

MODERN ISLAMIC THOUGHT

Graduate Syllabus

POS 6933-22E1

REL 5365-013G

Spring 2017

Tuesdays – 7th Period (1:55 PM-2:45 PM) – AND 32
Thursdays – 7th – 8th Periods (1:55-3:50 PM) – AND 32

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 2001 and the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq. These two seminal events plus the loss of Iraqi and American lives in those brutal conflicts have heightened U.S. citizens' awareness of this region and the religious beliefs of many of the inhabitants in these countries. While both of these wars were said to have concluded, the conflict continues unabated. Many say that the situation in both Afghanistan and Iraq are much worse now than they were before the U.S. Invasion. Recent events including the highly divisive issue of the Iranian-U.S. Nuclear Treaty deal tied into the perceived threat of Iran to Israel and the possibility of war between these two countries have increased the divisions within the US over Islam and the relationship between "Islam and the West". The rise of the so-called Islamic State (ISIS or ISIL) and its brutal seizure of vast swaths of Iraq and Syria in the name of creating an Islamic Caliphate have furthered the sense among many Westerners that Muslims are irrevocably anti-Western and anti-democratic. The "Islamic States" brutal tactics including videotaping of beheadings that are posted and beamed around the globe as well as their seizure of non-Muslim women and subjecting them to forced marriages and rape has only deepened many people's revulsion against Muslims and all things Islamic.

Perhaps even more alarming to many in the West is the “Islamic State’s” appeal to young Muslims in Australia, Europe and North America. The fact that hundreds of young Muslims – many of whom were born in Europe, Canada or the U.S. - are leaving their families and traveling to Iraq and Syria to join ISIS has their parents, former teachers, classmates and the authorities baffled. There is also the growing fear of sleeper cells embedded in the West who might plant bombs or carry out other acts of terror within their countries of origins. These fears are only heightened given the attacks in France, Belgium and Germany.

After the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on 9/11/2001 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. Rarely were there explanations given about the modern beginnings of the conflict between the Muslim world and the West with the colonization of huge swaths of Muslim lands by Europeans. Most Americans are unaware of the long anti-colonial struggles waged by Muslims against their European overlords. Without such knowledge, most Americans have no inkling of the origins of much of the modern antagonisms between Muslims and the West.

Additionally, much has happened in the Arab Muslim world in the last few years. The so-called “Arab Spring”, led by mostly young people across the Arab world who 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. It was said to have begun on December 17, 2010 in Tunisia when a street merchant, Mohammed Bouazizi burnt himself to death in protest over being disrespected and treated harshly by a female police officer. Incredibly, by the end of February 2012, authoritarian rulers had been forced from power in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Yemen, while others were teetering and holding onto their power. No one knew what to make of the people’s overthrow of long standing “elected” dictators such as Muammar 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). Many in the West hailed the Arab Spring as an indication that significant portions of the Arab-Muslim world wanted democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

But before the young reformers and their supporters could consolidate their movements into a political reality, repressive forces overtook their revolutions and returned most of these countries to authoritarian rule by military strongmen or worse. An example of this reality was the rise to power of the *Muslim Brotherhood*

and related groups in many of those countries who had overthrown their tyrants. The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood's rise to power was the most watched here in the U.S. given the importance of Egypt to the Region and to U.S. and Israeli interests. More shocking to some than the election of the Brotherhood in a fair and open election in Egypt was the brutal way Brotherhood officials were removed from office, 1000s of them slaughtered and/or sentenced to death and the seizing of power by another military strong man- General Abdel Fattah el-Sisi - while the world looked on in astonishment.

The flood of immigrants from Syria, Iraq, and beyond into Europe has rocked the West with fears of Muslim invasions. Some would say that President-Elect Donald Trump can credit his promise to stop all Muslim immigration into the U.S. and setting up a Registry for ALL Muslim living in the county as contributing to his winning the election. The terrorist attacks in Europe: France, Belgium and Germany as well as here in the U.S. have hardened many in the West against immigration.

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 the religion 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

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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 Qutb*, *Ayattolah Khomeini*, *Osama Bin Laden*, *Fatima Mernissi*, *Tariq Ramadan* 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.
- 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.

1). Attendance and **active** participation in class discussions. We are going to cover a lot of ground in a concentrated amount of time. Therefore, each class meeting is very important. The roll will be taken at each class. You are allowed **three unexcused absences without penalty**. Each unexcused absence after three will take 2 points off of your final grade for the semester. Excused absences include: 1). illness with a note from the infirmary or your private doctor on stationary saying that you were too ill to attend class on the day you were absent. 2). Death or serious illness of a close relative with documentation. 3). Member of a UF Sports Team, Band, Choir, Dance, Drama, Debating Team or other activity that required your

attendance (please let me know at the beginning of the class that you are a member and will need to be absent on certain dates), Job Interviews, etc.

2). **Reading and Writing Assignments**

2-A). **REQUIRED: Content Queries** - Each person is expected to read each assignment and be able to actively participate in our discussions of these readings. Each graduate student is to prepare four in depth written questions, quotes with your opinions on why these quotes were significant to you or your Reactions to the readings assigned for that class. You will e-mail these to the instructor on the day before the class meets by 8:00PM. [We meet on Tuesday and Thursdays this semester, therefore, on Monday by 8:00 PM and on Wednesday by 8:00PM, you are to e-mail your in depth questions, quotes saying why these quotes are important and/or your reactions to some significant part of the reading.] I will compile these and send them to the entire class on the morning of our class. Each student is to bring the compiled list to the class either on paper or in an electronic format that you can refer to during our class discussion. These Content Queries will be graded. They represent **20% of your grade.**

2- B). **REQUIRED: Reaction Papers** - Each graduate student will write **6 Reaction Papers** to the assigned readings during the course of the term. Additionally, each student will do two oral presentations 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 presentation of the assigned reading for that day. It can be done as a Power-Point presentation, or as a lecture with either a printed or an on-line hand-out. Each student will select the **six** readings assigned for a class period you want to write your **six reaction papers** on and select **two** of those six dates for your oral presentations also. I will ask you to give me in writing your six dates at the 3rd class of the semester. 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. The **six papers** and **your two oral presentations** with handouts will account for **40% of your grade.**

2-C). **REQUIRED: Research Paper** – Writing a **20 page (minimum) Research Paper** on a topic related to Modern Islamic Thought. **30% of your grade**

3). **REQUIRED: Outside class activity** – Each student is to participate in at least one extra class activity during the semester. For those who have never been to a mosque or would like to go with the class, 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 early in the semester. (The Jumah services are held at 1:30 pm on Fridays and are only one-hour long.) If this presents a problem because of class or work schedules, please speak to me about this outside of class.

Often there are numerous Muslim student sponsored 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) **Content Queries:** Four in depth questions, quotes with explanations, reactions to the readings that are to be e-mailed to me on the day before our class meets by 8:00 PM. These will be compiled and sent to the class by midnight the evening before our class meets. Each student is to bring the compiled list to class or have access via a digital source: phone, tablet, computer, etc. **20% of your grade**
- 2) Each graduate student will write **six** reaction papers during the term, which will be graded and returned with written comments during the term. **Two of these six papers will be presented in two Oral Presentations. On the days of your oral presentations, please present a synopsis of your reading in either hard-copy to be distributed in class or to be pulled up on video screen. 40% of your grade**
- 3) Each graduate student will **write a 20 page (minimum) research paper.** Additionally, each graduate student 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 to be pulled up on video screen. 30% of your grade**

4) Class trip to Jumah Service at the al Hoda Mosque, the Islamic Center of Gainesville 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% of your grade.**

Summary of requirements and percentages of your final grade:

Content Queries	20%
Four Reaction Papers	40%
Research Project and Paper	30%
Class Trip	10%
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Total	100%

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 three unexcused absences are permitted before it impacts negatively upon your grade. All unexcused absences above three will decrease your grade by 2 points. Being late repeatedly 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 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 or** 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

Titles of REQUIRED Books for this Class:

- 1). James L. Gavin, *The Modern Middle East: A History*, Fourth Edition, New York, Oxford University Press, 2016. ISBN 978-0-19-021886-7. This is the first book we will read. Please get the 4th edition.
- 2). Robert D. Lee, *RELIGION and POLITICS in the MIDDLE EAST: Identity, Institutions, and Attitudes*, Second Edition, Boulder, Colorado, Westview Press, 2014. ISBN: 978-0-8133-4873-5.

3). Roxanne L. Euben and Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *Princeton Readings in Islamist Thought: Texts and Contexts from al-Banna to Bin Laden*, Princeton, Princeton U. P., 2009. ISBN: 978-0-691-13588-5

4). Sayed Khatab, *Understanding ISLAMIC Fundamentalism: The Theological and Ideological Basis of Al-Qaida's Political Tactics*, Cairo & New York: The American University in Cairo Press, 2011. IS

There will be additional required readings sent as pdfs via the Class List

Gwendolyn Zoharah Simmons, Ph.D. Instructor

Office Hours: **Tuesdays: 3:00 – 5:00 PM & Thursdays: 4:00-5:00 PM** and by appointment.

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