

Islam in the Modern Age: Tradition, Fundamentalism & Reform

REL 378 (Spring 2014)

MWF 10:30 – 11:20 (Chambers 3068)

Dr. Syed Rizwan Zamir

Office: Preyer 201A (Ph: 704- 894 2950)

Email: rizamir@davidson.edu (on the weekends I will have limited access to email)

Office Hours: Mon & Wed 11:30- 12:30 & Thu 12:15-1:30

Schedule appointments via www.signupgenius.com (NOTE: If you are unable to meet during these times, schedule appointment through an email).

Course Description:

Popular discourse often characterizes 'Islam and 'Modernity' as two mutually exclusive points of view. Such attitudes are frequently exhibited in questions such as: "Is Islam compatible with democracy?" or "Does Islam give equal rights to women?" In light of such questions, this course aims to engender a nuanced appreciation of the various meanings of the terms 'Islam' and 'Modernity'. The basic argument of this course is as follows: *In order to understand the place of Muslim actors in the contemporary world it is better to conceive of 'Islam' and 'Modernity' as historical projects that are still in the process of being executed.* Rather than assume that 'Islam' and 'Modernity' have fixed meanings, our study will try to illustrate how these terms have come to represent varying (often vying!) political, social and spiritual aspirations at different moments in history.

We will begin with an examination of the phenomenon of 'Modernity', its origins in the Western Europe, its various interpretations and significance. We will then turn to a basic introduction to the Islamic tradition and its pre-modern intellectual, political and social landscapes¹. With this historical and intellectual understanding of 'Islam' and 'Modernity', we will examine how 'Islam' and 'Modernity' that had unfolded in different geographical spaces came to intersect during the Colonial age, both conceptually and within the lived experience of Muslims. The rest of the course will examine the intellectual, religious, sociopolitical and cultural transformations in the Islamic world due to this intersection and the response of Muslim thinkers and societies to the Modern ideals. We will conclude with the rise of postmodernity and globalization and the future of 'Islam' and 'Modernity'.

¹ Although prior knowledge of Islam is not expected, if you feel the need, you may read one of the introductory books on Islam listed in the recommended readings section.

Course Requirements:

(NOTE: The instructor reserves the right to change/alter the syllabus as he deems fit)

Midterm Examination	25%
Collaborative Group Project (3 students per group: It includes 12-page paper, annotated bibliography, reflection paper, <i>Prezi</i> presentation & group interview with the instructor)	35% (see detailed instructions below)
Assignments/Reflection Papers (5% each)	25%
Attendance & Participation (includes attending guest lectures)	15%

Objectives of the Course:

This is a course on Islam (and religion in general) *in relation to* modernity. Therefore, a nuanced appreciation of the meaning, values and phenomenon of Modernity in its various aspects is critical to the understanding of the subject matter and an integral part of the course. Since it is impossible for this course to be more than an *overview of Islam in the Modern Age*, it is expected that by the end of the class, the students will have the necessary language, categories and familiarity with the ‘Islam and modernity debate’ to pursue further study, engage the texts and practitioners of the Islamic faith and make sense of contemporary issues dealt with by Muslim thinkers and societies, and for that matter other religious communities facing the challenges of modernity. For the instructor, the success or failure of the course depends on how far the class as a group accomplishes these goals. Furthermore, implicit but the most significant goal of this class is to make learning *relevant, useful, enjoyable* and *meaningful* for all involved in the class. Making the class more relevant to you personally is something that will require your engagement and deep interest. Feel free to talk to the instructor about ways in which you may contribute in achieving these goals, personally and as a group.

Format of the Class:

(NOTE: You are expected to always bring with you the syllabus and readings for the week)

The format (i.e., structure of the class lecture/discussion, and presentations/assignments) and selection of readings are all carefully thought-out to meet the goals listed above. Students must note that the extent and length of lectures, in-class discussion, debates and group work

will be decided in view of these goals and could alter as per the needs of the class. That is why the class format will be flexible and may vary from week to week.

Readings are absolutely critical to your success in this class, both for comprehending the subject and in earning a good grade. Generally speaking, even lectures will mostly be geared towards better understanding of the assigned material. Lectures will provide a framework for the readings, clarify them, and highlight the key points. Hence, you are absolutely expected to have read and formulated your thoughts on the readings before the beginning of the week.

Occasionally, you will be asked to present the summary of the readings, make critical comments, work in groups and make formal presentations of selective portion of the readings, bring in questions from the readings, examples from the media, journals, blogs, magazines or other forums and from outside of the assigned reading for further discussion and clarification. All these activities and active participation in the in-class debates and discussion will be critical.

Your participation grade is based therefore on the overall quality of your in-class participation throughout the semester. This includes proper class etiquette, attentiveness, preparing for the class discussion, asking engaging questions and responding to those asked by the instructor. Do ask the instructor if you have any questions regarding how to make your participation more effective.

Attendance Policy:

Attendance is compulsory in this course (I will take regular attendance!) and more than **2 absences** without valid excuse such as sickness or family emergency etc. will result in the lowering of grade. It is student's responsibility to obtain notes and 'catch-up' in the case of absence. Absence will not be a good excuse for not knowing what happened in the class.

Instructions for the Exam:

1. GREEN BOOK: You will absolutely need Green Books for your exam. Loose paper (with or without clips/staple is irrelevant!) will result in loss of points.

2. **HANDWRITING:** Clear and legible. If I cannot read your handwriting, it will mean I won't understand what you are saying. I will have no option but to assume that you don't know the material.
3. **READ AND ANSWER THE QUESTION CAREFULLY:** It is here usually that well-prepared students lose points. Either they end up answering the wrong question (I.e., misreading the question) or not answering it FULLY. So answer the question asked, and answer all parts of it.
4. **TIME MANAGEMENT:** It is common sense and I have suggested a way to divide time for your answers. Do not write essays for short IDs. You will have to make choices. For IDs and short answers you will have to prioritize between more and less important, and more and less relevant things you choose to mention.
5. **READ THE QUESTION AGAIN AND AGAIN WHILE ANSWERING IT:** Related to 3, this works well for keeping one on track.

GROUP PROJECT:

(By the end of the second week you need to form your three-member group)

IMPORTANT NOTE: This course is about “Islam” in relation to “Modernity”. Your topic should demonstrate this relationality as it comes to bear upon your particular group project. A project undertaken without this awareness and application of it to the study will be deemed incomplete. Below, I provide *a brief illustration* which should give you a sense of what I mean by this note. Research topic of gender must incorporate three aspects: gender in the modern age/modernity; gender in premodern Islam; and the debate surrounding gender in contemporary Islamic thought and Muslim societies. “The kinds of readings” needed to address these **THREE** aspects for example will be:

Modernity, 122-148, 343-392; *Islam in the World*, 619-680; *Islam in Transition*, 157-177, 184-202, 212-215; Nasr “Male and Female” (*Islam in the Modern World*) Lumbard, Ch. 7; *Who Speaks*, Ch. 4

SUBMISSIONS: VARIOUS COMPONENTS OF THE PROJECT

1. **RESOURCES for the Study of your Topic (5% of the grade):** For that you will turn in an annotated blog-like page documentation/bibliography of the following:
 - a. Academic books, journal articles and other materials that qualify as “scholarly”
 - b. Multimedia: images, audio, videos etc.

- c. Popular stuff: news items, op-eds, blogs, interviews, and non-scholarly works
- d. Statistical data, surveys, and polls

2. 10-page GROUP PAPER (5%, Instructions for the Group Research paper):

- i. Topic/Question, why you chose it, its relevance/significance, who's the audience for your research, and whose question is it? Explain how and why each of the group member is interested in it? How is your topic related to the course?
- ii. Research methodology: How did you research your question? How do you know it was an appropriate way for finding answers to your question? In sum, clarify and justify your approach to research. Be concrete.
- iii. Research process: its different elements, and in what order they were completed. Make sure the process is consistent with your methodology.
- iv. Typology: Compare, contrast and provide a typology of the various positions on your topic and question *within the academic sources*. Identify concretely who holds a certain position and why? This section is very important; there has to be a way of classifying various positions into some sort of scheme that your reader could make sense of and draw his or her own conclusions.
- v. What did you find in the *popular media* (see 1c above) on the same subject, how it contrasts with your findings? Why (if so) there is a gap between your findings and what is found in the popular media?
- vi. If available, discuss *the statistical data and polls* that are relevant to your research.
- vii. Your Findings/Conclusions - challenges or potential rebuttals to your research
- viii. Analyze and explain any discrepancies between your findings within the academic study, popular media and the stats (iv, v & vi).
- ix. Where to now? Unresolved questions, confusions, paradoxes etc. If you were to pursue the topic further what would you do?
- x. How your project relates to the course? Have *at least three significant points* you will make to your classmates with whom you have shared for the whole semester discussion on "Islam in the modern age".

3. **Group Reflections on the PROCESS (5%)**

NOTE: These reflections are separate (not part of the paper length prescribed) and should not be more than 1-2 pages

- a. Discussion notes/thread and significant points discussed, debated and choices made during the thinking or writing process
- b. Reflections on the process of group research, where it helped, where it hindered etc. (list briefly as points)
- c. What did you learn or got out of this project, individually and as a group?

4. **PREZI PRESENTATION (see below) – a copy will be submitted to the instructor**

THE PREZI PRESENTATION (10%)

1. You will basically discuss number 1 and 2 above in the classroom.
2. **DO NOT OVERWHELM YOUR AUDIENCE:** Time limit on the one hand, and human ability to absorb information to a certain limit on the other should guide your selection of what should be in and what should be out.
3. **MAKE IT IMPORTANT, INTERESTING & BE CREATIVE:** Employ images, audio/video etc. for your presentation of the topic.
4. **TIME LIMIT: Strictly 25 min** (20 min =presentation; 5 min Q&A)
5. **CONCLUDING INSIGHTS:** Leave your audience with concrete points that reflect your own synthesis and conclusions on the subject.

GROUP INTERVIEW (10%):

The final week of the class, your group will be interviewed during an hour-long meeting.

DEADLINES & OTHER INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE GROUP PROJECT:

- *You are strongly recommended to see me as a group in my office hours once per two weeks.*
- The Group Paper and the Resources Page will be submitted via email (no hardcopy).
- PREZI presentation will be submitted on a USB during our interview meeting.
- For your final grade, I will also assess the overall quality of the process of research.

DEADLINES:

- *By March 10:* Receive APPROVAL of the Topic & Submit BLOG/RESOURCES
- *April 30:* Submit GROUP PAPER & **“Updated”** BLOG/RESOURCES

- Group INTERVIEW & PREZI Presentation = Will be scheduled

ASSIGNMENTS/ Reflection Papers (*General Guidelines on Audience and Citation*)

Note: *The audience for all your written assignments is your REL 378 class. Only cite fully if it is a source other than the assigned material. You may use Chicago or MLA format.*

1. Your reflection paper is to help enhance the level of class conversation and discussion. In writing it, imagine you are reading it aloud for everyone to hear and engage it.
2. The purpose of the response paper is to help you reflect and critically engage the materials you have learned in the class. *Remember you are writing for your fellow classmates* who have also read the same material. Therefore, restating or summarizing the readings will be absolutely redundant.
3. Yes, you need to demonstrate that you have a good grasp of the material and have critically engaged the readings. Choose to reflect on the aspects of readings that you find fascinating, intriguing, contentious, or simply unclear/confusing.
4. ENGAGE READINGS: A good reflection paper will engage the readings and speak from both *within* and *without* these texts. Ask the instructor to explain this distinction.
5. The key questions you should be asking yourself are the following:
 - i. DO YOU CARE? Is this idea worth your time and effort? Do you care about the topic? Would you enjoy thinking about it?
 - ii. FEASIBILITY: Is the idea manageable within the word-limit prescribed for the assignment? With limited words, write only after having fully developed your thoughts so you could state those as clearly and succinctly as possible.
 - iii. ILLUMINE: Will it be found interesting and illuminating by the class as a whole? Why should your classmates care about what you have to say? Does the reflection offer something different/new or merely summarizes?
 - iv. SHOW: Does it *show* (not just state) what it was meant to convey to the class?
 - v. PERSUADE: Does it successfully convince or persuade your classmates?
6. A response paper is not an op-ed or an expression of how you felt about the readings. A response paper, like all writing, is meant to persuade the reader of your analysis. You do not need to exclude yourself. Yes, you can use first person pronoun I! Do not

pretend as if you have some objective view-from-the-top stance. You should come across fully aware of the various assumptions you bring to your analysis.

7. Unnecessary quotes from the readings are as unacceptable as a rambling current of thoughts unrelated to the subject at hand.
8. Do mention the WORD COUNT.

TEXTBOOKS (available at the Bookstore and on Library Reserves):

1. *Modernity: An Introduction to Modern Societies* ed. Stuart Hall, David Held, Don Hubert and Kenneth Thompson (Malden: Blackwell, 2008)
2. *Islam in Transition 2nd. Edition* ed. J. Esposito and J. Donohue (New York: Oxford, 2007)
3. Rene Guenon. *The Crisis of the Modern World* (New York: Sophia Perennis, 2004)
4. S. H. Nasr. *Islam and the Plight of Modern Man* (Chicago: Kazi Publications, 2001)
5. ***T. Asad. *On Suicide Bombing*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2007 (ebook).

Recommended Background Readings:

- Gibb, Hamilton. *Mohammedanism: A Historical Survey* (?: Kessinger Publishing, 2010)
- Schimmel, Annemarie. *Islam: An Introduction*. (New York: SUNY, 1992)
- Nasr, Seyyed Hossein. *Islam: Religion, History and Civilization* (New York: HarperCollins, 2003)

Writing and Speaking Centers:

Basic writing and speaking skills are expected in this course and quality of both will be critical to your success in this course. You are therefore strongly encouraged to consult writing and speaking centers for your assignments and class presentations. Look up the links below for more information on the services they provide:

Writing Center: <http://www3.davidson.edu/cms/x11014.xml>

Speaking Center: <http://www3.davidson.edu/cms/x15986.xml>

Disabilities: A student who requires accommodation for a documented disability of any type should see me *immediately* to discuss modifications to course requirements.

Academic Honesty: Students are expected to fully abide by the Honor Code as set out by the College and should pledge all their assignments and exams.

COURSE OUTLINE

PART I: ISLAM & MODERNITY: A BASIC OVERVIEW

WEEK 1 (Jan 13-17): Relevance of the Subject and the Framework for Our Study

Readings: Dennis Prager, “Can Islam be Reformed?”

<http://www.nationalreview.com/articles/273388/can-islam-be-reformed-dennis-prager>

Fukuyama, “The West has Won” (2001)

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2001/oct/11/afghanistan.terrorism30>

Muslim thinkers (Interview), “Islam and the West”

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/muslims/themes/west.html>

DOCUMENTARY: *Edward Said on Orientalism* (JAN 17 – in class, followed by discussion)

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fVC8EYd_Z_g

- Studying “Islam in the Modern Age”: History, Methods and Approaches
- The Problem of Compatibility between Islam and Modernity
- The Triumph of Modernity?

WEEK 2 (Jan 22-24): What is Modernity? What is “Modern” about the Modern Age?

Readings: *Modernity*, 3-54; *Portable Enlightenment Reader*, pp. 1-7 & 26-38 (on reserve)

- What is Modernity? Defining the “Modern” and “Modernity”
- Origins of Modernity and The Enlightenment
- What Changed with Modernity & Why? Changing Intellectual and Cultural Norms

WEEK 3 (Jan 27-Jan 31): Culture, Values and Religion in the Modern Age

Readings: *Modernity*: 169-182 & 395-422; *Portable Enlightenment Reader*, pp. 115-131

- Religion, Values and Ideology – Modernity and Religion
- Culture, its various meaning & “Modern” culture
- Disenchantments and Dilemmas of Modernity

NOTE: Davidson Library visit for Prezi and collaborative group work this week

Assignment I: Pick a theme from any of the readings for the “Modernity” section of the course and reflect on it. **Reflection Paper 1 (500 words) DUE on JAN 31**

WEEK 4 (Feb 3-7): 'Intersections' of Islam and Modernity during the Colonial Age

Weekend before this week: Watch “*Lion of the Desert*” (On RESERVE, will be discussed)

- Definitions of “Islam”: Introduction to Islam & Premodern Islamic Societies
- Intersection of Islam and Modernity: Historical Details of the Colonial Period
- Transformation of the Muslim World under the Colonial Impact

Readings:

- Modernity*, 184-221;
- The Portable Enlightenment Reader*, pp. 387-395
- Vali Nasr, “European Colonialism...” in *Oxford History of Islam* (on reserve)
- “Schooled to Order: Education and the Making of Modern Egypt” (will be provided)
- Minute by the Hon'ble T. B. Macaulay, dated the 2nd February 1835
http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/oogenerallinks/macaulay/txt_minute_education_1835.html

WEEK 5 (Feb 10-14): What Went Wrong? Crises & Challenges of Colonialism & Modernity

- What Went Wrong? Insights from Historians and Sociologists
- What Went Wrong? Muslim Diagnosis and Articulation of the “Crisis”
- THE FOUR CRISES: Political, Economic, Social and Cultural Dimensions
- The Crisis of “Religion”

Readings:

- Islam and the Plight of Modern Man*, Chapter 2;
- Cultural Schizophrenia*, pp. 3-15 (on reserve)
- Islam in Transition*, 44-48 & 115-121
- Islam in the World Today* pp. 800-829 (library e-book);
- Syed Rizwan Zamir, “Chapter 1: ‘Ali Naqvi’s Reception of the Crisis of Religion” ProQuest Dissertations & Theses (PQDT) database (Library website)

Assignment II (2-3 pages): Find 3 examples from the popular media that creatively capture the “Crisis” that parallels or expands on the readings for this week. Popular media includes newspapers, magazines, blogs, images and videos. The examples should be followed by your brief comments as to the significance of each item and how it relates to the readings for the week. **DUE on FEB 14**

OR

Without listing the various crises faced by Muslims and Muslim societies, discuss the crisis you saw as most critical/significant and WHY. Explain your reasons to the reader and reflect on why you made this choice and not any other? **Reflection Paper II (500 words) DUE on FEB 14**

WEEK 6 (Feb 17-21): “The Political Crisis”: The Question of Governance

Readings: *Modernity*: 55-87; *Islam in Transition*, 16-19, 24-34, 41-43 & 261-340.

- Political Thought and Political History of Premodern Islam
- The Political Crisis and Contemporary Muslim Responses
- Role of Shari‘ah in Islamic governance

Assignment III (GROUP WORK, 1-2 pages): *Through a synthesis of your readings for this week, draw an accessible intellectual map/typology of Muslim responses to the Political Crisis. Your presentation must express the spectrum of political views relationally. In other words it should capture the commonalities and differences among the various positions. You may use bullet points, visuals (charts or figures etc.), short descriptions or any other creative medium. Be prepared to present this map/typology of contemporary Islamic political thought in the class. DUE on FEB 21*

WEEK 7 (Feb 24-Feb 28): The Question of Economics: State, Economy and Law (Shari‘ah)

Readings: *Modernity*: 106-120;

Harvey Cox, “The Market as God”

http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1999/03/the-market-as-god/306397/?single_page=true

Islam in Transition, 100-113, 128-132 & 228-259;

- Economic Life in Premodern Islam & Shariah Guidelines for Economic life
- Economy-Shari‘ah-State in Premodern Islamic Societies
- Contemporary Islamic Economic Thought

Feb 28: MIDTERM EXAM

SPRING BREAK: Fri, Feb 28 (4:30 p.m.) - Mon, Mar 10 (8:30 a.m.)

PART II: MUSLIM RESPONSES TO MODERNITY

WEEK 9 (Mar 10-14): Muslim Response I: Reformist/Modernist Tradition

Readings: “Modernism” encyclopedia entry (Database *Oxford Islamic Studies Online*)

http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t236/e0539?_hi=0&_pos=3

“What is Progressive Islam” (Will be provided)

Islam in Transition, 7-15, 20-23, 122-127, 143-156, 345-360 & 501-512

- Origins, Developments and Characteristics of the Modernist thought
- Varieties within Islamic Modernism: Proponents, Ideas, Method & Influence

WEEK 10 (Mar 17-21): Response II – Fundamentalist/Salafi Tradition

Readings: “Fundamentalism” encyclopedia entry (Database *Oxford Islamic Studies Online*)

http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t236/e0256?_hi=1&_pos=1

Global Salafism, “Introduction” (on reserve); *Islam in Transition*, 59-63, 409-443

Maududi “Our Message” (will be provided)

- Origins, Development & Characteristics of Salafi Movement
- Varieties of Salafism: Proponents, Ideas, Method & Influence

WEEK 11 (Mar 24-28): Response III – The Tradition and the Traditionalists

Readings: *The Crisis of the Modern World* (complete);

- “The Tradition”, ‘Traditional’ and the ‘Traditionalist’
- Traditional view of Time and the Critique of the Modern World

WEEK 12 (Mar 31- Apr 4): Response III continued...

Readings: Nasr, “What is Traditional Islam?” (to be provided); *Islam and the Plight*, Ch. 1, 5 and 11; *Islam, Fundamentalism and the Betrayal of Tradition*, Chapter 2 (library e-book)

- What is Traditional Islam? Contrasts with Modernist and Fundamentalist Islam
- Reviving the *Ihsani* Tradition: Islamic Tradition and the Modern World

Apr 4: In-Class Debate: Which Muslim response to modernity is best and why? Why others are wrong?

WEEK 13 (Apr 7-11): Guest Lectures & Group Projects

NO Readings: You will work on your projects instead.

Assignment IV: Which Muslim response to modernity in your *informed* opinion is the best and why? Why others are wrong? **Reflection Paper Due on Apr 7**

MANDATORY GUEST LECTURES: Dr. Samer Al-Saber & Dr. Doug Ottati

Watch the movie *Moozlum* (2010) this week (DVD on reserve)

PART III: THE FUTURE OF ISLAM AND MODERNITY

WEEK 14 (Apr 14-18): Globalization & Postmodernity

Readings: *Modernity*, pp. 425-444, 467-473, 478-482 & 596-632;

John Gay, "Three Mistakes about Modernity"

<http://fathom.lse.ac.uk/Features/2187/gen.html>

- From modernity to postmodernity
- Globalization and the Dark Side of Modernity

EASTER BREAK: Fri Apr 18 (4:30 p.m.)- Wed Apr. 23 (8:30 a.m.)

WEEK 15 (Apr 23-25): Postmodernity, Globalization & the Future of Islam and Modernity

Readings:

Islam, Fundamentalism and the Betrayal of Tradition, Ch. 8 (library e-book)

Talal Asad, *On Suicide Bombing* (readings TBA);

Timothy Winter "Unpacking Islam" (will be provided)

B. Lewis, "The Roots of Muslim Rage" (1990)

<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1990/09/the-roots-of-muslim-rage/304643/>

Assad Baig, "Malala Yousafzai and the White Savior Complex"

http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/assed-baig/malala-yousafzai-white-saviour_b_3592165.html

- Globalization: The Future of Islam and Modernity

Assignment V: *Pick a theme from any of the readings for the PART III section of the course and reflect on it. Response Paper (500 words) Due on Apr 25*

WEEK 16 (Apr 28-Apr 30): Class Presentations and Group Interviews

Apr 30: Group Research Paper is Due Today

IN-CLASS PREZI PRESENTATIONS & GROUP INTERVIEWS

(Through signupgenius you will schedule interview meetings with me as a group)

If needed, Optional Class Days [May 1-7] may be used for classes or Group Interviews