

## INTRODUCTION TO ISLAM (FALL 2021)

**Religion 2362**

**Location: FLG 0230**

**Meeting Times:**

**Lecture:** Monday/Wednesday 9:35-10:25 AM

Friday Break-Out Sessions:

**19879-2560:** 9:35-10:25 AM—MAT 0114

**19880-4227:** 11:45-12:35 PM—MAT 0006

**19881:4231:** 12:50-1:40 PM—AND 0019

**Instructor: Professor Ali Altaf Mian, Ph.D.**

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Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays 10:35-11:25 AM or by appointment

**Teaching Assistant: Brahim Afrit**

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TA Office Hours: 11:45-12:35 PM

TA Office Location: Anderson Hall 009

### Required Texts

- Carl W. Ernst, *Following Muhammad: Rethinking Islam in the Contemporary World*
- Nile Green, *Global Islam: A Very Short Introduction*
- Elif Shafak, *The Forty Rules of Love: A Novel of Rumi*

\*All additional readings will be posted on Canvas.

### Course Synopsis

This course introduces you to the historical and contemporary dimensions of Islam. We will begin by examining how Islam is usually framed in contemporary Western media as well as how it relates to the broader history of the term, “religion.” We will then study the historical formation of Islam as both empire and faith tradition, paying particular attention to questions of knowledge, ethics, and spirituality. 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 adherents describe 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.

### 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

### 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.

### Communication and Interaction

Please email me at [alimian@ufl.edu](mailto: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 or meet with you in my Anderson Hall office during office hours.

### Assignments and Grade Breakdown

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

- **Midterm Exam—200 points**
- **Final Exam—300 points**
- **In-Class Writing Assignments and Attendance—300 points**
- **Friday Breakout Sessions—200 points**

### 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

More information on grades and grading policies can be found here:  
<https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/>

### **Attendance and Participation**

Class attendance is mandatory, and will be taken at the beginning of each class session. You can miss two lecture sessions and one Friday discussion session without penalty. Each additional unexcused absence will detract 50 points from your grade. Excused absences are consistent with university policies as listed in the undergraduate catalog (<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>) and require appropriate documentation. Class will begin and end on time. Five late arrivals (anything over 5 minutes) will be considered one absence.

### **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/](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.

#### ***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/scsr/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**

Monday August 23—Introduction

Wednesday August 25—Carl W. Ernst, *Following Muhammad*, Preface

Friday August 27—Devin J. Stewart, “faith,” and Shawkat M. Toorawa, “Pillars of Islam,” from *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Islamic Political Thought*

### **WEEK TWO**

Monday August 30—Ernst, *Following Muhammad*, Chapter 1: Islam in the Eyes of the West

Wednesday September 1—Ernst, *Following Muhammad*, Chapter 2: Approaching Islam in Terms of Religion

Friday September 3—Gerhard Bowering, “Muhammad,” from *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Islamic Political Thought*

### **WEEK THREE**

Monday September 6—No Class (Holiday)

Wednesday September 8—Ernst, *Following Muhammad*, Chapter 3: The Sacred Sources of Islam

Friday September 10—Ernst, *Following Muhammad*, Chapter 4: Ethics and Life in the World

### **WEEK FOUR**

Monday September 13—Ernst, *Following Muhammad*, Chapter 5: Spirituality in Practice

Wednesday September 15—Ernst, *Following Muhammad*, Chapter 6: Postscript

Friday September 17—Gerhard Bowering, “Qur’an,” from *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Islamic Political Thought*

### **WEEK FIVE**

Monday September 20—Devin J. Stewart, “shari‘a,” from *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Islamic Political Thought*

Wednesday September 22—“Primary Sources,” part I (in-class readings and exercises)

Friday September 24—“Primary Sources,” part II (in-class readings and exercises)

### **WEEK SIX**

Monday September 27—Roy Jackson, “Authority,” and Wadad Kadi and Aram A. Shahin, “Caliph, Caliphate,” from *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Islamic Political Thought*

Wednesday September 29—John Kelsay, “Jihad,” from *The Princeton Encyclopedia of*

*Islamic Political Thought*

Friday October 1—Scott C. Lucas, “Companions of the Prophet,” from *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Islamic Political Thought*

**WEEK SEVEN**

Monday October 4—Emad el-Din Shahin, “government,” from *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Islamic Political Thought*

Wednesday October 6—Roxanne L. Euben, “fundamentalism,” from *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Islamic Political Thought*

Friday October 8—Yohanan Friedmann, “minorities,” from *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Islamic Political Thought*

**WEEK EIGHT**

Monday October 11—Nile Green, *Global Islam*, Introduction and Chapter 1

Wednesday October 13—Green, *Global Islam*, Chapter 2

Friday October 15—Review for the Midterm Exam

**WEEK NINE**

Monday October 18—Nile Green, *Global Islam*, Chapter 3

Wednesday October 20—Green, *Global Islam*, Chapter 4 and Conclusion

Friday October 22—MIDTERM EXAM

**WEEK TEN**

Monday October 25—Elif Shafak, *The Forty Rules of Love*, pgs. 1-103

Wednesday October 27—Paul L. Heck, “Ethics in Sufism,” *EI3*

Friday October 29—Shafak, *The Forty Rules of Love*, pgs. 104-146

**WEEK ELEVEN**

Monday November 1—Shafak, *The Forty Rules of Love*, pgs. 149-200

Wednesday November 3—Shafak, *The Forty Rules of Love*, pgs. 200-260

Friday November 5—Discussion of novel and in-class readings from Rumi’s *Mathnawi*

**WEEK TWELVE**

Monday November 8—Shafak, *The Forty Rules of Love*, pgs. 261-350

Wednesday November 10—Catharina Raudvere, “Between home and home: Conceptions of Sufi heritage in Bosnia-Herzegovina and in Swedish Bosniak diaspora,” from *Sufism Today: Heritage and Tradition in the Global Community*, eds. Catharina Raudvere and Leif Stenberg (London: I.B. Tauris, 2009), pgs. 49-64.

Friday November 12—Break-Out Session

**WEEK THIRTEEN**

Monday November 15—James Caron, “Sufism and Liberation across the Indo-Afghan Border: 1880-1928.” *South Asian History and Culture* (2016).

Wednesday November 17—Julien Levesque, “‘Sindh is by nature’: Sufism as a marker

of identity in Sindh,” in *Islam, Sufism and Everyday Politics of Belonging in South Asia*, eds. Deepra Dandekar and Torsten Tschacher (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), pgs. 212-227.

Friday November 19—Break-Out Session

#### **WEEK FOURTEEN**

Monday November 22—Paola Abenante, “Inner and Outer Ways: Sufism and Subjectivity in Egypt and beyond.” *Ethnos: Journal of Anthropology* (2013).

Wednesday November 14—No Class (Holiday)

Friday November 26—No Class (Holiday)

#### **WEEK FIFTEEN**

Monday November 29—Youssef J. Carter, “Black Muslimness Mobilized: A Study of West African Sufism in Diaspora.” *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*.

Wednesday December 1—In-Class Film Viewing of Nacer Khemir’s *Bab ’Aziz*.

Friday December 3—In-Class Film Viewing of Khemir’s *Bab ’Aziz*.

#### **WEEK SIXTEEN**

Monday December 6—In-Class Film Viewing of Khemir’s *Bab ’Aziz*

Wednesday December 8—Last Day of Class: Final Exam Review Session (No Reading for Today)

Final Exam—Date and Place will be announced soon