

Tradition, like religion, is at once truth and presence. It concerns the subject which knows and the object which is known. It comes from the Source from which everything originates and to which everything returns. It thus embraces all things like the “Breath of the Compassionate” which, according to the Sufis, is the very root of existence itself. Tradition is inextricably related to revelation and religion, to the sacred, to the notion of orthodoxy, to authority, to the continuity and regularity of transmission of the truth, to the exoteric and the esoteric as well as to the spiritual life, science and the arts.

- Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Knowledge and the Sacred*, p.68

Primordial man sees the ‘greater’ in the ‘lesser’: the world of Nature, in fact, reflects Heaven, and conveys, in an existential language, a divine message that is at once multiple and unique. The moral result of this perspective of the ‘translucid’ cosmos is a respectful and even devotional attitude towards virgin Nature, this sanctuary— the key to which has been lost to the West since the disappearance of the mythologies— which fortifies and inspires those of its children who have retained the sense of its mysteries, as Terra did for Antheia.

- Frithjof Schuon, “The Symbolist Mind”

## NATURE & ECOLOGY in ISLAM

REL 279 (Fall 2020)

MW 7:30-8:45 pm (ONLINE/ZOOM through class MOODLE page)

### WHAT IS IT ABOUT? (Previously Course Description)

What are the Muslims views about the natural world, its origins, *telos* and its relationship to human beings? How did Muslims study the world of nature? How was the world of nature invoked and depicted in Islamic literature, art, architecture and urban planning? Encompassing these and other interrelated questions, this course is intended to be an overview and survey of the place of nature and its study in the premodern Muslim intellectual and cultural heritage. We will observe Muslim worldview, imagination and study of nature through its scriptural, mystical, philosophical, scientific, theological, and legal traditions and texts, but also in literary and cultural expressions such as poetry, storytelling, art, architecture, gardens, and daily life.

## THE ROADMAP

*SEE MOODLE FOR CALENDAR OF READINGS & ASSIGNMENTS*

## THE INTELLECTUAL COMMUNITY

### Meeting with the Instructor

Prof. Syed Rizwan Zamir

**Office:** Eumenean Hall 104; **Phone:** (704) 894 2950]

**Email:** [rizamir@davidson.edu](mailto:rizamir@davidson.edu) (On the weekends I tend to keep very low)

You can meet with SRZ:

1. Right after the class meeting (just walk up to me); or
2. Through a scheduled appointment through email. Mention your availability in the next couple of days and your preference for a zoom or in-person meeting between 2pm and 7pm.

### The Intellectual Community inside and outside the class

We will speak about this in the class on the first day.

### Journaling & Google DOC [A recurring practice]

You are strongly encouraged to be regular in your contributions to the Google Doc & your Journal.

### Recommended Reading:

If you feel inspired to explore further a topic discussed in a certain week, you are welcome to write to the instructor and ask for a recommended reading. Do clarify your question or what aspect in particular is of interest to you.

### INTELLECTUAL PRACTICES (AKA Course Assignments)

Various “Intellectual Practices” are “building blocks”. At the heart of all these intellectual practices is *thinking* and *thinking through* the themes of this course. Engaged reading of assigned material is therefore key to the success of these intellectual practices.

Presence & Contributions to the Intellectual Community (includes Storytelling)	20%
Collaborative Deliberative Exercise in Defining the Problem & its Causes (Two Rounds, 10% & 15%)	25%
Weekly Journal-Portfolio [Reflective 80%, Explorative 20%] – 10 Entries in total	20%
Final Comprehensive Review of our study	35%

### Voluntary Visit

Consider visiting any of the mosques in Charlotte. Contact Muslim Students Association (MSA) or South Asian Students Association (SASA) to see if they are able to facilitate.

**Disabilities:** A student who requires accommodation for a documented disability of any type should see the instructor immediately to discuss modifications to course requirements. “Davidson College values the diversity of its community and is an equal access institution that admits otherwise qualified applicants without regard to disability. The college seeks to accommodate requests for accommodations related to disability that are determined to be reasonable and do not compromise the integrity of a program or curriculum. To make such a request or to begin a conversation about a possible request, please contact Beth Bleil, Director of Academic Access and Disability Resources, in the Center for Teaching and Learning by visiting her office in the E.H. Little Library, by emailing her at [bebleil@davidson.edu](mailto:bebleil@davidson.edu), or by calling 704-894-2129. It is best to submit accommodation requests within the drop/add period; however, requests can be made at any time in the semester. Please keep in mind that accommodations are not retroactive.”

**Honor (and Conscience):** The College expects students to fully abide by the Honor Code. The instructor wonders also about the burdens of conscience and to what extent our honor and conscience intersect.

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

### INSTRUCTOR’S:

It is intended that by the end of the class, the participants will have:

1. Gained skills and appreciation for careful readings of texts that is geared towards accomplishing better understanding of both the texts and the issues that they raise;
2. Engaged in various intellectual practices, for example: reflection, summarizing, synthesizing & interpreting texts;
3. Learned how Islamic sciences and intellectual disciplines dealt with the world of nature and where study of nature fell within traditional educational curriculum;
4. Adequate familiarity with various modes of inquiry and reflection on the world of nature in premodern Muslim societies;
5. Gained knowledge of traditional Islamic conceptions of the natural order, its place and role in the world of existence, and its relationship to humanity;

### YOURS?

### A NOTE:

If our study will inspire joy of learning and its themes prove relevant to your lives, it will be an excellent learning outcome. Yet making the class more relevant to you personally and as an intellectual community demands from participants a deeper engagement and a more active investment.

## TEXT-GUIDES

(Available at the Bookstore)

### **Introduction to Traditional Islam: Foundations, Art and Spirituality (Perennial Philosophy) Paperback – Illustrated, July 30, 2008**

by [Jean-Louis Michon](#) (Author) From <https://amzn.to/3s8rGr2>

### **The Book of Sufi Healing Paperback – April 1, 1985**

by [G. M. Chishti](#) (Author) From <https://amzn.to/324wrXE>

### **The Illustrated Rumi: A Treasury of Wisdom from the Poet of the Soul Paperback – December 21, 2010**

by [Philip Dunn](#) (Author), [Manuela M Dunn](#) (Author), [Book Laboratory](#) (Author) From <https://amzn.to/3oX4XMU>

### **Ibn Tufayl's Hayy Ibn Yaqzan: A Philosophical Tale Updated Edition**

by [Ibn Tufayl](#) (Author), [Lenn Evan Goodman](#) (Translator, Introduction) <https://amzn.to/2P8LF4v>

### **Islamic Science: An Illustrated Study Paperback – August 27, 2007**

by [Seyyed Hossein Nasr](#) (Author) <https://amzn.to/3k5CDDA>

### **The Animals' Lawsuit Against Humanity: An Illustrated 10th Century Iraqi Ecological Fable Paperback – April 1, 2005**

by [Ikhwan al-Safa](#) (Author), [Rabbi Dan Bridge](#) (Author), [Rabbi Kalonymus](#) (Author), <https://amzn.to/3hS7zVI>

**NOTE:** All other assigned texts will be posted on Moodle.