

**New Approaches to Islam and Muslim Societies after Orientalism  
Spring 2017**

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

**Meeting Time & Location:**

Mondays, periods 8 – 10, 3.00-6.00 pm, Matherly 251

**Instructor:** Benjamin Soares

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**Office hours:** Monday 11 am-1 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 classical social theory has been applied and used in the study of Islam and Muslim societies, 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. We will usually read a monograph or several articles 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 (10%) and leading of discussions (10%)
- Critical commentary papers on readings: 8 papers (350-500 words each) (25%)
- 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):

- 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.
- Mahmood, Saba. 2016. *Religious Difference in a Secular Age: A Minority Report*. Princeton.
- 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.
- Spiegel, Avi Max. 2015. *Young Islam: The New Politics of Religion in Morocco and the Arab World*. Princeton.
- 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.

**Additional readings** will be made available through e-Learning: <http://elearning.ufl.edu>.

**SCHEDULE**

**Week 1 (1/9): Introduction & Orientation**

**Week 2 (1/16): No class, Martin Luther King Day**

**Week 3 (1/23): 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.
- Eickelman, Dale F. 1982. "The Study of Islam in Local Contexts." *Contributions to Asian Studies* 17:1-16.
- Launay, Robert. 1992. "The One and the Many," in *Beyond the Stream: Islam and Society in a West African Town* (chapter 1, pp 1-35). California.
- 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 background reading:

Said, Edward W. 1978. *Orientalism*. Basic.

Hourani, Albert. 1991. *Islam in European Thought*. Cambridge.

**Week 4 (1/30): Intellectual Traditions**

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

**Week 5 (2/6): 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 (2/13): Islam & Globalization**

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

**Week 7 (2/20): Sufism & Islamic Revival**

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

**Week 8 (2/27): Lived Islam**

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

**Week 9 (3/6): Spring Break. No Class**

**Week 10 (3/13): Instructor away; guest lecture (TBA)**

**Week 11 (3/20): Political Secularism & Religious Minorities**

Mahmood, Saba. 2016. *Religious Difference in a Secular Age: A Minority Report*. Princeton.

**\*\*Critical commentary paper due (in class)\*\***

**Week 12 (3/27): Jihad/Violence**

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

**Week 13 (4/3): Islamism**

Spiegel, Avi Max. 2015. *Young Islam: The New Politics of Religion in Morocco and the Arab World*. Princeton.

**Week 14 (4/10): The Islamic State**

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

**Week 15 (4/17): Presentations & Final Wrap Up**

**\*\*Final paper/written work due by Monday, April 24, 2017, 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 should be handed in during the seminar. Put research papers/writing assignments in my mailbox in the Religion Department, 107 Anderson Hall.
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/](http://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.