Modern Islamic Thought (Undergraduate) Syllabus – Fall 2012

MODERN ISLAMIC THOUGHT
Undergraduate Syllabus
POS 4931/Section 2729
REL 4367/Section 2425
Fall 2012
Tuesdays 8th-9th periods (3:00 - 4:55)
Anderson 19
Thursdays 9th period (4:05: 4:55 pm)
Anderson 21

Course Description

The Muslim world extends from Africa, both Northern and sub-Saharan, to Southeast Asia. There are over forty-three majority Muslim countries and there are sizeable Muslim minorities in another twenty countries. Muslims are significant in number in many European countries as well as here in the United States. There are approximately one billion Muslims in the world, making it the second largest global religion. The size and geographical expanse of the Muslim world and its impact on global, political, social, and economic structures makes it of great importance to the Western world; this was even prior to the events of September 11th and the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq. These seminal events plus the loss of Iraqi and American lives in that brutal conflict and the continued deadly toll on Afghani and US citizens in this on-going war have heightened U.S. citizens’ awareness of this region and the religious beliefs of many of the inhabitants in these countries. Recent events including the issue of Iranian nuclear capabilities and their threat to Israel and the possibility of war between these two countries have increased the divisions between “Islam and the West”. The United States has imposed the tightest sanctions on Iran ever imposed on a country, ratcheting up the tensions between our county and Iran. After 9/11 and the rise of Al-Qaida, Americans asked: “Why do they hate us” as they watched in amazement (via the nightly news), as representatives of Al-Qaida, the Taliban and other Muslims extremists groups hurled invective after invective against the “Great Satan” in the West. Much has happened in the Arab Muslim world in the last year or two. The so-called Arab Spring, led by mostly young people across the Arab world who have demonstrated, suffered beatings, torture, jailings and even death while calling for freedom, democracy and human rights, caught U.S. and European elected officials and the public off guard. No one knew what to make of the people’s overthrow of long standing “elected” dictators such as Muanmar Gaddafi (head of Libya for 42 years), Hosni Mubarak (head of Egypt for 30 years) and Zine El Abidine Ben Ali. (head of Tunisia for 24 years). Politicians in the West do not know what to make of the rise to power of the Muslim Brotherhood and related groups in many of those countries who have overthrown their tyrants. The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood’s rise to power is the most watched here in the U.S. given the importance of Egypt to the Region and to U.S. and Israeli interests.

All of the above and more have the pundits and politicians greatly concerned about what is happening in the Islamic world. The interconnectedness of our lives with people in the Muslim world makes it imperative for us as educated citizens to have an understanding of Islam, the Muslim world and the “Islamic resurgence” (which really began in the early part of the twentieth century), Modern Islamic Thought, and the major Muslim thinkers who have shaped and are developing this thought today.

COURSE GOALS:

- Learn the basics of the Islamic Religion including the history of the Prophet Muhammad, the role of the Qur’an, the Sunnah of the Prophet, the Hadith, and the Shari’ah or Islamic Law.
- Learn about the Islamic religion’s expansion from Arabia in the 7th Century to become an empire that spread from the Pyrenees to the Himalayas in less than one hundred years after the death of the Prophet Muhammad.
- Gain knowledge of the modern history (1800 to the present) of the Islamic World with a focus on the Arab world.
- Obtain an understanding of the crisis in Islamic history and Muslim identity caused by the demise of the various Muslim Empires (the Moghul, the Qajar and Ottoman) and the subsequent European Colonization of Muslim lands in the 18th, 19th and the early 20th Centuries.
- Obtain an understanding of modern Muslim thought as expressed by some of its prominent intellectuals, such as Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, Muhammad Abduh, Sayyid Quth, and others of the modern era through analysis of their writings, their reactions to modernity and Western domination and their institutional responses.
- Obtain an understanding of the sources and inspiration of the Islamic resurgence and the thought that has fueled it.
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- Get an appreciation of the relationship of the Islamic religion to twentieth and twenty-first century Muslim political thought and some of the important thinkers such as Osama bin Laden, Hassan Nasrallah, Tariq Ramadan and others of today.

- Attain knowledge of the development of modern, and current political and social movements that are labeled Fundamentalist, Progressive, Feminist and an understanding of the impetus behind the growing contemporary “political Islam” phenomena.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND PERCENTAGES OF YOUR GRADE:

Requirements: This is a reading intensive and research course.

Some of your work will be done in small groups on a topic you will select early in the term and continue working on throughout the semester

1). Attendance and active participation in your group and class discussion. 10% We are going to cover a lot of ground in a concentrated amount of time. Therefore each class meeting is very important.

2). This is a reading and writing intensive class.

Each person is expected to read each assignment and be able to actively participate in our discussions of these readings. Each undergraduate student will write 4 Reaction Papers to assigned readings during the course of the term. Additionally each student will do one oral presentation of the assigned readings for a class period. An outline or synopsis of your oral presentation is to be distributed to the class when you make your oral report. It can be done as a Power-Point presentation, or as a lecture with either a printed or an on-line hand-out. In other classes students have used YouTube clips or other video or audio materials during their presentation. Please make your oral presentations as interesting and thought provoking as possible. (This presentation along with the instructor’s comments on the readings will serve as the basis for our weekly discussions). Each student will select the four readings you want to write your four reaction papers on and select one of those four dates for your oral presentation also. I will ask you to give me in writing your four dates early in the semester; the specific deadline for these dates to be turned in will be listed on the Course Outline that will be given to you in our 2nd class meeting. I will compile and circulate the master list of dates when each of you will write your Reaction Papers and the date on which you will facilitate our class discussion for the class. The four papers and your oral presentation with handout will account for 40% of your grade.

3). Each student will participate in small (2 or more persons) research projects on a range of topics that can include: Modern Islamic Thinkers, important Islamic Revivalist Organizations, the Arab Spring, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, important Muslim thinkers or other topic related to modern Islamic thought. Examples of persons or organizations you could focus upon include: 1) Jamal Ad-Din al-Afghani, 2) Shaykh Muhammad Abd al-Wahhab, 3) The Muslim Brotherhood, 4) Sayyid Abu A’la Mawdudi, 5) Jama’at –I Islami, 6) Ayman al-Zawahri; 7) the Al-Qaida Network; 8) Hamas; 9) Hezbollah; 10) Osama bin Laden. People will sign up for one of these groups in the early part of the semester. (As I am sure that some of these people are unknown to some of you, I suggest that you look them up on the web early in the term so that you make an intelligent decision about which of these individuals or organizations interest you the most.) This will culminate in each of you writing a 10 page (minimum) Research Paper on your portion of the Research Project. Members of these small groups are to exchange phone numbers and e-mail addresses so that you can be in touch with one another outside of class regarding your project. You will have the first meeting of your research group during class early in the term. Dates for the first meeting of your groups and subsequent in class meetings will be listed on the Course Outline. Each group will prepare an in depth written report on their topic with each member of the group being responsible for writing some specific subset of the overall project, which will be graded. (These are individual papers but as a group you should decide on who will research what particular part of the group’s topic.) The group will make an oral presentation on their research toward the end of the term with a written synopsis of your research to be distributed to the class at the time of each group’s oral presentation. It is my hope that you will meet periodically and communicate regularly via e-mail with each other about your projects. This project (the research, individual written segments {minimum 10 pages}, & oral presentation with handout) will count for 40% of your grade - a substantial portion.

4). Students are to participate in at least one extra class activity during the semester. For those who have never been to a mosque, we will plan a date for a visit to the al-Hoda or The Islamic Center of Gainesville mosque as a class for a Jumah (Friday prayer service) during the term. We will select a Friday that is most convenient for everyone in the class to attend. I will circulate a sheet with possible Friday dates to see which one is best for the most of us. (The Jumah services are held at 1:30 pm on Fridays.) If this presents a problem because of class or work schedules, please speak to me about this.
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outside of class. Often there are other events on campus or in the community related to Islam that might be of interest that can replace the class trip to the mosque for those with a time conflict. This class activity counts for 10% of your grade.

Summary of Requirements:

1) Active participation in your group and class discussion. 10%

2) Each student will write four reaction papers during the term, which will be graded and returned with written comments during the term. On the day of your oral presentation please present a synopsis of your reading in either hard-copy to be distributed in class or sent to me at least 24 hours in advance to distribute on-line via the class list. 40%

3) Small group project on a selected title with each member having a specific component on which to write a 10 page (minimum) research paper. Each member of the group will make an oral presentation in class with a 2 page synopsis of your research to be handed out at the time of your oral presentation in either hard-copy to be distributed in class or sent to me at least 24 hours in advance to distribute on-line via the class list to the class. 40%

4) Class trip to Jumah Service at the al Hoda Mosque or some other event related to Islam held on campus or in Gainesville. If you select to attend an event separately from the class, a one page written description of this event is required to get the credit. 10%.

Summary of requirements and percentage of your final grade:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Attendance and Active Participation in group</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Four Reaction Papers</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group Research Project and Paper</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class Trip</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
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Students with disabilities:

Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to me with your requests for specific accommodations.

Policy on Absences

Because of the importance of class attendance, Roll will be taken at each class. Only two unexcused absences are permitted before it impacts negatively upon your grade. All unexcused absences above the first one will decrease your grade by 5 points (Therefore an A becomes a A- etc). Arriving in class late can cause you to be recorded as absent for that day unless you have alerted me in advance that you will be late for a valid reason. Roll will be taken soon after class begins. Students who leave class without prior permission and a valid excuse to be determined before class by the instructor as valid will be marked absent even if your name appears on the earlier role taken that day. I will note on the role sheet that you left class before we dismissed officially.

Excused absences include:

a). **Serious illness.** You must have a note from your doctor written on her or his stationary from the University’s Infirmary saying that you were too ill to attend class on the specific date(s) that you missed. Also serious illness of a close family member (mother, father, child, sibling, grandparents) that requires your assistance verified on a doctor’s stationary will be considered as an excused absence.

b). **Death of a close family member** whose funeral or other service you attend that is certified by a letter from the funeral director or religious official who handled your family member’s service. **This must be on official stationary from the funeral home or the religious official.**

c). **Attendance and participation in university activities**, i.e. choirs, debating teams, sports teams, etc. Please inform the instructor at the beginning of the term of your membership in these activities and your expected days of absence. I need official documentation of your membership and confirmation from the university official advising the group of your scheduled absence on official stationary with a phone number. Also graduating seniors who have interviews for jobs, internships and the like will be excused with official papers confirming such meetings.
Please be responsible and let me know about other problems not on this list that might have caused you to be absent. Let’s discuss any problems with your assignments early in term before they become big problems. I am here for you and want to be helpful in any way that I can. TALK TO ME AND LET ME KNOW IF THERE IS A PROBLEM! I WANT TO HELP!!!!

**Required texts (available at the University of Florida Bookstore)**

(Please call ahead to see if our books are in)

Or purchase them via On-Line Books Sellers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text No.</th>
<th>Title: THE MODERN MIDDLE EAST: A HISTORY</th>
<th>Author: JAMES L. GELVIN</th>
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<tr>
<td>ISBN: 15</td>
<td>Publisher: OXFORD U.P.</td>
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<td>Edition: LATEST</td>
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<th>Text No.</th>
<th>Title: ISLAM IN TRANSITION: MUSLIM PERSPECTIVES</th>
<th>Author: JOHN J. DONOHUE &amp; JOHN ESPOSITON</th>
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<tr>
<th>Text No.</th>
<th>Title: PROGRESSIVE MUSLIMS: ON JUSTICE, GENDER, &amp; PLURALISM</th>
<th>Author: OMID SAFI</th>
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<th>Text No.</th>
<th>Title: UNDERSTANDING ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISM</th>
<th>Author: SAYED KHATAB</th>
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<tr>
<th>Text No.</th>
<th>Title: Beyond ISLAM: A New Understanding of the Middle East</th>
<th>Author: Sami Zubaida</th>
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<td>Edition: Latest</td>
<td>This text is recommended</td>
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**Additional Texts of Interest**

These books are not required and are not at the bookstore but any owned by the library will be put on Reserve at Library West; in some cases selected chapters will be placed on electronic reserves.

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- Mahmood Mamdani, Good Muslim, Bad Muslim, 2004, Pantheon Books, ISBN 0-375-42285-4 hbk (it is out in pbk)

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10:00am – 11:00am and by appointment Prvt line -273-2940
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