iqbal

*Monday, November 14:* Muhammad Iqbal. Islam as a Political and Moral Ideal; Introduction to Secrets of the Self

*Wednesday, November 16:* Seyyed Hossein Nasr. Islam and the Plight of Modern Man



Nasr

## **Twelfth Week: Enjoy the Break!**

*Monday, November 21:* No Class (AAR)

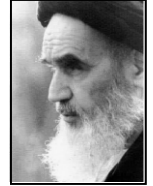
*Wednesday, November 23:* Thanksgiving.

## **Thirteenth Week: Iran's Islamic Revolution**

*Monday, November 28:* Ayatollah Khomeini. "The Pillars of an Islamic State"; "The Necessity of Islamic Government" (from Modernist and Fundamentalist

Debates in Islam)

*Wednesday, November 30:* Ali Shari'ati. Marxism and Other Western Fallacies, pp. 32-96.



Khomeini



Shari'ati

## **Fourteenth Week: Contemporary Islamic Modernism**

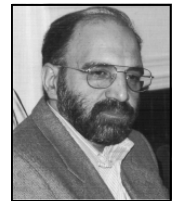
*Monday, December 5:* Fazlur Rahman. Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition, pp. 15-42; 130-162.

*Wednesday, December 7:* Abdolkarim Soroush. "The Evolution and Devolution of Religious Knowledge" (from Liberal Islam)

## **Fifteenth Week: Progressive Islam**

*Monday, December 12:* Farid Esack. Qur'an, Liberation and Pluralism (chapters 3 and 4)

*Wednesday, December 14:* Fethullah Gulen. Selections from Advocate of Dialogue.



Soroush



Ghannouchi



Gulen



Esack



Nadwi



Ahmad Khan



Edib