

Religion 5937-0970 (22161)

Topics in Religious Studies: Muslim Thought and Practice, Part I (Fall 2019)

Time: Mondays 3-6 PM

Location: Anderson 0101

Instructor: Professor Ali Altaf Mian, Ph.D.

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Office: Anderson Hall 107-A

Office Hours: Tuesday/Thursday 11 AM-12:15 PM, and by appointment

Course Synopsis

This graduate seminar explores certain key textual sources, methodological approaches, and scholarly debates in early and middle Islam. Our key questions include: How have scholars historicized Islam in relation to the religious, cultural, and social landscapes of the ancient Near East and Late Antiquity? What are some modern-day implications, as well as challenges and opportunities, of historicizing Islam, the Qur'an, the Hadith corpus, and early Muslim thought and ritual? What are some productive theoretical frames for studying the diversity of the Islamic scholarly tradition and its key thematic clusters and socio-political concerns? How did pre-modern Muslims conceive of politics, the state, and "the public sphere"? How did the Shi'i-Sunni split crystallize into sectarianism? This seminar thus seeks to explore a constellation of concepts—as well as attendant key figures and social institutions—that define the *longue durée* of the Islamic discursive tradition. To that end, we will read recent scholarship that introduces us to the key textual sources, academic conversations, and methodological approaches in the study of early and middle Islam.

Required Texts:

- Jonathan E. Brockopp, *Muhammad's Heirs: The Rise of Muslim Scholarly Communities, 622-950* (Cambridge University Press, 2017)
- Wael B. Hallaq, *Shari'a: Theory, Practice, Transformations* (Cambridge University Press, 2009)
- Zahra Ayubi, *Gendered Morality: Classical Islamic Ethics of the Self, Family, and Society* (Columbia University Press, 2019)
- Joel Blecher, *Said the Prophet of God: Hadith Commentary Across a Millenium* (UC Press, 2018)
- Cyrus Ali Zargar, *The Polished Mirror: Storytelling and the Pursuit of Virtue in Islamic Philosophy and Sufism* (Oneworld, 2017)

Assignments/Grade Breakdown:

Attendance and Participation—15% (150 points)

Your prompt attendance and active participation in class discussions are vital. I encourage each student to come prepared to discuss his/her/their critical commentary in class, and to engage the observations and questions of others. You can miss a single class without penalty. Each additional absence will reduce 50 points from your final

grade, unless the absence is excused, for which you need to furnish documentation. Please be on time.

Critical Commentaries on Weekly Readings 25% (250 points)

Students are expected to post their critical commentaries (ranging from 500-700 words) to Canvas by noon on Monday. This will give me enough time to read your responses and to think about your questions as posed in your critical commentaries. Each critical commentary is worth 50 points. Your grade in this category will be based on your top 5 commentaries. You cannot submit a commentary on the day that you are also presenting on the reading. An ideal critical commentary should include the following elements:

- identification of sources and modes of reasoning
- analyses of main points/arguments
- critical observations regarding the argument and/or methodologies and sources
- reflections about how it relates to your own research
- questions

Presentation on a Reading—10% (100 points)

Please sign up to make a 15-minute presentation on a reading. Your presentation will not only summarize the reading for us, but will also set the agenda for the ensuing discussion.

Presentation on an Orientalist—15% (150 points)

“Islamic studies” as a field of inquiry and knowledge production is indebted to the work done by modern European scholars who studied the Orient. While our assigned readings in this course represent the latest methodologies and trends in the field, it is important for us to have some knowledge of the important scholars and scholarship that preceded us. We will therefore spend a day observing how different orientalist “constructed” Islam as an object of study. Each presentation will be around 10-15 minutes, followed by 5-7 minutes of Q&A.

Montgomery Watt: _____

Annemarie Schimmel: _____

Wadad Kadi: _____

Patricia Crone: _____

Marshal Hodgson: _____

Franz Rosenthal: _____

Louis Massignon: _____

Presentation on Final Paper—5 % (50 points)

On Monday 2 December you will make 15-minute presentations on your final papers. Please use this opportunity to workshop your papers, and to get constructive feedback from me and your peers.

Final Paper—30% (300 points)

Your final papers need to use Chicago style and must be between 6000-8000 words.

Each student will have a meeting with me to discuss this assignment. This meeting must be a month in advance of the due date.

Grading Scale

Score	Percent	Grade	Grade Points
934-1000	93.4-100	A	4.00
900-933	90.0-93.3	A-	3.67
867-899	86.7-89.9	B+	3.33
834-866	83.4-86.6	B	3.00
800-833	80.0-83.3	B-	2.67
767-799	76.7-79.9	C+	2.33
734-766	73.4-76.6	C	2.00
700-733	70.0-73.3	C-	1.67
667-699	66.7-69.9	D+	1.33
634-666	63.4-66.6	D	1.00
600-633	60.0-63.3	D-	0.67
0-599	0-59.9	E	0.00

Late work will not be accepted. Students should arrange with the instructor for makeup material. If you require an extension on an assignment, please email me a day in advance.

Class Demeanor

Students are expected to arrive to class on time and behave in a manner that is respectful to the instructor and to fellow students. Please avoid the use of cell phones and restrict eating to outside of the classroom. Opinions held by other students should be respected in discussion, and conversations that do not contribute to the discussion should be held at minimum, if at all. The use of laptops or tables is only allowed for purpose of note-taking.

Course Evaluations

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

Students Requiring Accommodations

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be

presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

University Honesty Policy

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Honor Code (<https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or TAs in this class.

Counseling and Wellness Center

Contact information for the Counseling and Wellness Center:

<http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx>, 392-1575; and the University Police Department: 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies.

Schedule:

Monday August 26—“Introduction”

Monday September 2 (No Class/Labor Day)

Monday September 9—Brockopp, *Muhammad’s Heirs*

Monday September 16—Hallaq, *Shari’a*, Introduction and Part I

Monday September 23—Hallaq, *Shari’a*, Part II

Monday September 30—Student Presentations on Orientalists

Monday October 7—Ash Geissinger and Kecia Ali

Monday October 14—Zahra Ayubi, *Gendered Morality*

Monday October 21—Joel Blecher, *Said the Prophet of God*

Monday October 28—Zargar, *The Polished Mirror*, Introduction and Part I

Monday November 4—Zargar, *The Polished Mirror*, Part II and Conclusion

Monday November 11 (No Class/Veterans Day)

Monday November 18—Hallaq, *Shari’a*, Part III

Monday November 25 (No Class/AAR Annual Meeting)

Monday December 2—Student Final Paper Presentations

Final Papers Due to me by Saturday 12/14 (by midnight)