

**New Approaches to Islam and Muslim Societies after Orientalism
Fall 2018**

**RLG 5937, section 2H07
AFS 6905, section 174C**

Meeting Time & Location:

Wed., periods 9–11, 4.05–7.05 pm, Anderson 0013

Instructor: Benjamin Soares

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Office hours: Wed., 1–3 pm & by appointment

Course Description:

The main objective of this graduate seminar will be to critically examine some of the major contemporary approaches to the study of Islam and Muslim societies in their complexity and diversity. After considering how Islam and Muslim societies have been studied in past scholarship, we will focus most of our attention on developments in recent scholarship in Islamic studies, history, and anthropology that one might characterize as post-Orientalist in orientation. Through the close reading of texts in which various contemporary theoretical models and assumptions have been applied to different thematic areas, including the study of Islamic education, intellectual traditions, law, Islamic religious practice, religious encounters, politics, and public life more generally, we will assess such approaches to the study and understanding of Islam and Muslim societies past and present.

Course Objectives:

1. To map out the contemporary academic field of the study of Islam and Muslim societies;
2. To identify and critically assess different theoretical approaches and assumptions in the study of Islam and Muslim societies;
3. To provide experience in the writing and presentation of critical commentary on the field of Islam and Muslim societies.

Requirements and Format:

The seminar is organized around class discussions based on the weekly assigned readings. After Week 2, we will usually read a monograph per week. Since this is a small advanced seminar, active and engaged participation is required. Students will make presentations and help to lead discussions.

Students will write 8 critical commentary papers (350–500 words) on the readings and in consultation with the instructor develop a specific program of writing related to their particular interests and needs. One option is to write a research paper around a theme related to the course. Another option is to negotiate with the instructor a plan of work that gets one closer to preliminary examination preparation.

In addition to the critical commentary papers and participation in the seminar discussions, students will meet at least once with the instructor, make oral presentations, write a final paper/writing assignment proposal, and workshop the paper/writing assignment proposal during the seminar.

Method of Evaluation:

- Regular, active participation in seminar discussions (15% of the final grade)
- Class presentations and leading of discussions (15%)
- Critical commentary papers on readings: 8 papers (350-500 words each) (30%)
- Research paper (6,000 to 7,500 words) or other agreed-upon written work (40%)

Final grades will be computed on this scale: A = 94-100%; A- = 90-93%; B+ = 87-89%; B = 84-86%; B- = 80-83%; C+ = 77-79%; C = 74-76%; C- = 70-73%; D+ = 67-69%; D = 64-66%; D- = 60-63%; F = <60%

Required Texts:

The following **books** are available (for purchase):

- Deeb, Lara and Mona Harb. 2013. *Leisurely Islam: Negotiating Geography and Morality in Shi'ite South Beirut*. Princeton.
- Devji, Faisal. 2005. *Landscapes of the Jihad: Militancy, Morality, Modernity*. Hurst/Cornell.
- Green, Nile. 2015. *Terrains of Exchange: Religious Economies of Global Islam*. Oxford.
- Hoesterey, James. 2015. *Rebranding Islam: Piety, Prosperity, and a Self-Help Guru*. Stanford.
- Lacroix, Stéphane. 2011. *Awakening Islam: The Politics of Religious Dissent in Contemporary Saudi Arabia*. Harvard.
- Mittermaier, Amira. 2011. *Dreams that Matter: Egyptian Landscapes of the Imagination*. California.
- Salomon, Noah. 2016. *For Love of the Prophet: An Ethnography of Sudan's Islamic State*. Princeton.
- Taneja, Anand Vivek. 2018. *Jinnealogy: Time, Islam, and Ecological Thought in the Medieval Ruins of Delhi*. Stanford.
- Ware, Rudolph. 2014. *The Walking Qur'an: Islamic Education, Embodied Knowledge, and History in West Africa*. UNC Press.
- Zaman, Muhammad Qasim. 2002. *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam: Custodians of Change*. Princeton.

SCHEDULE**Week 1 (8/22): Introduction & Orientation****Week 2 (8/29): Rethinking the Study of Islam and Muslim Societies**

****First critical commentary paper due (in class)****

- Asad, Talal. 1986. *The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam* (pp. 1-22). Center for Contemporary Arab Studies, Georgetown University.
- Ahmed, Shahab. 2017. "Introduction: How does Truth Happen?" in *Before Orthodoxy: The Satanic Verses in Early Islam* (pp. 1-10). Harvard.
- Voll, John O. 1994. "Islam as a Special World-System." *Journal of World History* 5(2): 213-26.
- Ernst, Carl W. and Richard C. Martin. 2010. "Introduction," in *Rethinking Islamic Studies: From Orientalism to Cosmopolitanism* (pp. 1-15). South Carolina.

Supplementary reading:

- Ahmed, Shahab. 2016. *What is Islam? The Importance of Being Islamic* (pp. 3-109). Princeton.
- Said, Edward W. 1978. *Orientalism*. Basic.

Eickelman, Dale F. 1982. "The Study of Islam in Local Contexts." *Contributions to Asian Studies* 17:1-16.

Week 3 (9/5): Scholarly Traditions

Zaman, Muhammad Qasim. 2002. *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam: Custodians of Change*. Princeton.

Week 4 (9/12): Guest lecture, Benedikt Pontzen

Week 5 (9/19): Education & Embodiment

Ware, Rudolph. 2014. *The Walking Qur'an: Islamic Education, Embodied Knowledge, and History in West Africa*. University of North Carolina Press.

Week 6 (9/26): Islam & Globalization

Green, Nile. 2015. *Terrains of Exchange: Religious Economies of Global Islam*. Oxford.

Week 7 (10/3): Sufism & Islamic Revival

Mittermaier, Amira. 2011. *Dreams that Matter: Egyptian Landscapes of the Imagination*. California.

Week 8 (10/10): Lived Islam

Taneja, Anand Vivek. 2018. *Jinnealogy: Time, Islam, and Ecological Thought in the Medieval Ruins of Delhi*. Stanford.

Week 9 (10/17): Media & Globalization

Hoesterey, James. 2015. *Rebranding Islam: Piety, Prosperity, and a Self-Help Guru*. Stanford.

Week 10 (10/24): Islamism

Lacroix, Stéphane. 2011. *Awakening Islam: The Politics of Religious Dissent in Contemporary Saudi Arabia*. Harvard.

Week 11 (10/31): Jihad/Violence

Devji, Faisal. 2005. *Landscapes of the Jihad: Militancy, Morality, Modernity*. Hurst/Cornell.

Week 12 (11/7): The Islamic State

Salomon, Noah. 2016. *For Love of the Prophet: An Ethnography of Sudan's Islamic State*. Princeton

Week 13 (11/14): Youth & Leisure

Deeb, Lara & Mona Harb. 2013. *Leisurely Islam: Negotiating Geography and Morality in Shi'ite South Beirut*. Princeton.

Week 14 (11/21): No Class, Thanksgiving

Week 15 (11/28): No Class, African Studies Association annual meeting in Atlanta

Week 16 (12/5): Presentations & Final Wrap Up

****Final paper/written work due by Thursday, December 6, 2018, 12 pm****

Policies, Rules, Expectations, and Resources:

1. **Attendance** is mandatory
2. Active discussion of the **readings** by each student during every meeting.
3. **Handing in Assignments:** Critical commentary papers and final writing assignments should be uploaded to elearning.
4. **Late Assignments:** You may receive an extension only in extraordinary circumstances and with prior approval from the instructor.
5. **Completion of All Assignments:** You must complete all written and oral work and fulfill the requirement for class participation in order to pass the course.
6. **Honor Code:** UF students are bound by the Honor Code (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>), and all students have agreed to follow this Code, meaning they will not give or receive unauthorized assistance in completing assignments.
7. **Course Evaluation:** Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>.
8. **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.