

Islam - TH 4603

Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary
Summer 2021

July 12-Aug. 6
M, T, Th
6-8:30 pm
*Zoom distance course

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Course Description

This course is designed as an introduction to the core elements of the religious history and cultural dynamics of Islamic Civilization, from the Middle Ages to the early modern period. Within this framework the course will focus on cultural exchanges between Muslim and non-Muslim communities of the Near East, the advancements in theological principles as a part of the Muslim exegetical tradition, philosophical doctrines, the development of mysticism in Islam, and artistic achievements across this timeframe. The course will begin with the Late Antique Period, serving as a backdrop to discussions on Pre-Islamic Arabia and the Islamic Origins narrative. From there the course will focus on the Life of the Prophet Muhammad, the major themes and styles of the Qur'anic text, and the political history of the early Caliphates. The course will then shift to a survey of the Golden Age of Islam (9th-13th centuries), emphasizing the major contributions in the fields of science, philosophy, theology, and literature from the various Muslim dynasties of the Near East, North Africa and Central Asia. The third section of this course will introduce the Ottoman, Safavid and Mughal Empires of the early modern period, surveying their religious and political ideologies as well as their impact or influence upon western culture of that period.

This course will be offered through ZOOM. The first part of each night's class will be delivered through a PowerPoint lecture, with the second part of the session being a conversation regarding the readings for that particular night. I am truly hoping for a highly interactive discussion with students! By all means, ask questions and make comments pertaining to the readings! I sincerely want all students to engage in the discussion and I want to hear your thoughts on any and all issues.

Please do your best to have completed the opening night's reading assignments prior to the first night of our ZOOM session on July 12.

Course Objectives

The objectives of this course advance MDIV QEPSLO1: Students will demonstrate an ability to describe and articulate important characteristics of the history, traditions,

practices, and perspectives of at least one religious tradition other than Christianity and one Christian ecclesial tradition other than their own.

At the conclusion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Compare and contrast select themes, images, and persons in the Qur'an and the Bible.
2. Name and discuss characteristics of medieval Islam in light of Western Christianity's interaction with it.
3. Analyze the relationship between European intervention and colonialism and modern Islam.

Course Requirements

Students will be expected to attend all class meetings, read the assigned materials, complete assignments according to the schedule, and participate in class discussions.

Grading

This class will be graded on a standard 100 point scale. The breakdown is as follows:

4 short essays (4-5 double-spaced pages in length) - each essay is worth 20 points
Class participation and discussion - 20 points

Scale:

90-100%	A	x7-x9 = + (there will not be an A+)
80-89%	B	x0-x2 = -
70-79%	C	
60-69%	D	
59% -	F	

Directions for Essay Assignments

The essay papers should be between 4-5 pages in length, using 12-point font and appropriate citations of material. The specific questions to be addressed in each essay will be listed in the Weekly Schedule section of this syllabus.

Required Texts

The Holy Qur'an, translated by Abdullah Yusuf Ali. Hertfordshire, England: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 2000.

Daniel W. Brown, *A New Introduction to Islam*. West Sussex, UK: John Wiley & Sons Limited/Blackwell Publishing.

Francis Peters, *A Reader on Classical Islam*. Princeton University Press.

Course Responsibilities

Use of Inclusive Language

In accordance with seminary policy, students are to use inclusive language in class discussions and in written and oral communication by using language representative of the whole human community in respect to gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, and physical and intellectual capacities. Direct quotations from theological texts and translations of the Bible do not have to be altered to conform to this policy. In your own writing, however, when referring to God, you are encouraged to use a variety of images and metaphors, reflecting the richness of the Bible's images for God. For more information, see:

<http://www.lpts.edu/academics/academic-resources/academic-support-center/online-writing-lab/avoiding-gender-bias>

Academic Honesty

All work turned in to the instructors is expected to be the work of the student whose name appears on the assignment. Any borrowing of the ideas or the words of others must be acknowledged by quotation marks (where appropriate) and by citation of author and source. Use of another's language or ideas from online resources is included in this policy, and must be attributed to author and source of the work being cited. Failure to do so constitutes plagiarism, and may result in failure of the course. Two occurrences of plagiarism may result in dismissal from the Seminary. Students unfamiliar with issues related to academic honesty can find help from the staff in the Academic Support Center. For more information, see the Policy for Academic Honesty in the Student Handbook.

Special Accommodations

Students requiring accommodations for a documented physical or learning disability should be in contact with the Director of the Academic Support Center (kmapes@lpts.edu) during the first two weeks of a semester (or before the semester begins) and should speak with the instructor as soon as possible to arrange appropriate adjustments. Students with environmental or other sensitivities that may affect their learning are also encouraged to speak with the instructor.

Citation Policy

Citations in your papers should follow Seminary standards, which are based on these guides:

American Psychological Association. *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*. 6th ed. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2010.

Turabian, Kate L., Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations: Chicago Style for Students and Researchers*. 8th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013.

The Chicago Manual of Style. 16th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010.

Copies of these guides are available at the library and in the Academic Support Center.

Attendance Policy

According to the Seminary catalog, students are expected to attend class meetings regularly. In case of illness or emergency, students are asked to notify the instructor of their planned absence from class, either prior to the session or within 24 hours of the class session. Six or more absences (1/4 of the course) may result in a low or failing grade in the course.

Course Schedule

Monday, July 12

Topics: Introduction to the course, the Late Antique Period, pre-Islamic Arabia, the early life of the Prophet Muhammad

- Readings:
1. Brown, *A New Introduction to Islam*, Chapters 2 & 3
 2. Peters, *A Reader on Classical Islam* – excerpts from Chapter 1 on Abraham and Ishmael, Abraham the Builder, Mecca in the Age of Ignorance
 3. *The Qur'an* - Surat al-Alaq (Chapter 96 - The Clot), Surat al-Takwir (Chapter 81 - The Turning), Surat al-Rum (Chapter 30 – The Romans)

Tuesday, July 13

Topics: The life of Muhammad continued, the development of the earliest community (the *umma*), the Qur'an - an introduction to theological principles & literary structure

- Readings:
1. Brown, *A New Introduction to Islam*, Chapter 4 up to page 65

2. *The Qur'an* - Surat al-Ma'idah (Chapter 5 - The Table), Surat Maryam (Chapter 19 - Mary), Surat al-Ikhlās (Chapter 112 - The Oneness), Surat al-Tariq (Chapter 86 – The Night Star)

3. Peters, *A Reader on Classical Islam* – excerpts from Chapter 1 & 2 on The Religion of Mecca, Pre-Islamic Monotheism

4. Guillaume *The Life of Muhammad* *PDF on CAMS

Thursday, July 15

Topics: The Qur'an continued, Preaching the Message in Mecca

Readings: 1. The Qur'an - Surat al-Qiyamah (Chapter 75 - The Resurrection), Surat al-Zalzalah (Chapter 99 - The Quaking), Surat al-Baqara (Chapter 2 – The Cow)

2. Brown, *A New Introduction to Islam*, 5 pages 79-96

3. Peters, *A Reader on Classical Islam*, excerpts from Chapter 2 on The Conversion of Ali, The Earliest Public Preaching, Opposition of Quraysh, Persecution and Migration to Abyssinia

Monday, July 19

Essay #1 due via e-mail by class-time on Monday

Directions:

After reading the chapters from the Qur'an listed above, please address the following questions: What stands out to you as the major themes in these sections? How do these particular themes compare to Christian theology and New Testament motifs? What appears to be the view of Christians/Christianity in these passages from the Qur'an? In what ways do the figures of Mary and Christ, in their Qur'anic context, resonate with traditional Christian interpretations? Does any of the language used in Surat Maryam have a familiar tone to New Testament passages?

Topics: The Night Journey and the Hijra to Medina

Readings: 1. Brown, *A New Introduction to Islam*, Chapter 4 pages 65-74

2. Peters, *A Reader on Classical Islam*, excerpts from Chapter 2 on Muhammad's Night Journey, Losses, An Invitation from Yathrib, A Turn to Armed Resistance, The Hijra, The Battle at Badr Wells

3. Qur'an – Surat al-Isra (Chapter 17 – The Night Journey), Surat al-Tawbah (Chapter 9 – Repentance)

Tuesday, July 20

Topics: The Muslim Commonwealth, The Farewell Pilgrimage, the Early Caliphates & Conquest Period

- Readings:
1. Brown, *A New Introduction to Islam*, Chapter 7 pages 123-131
 2. Peters, *A Reader on Classical Islam*, excerpts from Chapter 3 on The Ruler, Ali the First Imam, The Pool of Khum
 3. Qur'an – Surat al-Nur (Chapter 24 – The Light)

Thursday, July 22

Topics: Fractures in the Community, The First Civil War, Sunni and Shi'ite Islam

- Readings:
1. Brown, *A New Introduction to Islam*, Chapter 8 pages 133-139
 2. Peters, *A Reader on Classical Islam*, excerpts from Chapter 3 on The Martyrdom of Husayn, the People of the House, The Shi'ite Succession, Awaiting the Hidden Imam

Monday, July 26

Essay #2 due via email by class-time on Monday

Directions: Please discuss the role of Christian communities within the emergence of Islam, up to the point that we have covered in class. What do the narratives of Bahira and Salman the Persian (both from the *Sira* of Ibn Ishaq) tell us about early Muslim conceptions of Christianity? Do these faith traditions appear at odds with each other throughout this early period? Are there examples to support your answer? Please keep in mind any Qur'anic passages that you have come across, the migration to Abyssinia, and the information concerning the Islamic conquest period. Aside from the issue of early Christian-Muslim relations, what does seem to be the cause of greater friction within the Muslim community at this time?

Topics: The Umayyad Period continued

- Readings:
1. Brown, *A New Introduction to Islam*, Chapter 8 pages 141-149
 2. Reynolds, "The Muslim Jesus: Alive or Dead?" *PDF on CAMS

3. Qur'an – Surat al-Nisa (Chapter 4 – The Women)

Tuesday, July 27

Topics: The Abbasid Revolution, the Golden Age of Islam, Science and Philosophy under the Caliphates

- Readings:
1. Brown, *A New Introduction to Islam*, Chapter 10 pages 177-185
 2. Bennison, Chapter 5 “Baghdad’s Golden Age” * PDF on CAMS
 3. Selections from al-Jahiz *PDF – this will be delivered to all students by email
 4. Selections from Ibn Fadlan’s Journey to the Rus *PDF – this will be delivered to all students by email

Thursday, July 29

Topics: Fracturing of the Caliphate, Crusader Period

- Readings:
1. Brown, *A New Introduction to Islam*, Chapter 13 pages 245-254
 2. William of Tyre *PDF on CAMS
 3. Usama ibn Munqidh *PDF on CAMS

Monday, August 2

Essay #3 due via email by class-time on Monday

Directions:

After reading the various selections from the past week, has your view of medieval Islam changed in any way? Does this Muslim culture of the Near East appear to be an enlightened and sophisticated civilization? What kinds of artistic and literary achievements stand out the most to you? How does this contrast with the view of Islam depicted in the Crusader literature? In light of the readings, has your view of the Crusades been challenged? Does this appear to have been a “Holy War”, or something else? What kinds of language within the literature can be used to support your conclusions?

Topics: The Ottoman Turks

- Readings:
1. Brown, *A New Introduction to Islam*, Chapters 13 & 14 pages 254-269

Tuesday, August 3

Topics: Muslim Spain & Christian-Muslim Relations in the Late Middle Ages

- Readings:
1. Tolan, "The Muslim in Ideology of 13th Century Spain" * PDF on CAMS
 2. Hillenbrand, "Ornament of the World" *PDF on CAMS

Thursday, August 5

Topics: Mystical Islam

- Readings:
1. Peters, *A Reader on Classical Islam*, excerpts from Chapter 7 on This World and the Next, The Historical Origins of the Sufis, Monks and Sufis, What is the Mystic Way
 2. Ernst, "Sacred Sources of Sufism" * PDF on CAMS
 3. Arberry, "Al-Hallaj" *PDF on CAMS

Essay #4 due via email by Monday evening (August 9th) at 8pm EST

Directions: Please discuss the aspects of mystical Islam/Sufism that have resonated with you the most, on a personal level. Do you see some similarities between this and esoteric and/or monastic forms of Christianity? In particular, how do the texts of *The Parliament of Birds* and the *Passion of al-Hallaj* seem to encapsulate the meaning of Sufism? Do any passages within the *Passion of al-Hallaj* appear to have parallels within Christian theology?