

INTRODUCTION TO ISLAM (FALL 2020)

Religion 2362 Location: ONLINE

Meeting Times:

Lecture: Tuesday/Thursday 9:35-10:25 AM

Friday Break-Out Sessions:

19879-2560: 9:35-10:25 AM

19880-4227: 10:40-11:30 AM

19881:4231: 12:50-1:40 PM

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Required Texts

- Daniel W. Brown, *A New Introduction to Islam* (order via UF Bookstore or an online book vendor)
- Elif Shafak, *The Forty Rules of Love: A Novel of Rumi* (order via an online book vendor)
- Jokha Alharthi, *Celestial Bodies: A Novel* (order via an online book vendor)

Course Synopsis

This course introduces you to the historical and contemporary dimensions of Islam. We will begin by examining how Islam emerged in conversation with Christianity and Judaism, as well as other traditions of the Near East. We will then study the historical formation of Islam as both empire and faith tradition, paying particular attention to questions of knowledge, power, and

Welcome, **GATORS!**
Don't Forget to Introduce
Yourself on Canvas
(First Discussion Item is
"Introductions")
~due by end of week one~

pleasure. The “Islam” of this course differs not only from the “Islam” of the mainstream media but also from the “Islam” of a lecture in a seminary or a tutorial in a mosque. In this course, we employ a critical-historical method to survey Islam and differences among Muslims on questions of doctrine, practice, and politics. To examine a religious tradition historically and critically means

- to study how this tradition’s religionists describes their beliefs and rituals **but also** how it is described by others who do not profess its truth
- to study how this tradition relates to other traditions (this critical move enables us to decenter any tradition’s exceptionalism)
- to study how it has changed over time **but also** how it has endured over time (this critical move helps us to avoid essentialism while constructing a helpful, and accurate historical narrative)
- to study this tradition’s internal diversity without privileging any one expression as true or orthodox
- to become reflexive about ourselves and the political frameworks that might be coloring our fair-minded study of cultural and religious differences

The last point connects to the need for empathy in the study of religion. In other words, we need to study “religions” as living traditions that are rich reservoirs of imagination for those who adhere to them. The kind of historical-critical methodology we shall employ in this course is therefore not antithetical to cultivating empathy. To say it differently, we should be committed to trying to understand traditions different from our own in terms that also make sense to their adherents. The three texts chosen for this course attend to this dual need to be critical but also to be imaginative and empathetic. The central resource for this course is a textbook, namely, Daniel Brown’s *A New Introduction to Islam*, which does a good job of placing Islam in a critical-historical framework. To understand how Islam matters for Muslims in their everyday life, we will also read and discuss the following two novels: Elif Shafak’s *The Rules of Love: A Novel of Rumi* and Jokha Alharthi’s *Celestial Bodies: A Novel*.

General Education Objectives

This course is a Humanities (H) and International (N) subject area course in the UF General Education Program. **Humanities courses** provide instruction in the history, key themes, principles, terminology, and theory or methodologies used within a humanities discipline or the humanities in general. Students will learn to identify and to analyze the key elements, biases and influences that shape thought. These courses emphasize clear and effective analysis and approach issues and problems from multiple perspectives. **International courses** promote the

development of students' global and intercultural awareness. Students examine the cultural, economic, geographic, historical, political, and/or social experiences and processes that characterize the contemporary world, and thereby comprehend the trends, challenges, and opportunities that affect communities around the world. Students analyze and reflect on the ways in which cultural, economic, political, and/or social systems and beliefs mediate their own and other people's understanding of an increasingly connected world.

How Will We Achieve These Objectives?

- Reading about the history of Islam as a tradition of faith and ritual, and the diversity of its expressions in all periods of its history, but especially the modern period
- Examining and correcting popular misperceptions about Islam
- Assessing how knowledge production about Islam and Muslims is informed by various disciplinary locations and political motivations
- Engaged Discussions (via Canvas and during Zoom meetings)
- Writing Analytical Essays about historical dimensions and lived experiences
- Completing a Film Review Essay

Learning Outcomes

At the end of this course, students will be expected to have achieved the following learning outcomes in *content*, *communication*, and *critical thinking*:

- **Content:** Students will have knowledge of the long history of Islam—its beginnings in Near Eastern religious, social, political, economic, and cultural settings, its evolution as a multi-faceted religious tradition, its entanglements in various political designs, its relationship with its religious and political others, the different ways in which Muslim thought and practice has changed in modernity, particularly in relation to European colonialism, and some of the key challenges Muslims face in today's world.
- **Communication:** Students will be able to communicate their reasoned perspectives to others with clarity and openness to dialogue, in both speech and writing. They will be encouraged to listen attentively and compassionately to others and to consider a wide range of perspectives before making up their own minds.
- **Critical Thinking:** Students will be able to examine their own as well as others' biases when it comes to speaking and thinking about religion. They will try their best to avoid generalizing statements, reductive views, stereotyping gestures, and essentialist claims. They will be able to assess the rhetorical value of different types of evidence and sources.

How Do I Come to Class?

Please note that while this class is 100% online, you still have to attend lectures via Zoom. There are no pre-recorded lectures. All lectures and discussion meetings will take place on Zoom. Please make sure you have access to stable internet and a computer.

Instructions to Come to Class via Zoom:

For the Tuesday/Thursday lectures, please go to this class's page in your E-Learning (Canvas) account. Click on "Zoom Conferences." Here you will find a list of upcoming meetings. Click on "Join" to attend class.

For the Friday sessions, Mr. Schuster will be sending you invites each week by Thursday midnight.

NOTE: For your online safety and security, I am limiting participants to "authenticated users." That means you must access Zoom via your .ufl email and not another personal email. However, for your convenience, I have not required a password for each session. This strategy enables us to have safe, secure meetings but without the nuisance of entering a different password each time.

For more on Zoom, visit:

<https://elearning.ufl.edu/zoom/>

What's on E-Learning (Canvas)?

Canvas is essential for this course. The Canvas website for this course has been designed keeping your convenience in mind. All assignments have already been created. Moreover, the recurring assignments in this course, namely, the discussion board posts due before each class meeting on Tuesdays and Thursdays, have been grouped together for your convenience. You will find instructions to complete each assignment by clicking on the turn-in page for that assignment. Periodically, I will post in-class resources in Files, after the lecture.

Communication and Interaction

Please email me at alimian@ufl.edu or send me a message from your Canvas inbox if you have any questions or concerns about this class. I welcome the opportunity to set up individual zoom meetings with you in lieu of holding office hours in my physical office on campus.

During our Zoom lectures, Mr. Schuster will serve as moderator. To ask a question or make a comment, you can either use the "hand raise" button or send a private message in the chat box to Mr. Schuster. He will then let me know that you have a question or a comment. Please do not message each other during class via Zoom.

You do not have to turn on your video camera, but are welcome to do so if you'd like.

Assignments and Grade Breakdown

This course is based on a 1000-point scale. Here is the breakdown of those 1000 points:

- **Discussion Board Posts—400 points**

There will be 27 opportunities for you to submit a discussion board post. Each post is worth 20 points. The lowest 7 scores will be dropped. While you can get a perfect score in this category by submitting only 20 posts, I encourage you to complete each post, since these are short "reactions" and "questions" on the assigned reading and help us to have an effective class discussion. You will find instructions for each post when you click to turn it in. The discussion board posts are **due by 8:00 AM before each class meeting on**

Tuesday and Thursday. No Late Work will be accepted and no extensions given in this category.

This assignment will help us to ask highlight the key ideas within a chapter and to ask critical questions about the material. I will grade your posts according to the following rubric:

19-20 points: The post poses a compelling and substantial question the answer to which helps the entire class comprehend the text more fully. The post includes at least three polished sentences that touch on the three key terms provided in the prompt. These sentences are not mere summary, but show the student's critical and synthesizing skills.

14-18 points: The post poses a good question that needs to be addressed for the student but not for the class in general. The post includes at least three sentences that summarize the reading and touch on the three key terms provided in the prompt.

9-13 points: The post poses a question whose answer is found in the text. The post might have three sentences but they do not touch on the three terms provided in the prompt.

4-8 points: The post either lacks a question or three full sentences.

1-3: The post contains only a single sentence and/or incomprehensible sentences, or the content of the post is about another chapter.

0: Nothing Turned in

- **Friday Breakout Sessions—200 points**

- **Two Essays—300 points**

Each essay is worth 150 points

Guidelines for each essay assignment can be found on Canvas

If you need an extension of 24-hours, please email me. No Late Work will be accepted.

- **Film Review—100 points**

Guidelines for this assignment are on Canvas

If you need an extension of 24-hours, please email me. No Late Work will be accepted.

Grade Turn-Around:

Each week's discussion board posts will be graded by Sunday night of that week. The two essays and the film review will be graded within 10 days of the due date.

Accessing Your Grades: You can keep track of your grades by logging into Canvas and clicking on "Grades" in the panel on the left of your screen.

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	0-599	E	0.00

More information on grades and grading policies can be found here:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/>

Attendance and Participation

It is really important for you to come to each class via Zoom. The Tuesday/Thursday meetings are for lectures and the Friday breakout sessions are for discussions. However, many times on Tuesdays and Thursdays I will use the “breakout rooms” feature in Zoom to conduct short discussions. It is therefore vital for you to pay attention for the entirety of our 50-minute sessions. Mr. Schuster will take attendance on Zoom for all sessions.

MY ATTENDANCE POLICY: You can miss up to 4 sessions without penalty. For each additional session you miss, you will lose 50 points (that is, 5% of your grade).

Class Demeanor

Students are expected to join Zoom meeting ON TIME and avoid disruptive behavior. When posing your question or comment, please use courteous dialogue. Opinions held by other students should be respected in discussion.

Resources and Services

Writing Studio

<https://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/>

The Writing Studio is committed to helping University of Florida students and faculty meet their academic and professional goals by becoming better writers. We support independent learning and encourage scholarship by providing one-on-one consultations, workshops tailored to specific classes (graduate and undergraduate), and faculty retreats focusing on publishing original research. Students and faculty at all levels and in every discipline are welcome!

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:

<https://counseling.ufl.edu/about/>, 392-1575; and the University Police Department: 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies.

Course Evaluations

Students are expected to provide professional 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/>.

Schedule of Meetings and Assignment

WEEK ONE

September 1 Tuesday—Introductions, Basics Lecture

September 3 Thursday—Basics Lecture, continued.

September 4 Friday—Break-Out Session with Michael Schuster

WEEK TWO

September 8 Tuesday—Daniel W. Brown, *A New Introduction to Islam* (Chapter 1: Islam in Global Perspective)

September 10 Thursday—Brown, *A New Introduction to Islam* (Chapter 2: Arabia)

September 11 Friday—Break-Out Session with Michael Schuster

WEEK THREE

September 15 Tuesday—Brown, *A New Introduction to Islam* (Chapter 3: The Pre-Islamic Near East)

September 17 Thursday—Brown, *A New Introduction to Islam* (Chapter 4: The Life of Muhammad)

September 18 Friday—Break-Out Session with Michael Schuster

WEEK FOUR

September 22 Tuesday—Brown, *A New Introduction to Islam* (Chapter 5: The Qur'an)

September 24 Thursday—Brown, *A New Introduction to Islam* (Chapter 6: The Tradition Literature)

September 25 Friday—Break-Out Session with Michael Schuster

WEEK FIVE

September 29 Tuesday—Brown, *A New Introduction to Islam* (Chapter 7: The Conquests)

October 1 Thursday—Brown, *A New Introduction to Islam* (Chapter 8: Religion of Empire)

October 2 Friday—Break-Out Session with Michael Schuster

Film Review Due on Sunday October 4 at 11:59 PM

WEEK SIX

October 6 Tuesday—Brown, *A New Introduction to Islam* (Chapter 9: The Caliphate)

October 8 Thursday—Brown, *A New Introduction to Islam* (Chapter 10: Islamic Law)

October 9 Friday—Break-Out Session with Michael Schuster

WEEK SEVEN

October 13 Tuesday—Brown, *A New Introduction to Islam* (Chapter 11: Islamic Theology and Philosophy)

October 15 Thursday—Brown, *A New Introduction to Islam* (Chapter 12: Sufism)

October 16 Friday—Break-Out Session with Michael Schuster

WEEK EIGHT

October 20 Tuesday—Elif Shafak, *The Forty Rules of Love: A Novel of Rumi*, pgs. 1-103

October 22 Thursday—Shafak, *The Forty Rules of Love*, pgs. 104-146

October 23 Friday—Break-Out Session with Michael Schuster

WEEK NINE

October 27 Tuesday—Shafak, *The Forty Rules of Love*, pgs. 149-260

October 29 Thursday—Shafak, *The Forty Rules of Love*, pgs. 261-350

October 30 Friday—Break-Out Session with Michael Schuster

Essay 1 DUE on Sunday November 1 at 11:59 PM

WEEK TEN

November 3 Tuesday—Brown, *A New Introduction to Islam* (Chapter 13: Turks, Crusaders, and Mongols)

November 5 Thursday—Brown, *A New Introduction to Islam* (Chapter 14: Revival and Reform)

November 6 Friday—Break-Out Session with Michael Schuster

WEEK ELEVEN

November 10 Tuesday—Brown, *A New Introduction to Islam* (Chapter 15: Islam and the West)

November 12 Thursday—Brown, *A New Introduction to Islam* (Chapter 16: The Turbulent 20th Century)

November 13 Friday—Break-Out Session with Michael Schuster

WEEK TWELVE

November 17 Tuesday—Brown, *A New Introduction to Islam* (Chapter 17: Salafism)

November 19 Thursday—Brown, *A New Introduction to Islam* (Chapter 18: Islam in the Twenty-First Century)

November 20 Friday—Break-Out Session with Michael Schuster

WEEK THIRTEEN

November 24 Tuesday—Jokha Alharthi, *Celestial Bodies: A Novel*, pgs. 1-38

November 26 Thursday—NO CLASS (Thanksgiving Holiday)

November 27 Friday—NO CLASS (Thanksgiving Holiday)

WEEK FOURTEEN

December 1 Tuesday—Alharthi, *Celestial Bodies*, pgs. 39-162

December 3 Thursday—Alharthi, *Celestial Bodies*, pgs. 163-197

December 4 Friday—Break-Out Session with Michael Schuster

WEEK FIFTEEN

December 8 Tuesday—Alharthi, *Celestial Bodies*, pgs. 198-243

Essay 2 Due Sunday December 13 by 11:59 PM