

Islam in the Modern Age: Tradition, Fundamentalism & Reform

REL 378 (Fall 2012)
MWF 10:30 – 11:20 (Chambers 2068)

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Office Hours: Mon & Wed 12:00- 1:00; Tue 3:00 – 5:00 (or by appointment)

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. 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 end our study by reflecting on the recent developments in the Islamic world and the future of 'Islam' and 'Modernity'.

¹ Although prior knowledge of Islam is not expected, those who have not taken a course with me are ***strongly recommended*** to read at least one of the introductory books on Islam listed in the recommended readings section.

Required Readings (available at the Bookstore):

1. *Modernity: An Introduction to Modern Societies* ed. Stuart Hall, David Held, Don Hubert and Kenneth Thompson (Malden: Blackwell, 2008)
2. *Islam in the Islamic World Today* ed. Werner Ende and Udo Steinbach (New York: Cornell University Press, 2010)
3. *Islam in Transition 2nd. Edition* ed. John Esposito and John Donohue (New York: Oxford, 2007)
4. *Islam, Fundamentalism and the Betrayal of Tradition* ed. Joseph Lumbard (Bloomington: World Wisdom, 2009)
5. Rene Guenon. *The Crisis of the Modern World* (New York: Sophia Perennis, 2004)
6. Seyyed Hossein Nasr. *Islam and the Plight of Modern Man* (Chicago: Kazi Publications, 2001)
7. John Esposito and Dalia Mogahed. *Who Speaks for Islam?* (New York: Gallup Press, 2007)
8. *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement* ed. Roel Meijer (New York: Columbia, 2009)
9. Ian Buruma and Avishai Margalit. *Occidentalism: The West in the Eyes of its Enemies* (New York: Penguin, 2004)

Recommended Background Readings:

- Ernst, Carl W. *Following Muhammad: Rethinking Islam in the Contemporary World* (Chapel Hill: UNC Chapel Hill, 2004)
- Mahmoud Ayoub. *Islam: Faith and History*. (Oxford: OneWorld, 2004)
- Turner, Colin. *Islam: The Basics 2nd ed.* (New York: Routledge, 2011)

Course Requirements:

(Please note that the instructor reserves the right to change/alter the syllabus as he deems fit)

Midterm Examination	25%
Collaborative Group Project (3 students per group)	35% (includes wikipage/discussion forum & presentation)
Response Paper (500-words)	10%
7-page Book Report (choose 120 pages)	15%
Attendance & Participation	15% (includes group work & presentations)

Objectives of the Course and Format of the Class:

Since it is impossible for this course to be more than an overview of a vast subject, it is expected that by the end of the class, students will have intellectual tools and enough familiarity with the discourse surrounding “Islam and modernity” that they will not encounter any major difficulty in pursuing further study of relevant texts, engaging Muslims and others involved and making meaningful and important distinctions in the process of observing or participating within that discourse. For the instructor, the success or failure of this course will be assessed through an examination of how far we accomplish these goals in our study of the subject. The format (i.e., structure of the class lecture/discussion, and presentations/assignments) and selection of readings are all carefully thought-out to meet these goals. That is why although discussion and close interaction and conversations are the central focus of the class, the class format will be flexible and may vary from week to week. The extent and length of lectures, in-class discussion, debates and/or group work may alter according to the needs of the class.

Readings are absolutely critical to your success in this class, both for comprehending the subject and 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 discussion sessions, 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.

ASSIGNMENTS:

I- Response Papers:

The purpose of the response paper is to help you reflect and *critically engage* the materials you have learned in the class. It is not merely a summary of the readings or lectures. Instead, it gives you a chance to reflect on the aspects of readings that you find interesting, contentious, or simply unclear/confusing. In the larger picture, a response paper is designed to help you "think through" the major themes in the readings and develop synthesis of the disparate ideas that you'd learn. Clearly, a response paper is not an op-ed or an expression of how you felt about the readings. Without at all leaving yourself out – and in full awareness of the assumptions you bring to your analysis – try to persuade your reader of your analysis. Without explicitly restating or summarizing readings you need to demonstrate good grasp of the relevant material. The key questions you should be asking yourself are the following:

1. Is this topic worth your time, effort and interest?
2. Is the topic manageable within the page-space prescribed for the assignment?
3. Is it worthy of the reader's time and interest?
4. Does it show what it was meant to show to the reader?
5. Is your paper convincing/persuasive?

The response paper should indicate that you have critically engaged the readings; large quotes from the readings are as unacceptable as a rambling current of thoughts unrelated to the subject at hand.

Book Report:

The purpose of the book report is to help you explore further a topic of your interest beyond what we were able to cover in the class. It is strongly recommended that by the end of the first month of classes you decide on the book you choose to write your report on. Make sure to consult with the instructor regarding the appropriateness of the book. Before you begin to write your book reports, you are **required** to read at least three "academic" book reviews of books similar to the one you have picked to read. The book report has two sections: Section I will be a carefully written summary of the purpose, structure, audience, content and major arguments and evidence provided; Section II will then critically evaluate and analyze the book and its significance in light of the relevant and

applicable material that you have learned throughout the semester. A book report that lacks engagement with the assigned readings and knowledge gained during the course will be deemed incomplete.

Research paper:

Research paper is expected to meet all the requirements of a research paper. These include

- a clearly thought-out problem or question,
- A clear thesis
- scholarly evidence
- Structured and easy-to-follow organization of ideas and transitions from an idea to another
- Proper language usage
- properly formatted citations and bibliography (use Chicago)

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

WEEK 1 (Aug 27-31): Study of “Islam in the Modern Age”: Methodological Considerations

Readings: *Modernity*, 3-54; *Islam in Transition*, 1-6; Lumbard, vii - xxiv

Note: Start reading an introductory book on Islam (especially those with no background in Islam)

- Introduction to the Course
- Framework for the study of “Islam in the Modern Age”
- Scholarly Study of “Islam in the Modern Age”: History, Methods and Approaches
- Defining the “Modern” and “Modernity”
- Origins of Modernity and The Enlightenment

WEEK 2 (Sep 3-Sep 7): What is Modernity? What is “Modern” about the Modern Age?

Readings: *Modernity*: 55-121 & 395-422;

- What is Modernity?
- Changing Social Structures
- Changing Cultural Norms
- Religion, Values and Ideology – Modernity and Religion

WEEK 3 (Sep 10-Sep 14): What is Religion, What is Islam? The Islamic Tradition

Readings: *Modernity*: 149-182; *Islam in the World Today*, Part One Section I, II, III & V (p.1-69 & 105-126); *Who Speaks*, Introduction & Chapter 1

Note: You must have completed your reading of the introductory book before the Monday class)

- Culture, its various meaning & “Modern” culture
- Origins and definitions of “Islam”
- Introduction to Islamic faith, practice and history
- Significance of “Islam” in the lives of Muslims then and now

WEEK 4 (Sep 17-Sep 21): Setting the Stage: From Pre-Colonial Times to the Colonial Age

Readings: Stephen Dale. “Islamic World in the Age of Expansion” (will be provided); *Modernity*, 184-227; Lumbard, Ch. 2; *Islam in the World Today*, 753-766, 792-799 & 830-857

Note: You will watch the movie “Lion of the Desert” the weekend before class.

- Three Zones: The Ottoman, Safavid and Mughal
- Political Structures, Culture and Social Life
- Religious Thought and Life

- Historical Details of the Colonial Period
- Colonial Perceptions of Islam and Muslims
- Intellectual and Cultural Transformations

WEEK 5 (Sep 24-Sep 28): What Went Wrong? Crises & Challenges of Colonialism

Readings: Syed Rizwan Zamir, “Chapter 1: Ali Naqvi’s Reception of the Crisis of Religion” (ProQuest Dissertations & Theses (PQDT) database; *Islam in the World Today*, 767-788 & 800-829; *Islam in Transition*, 7-23, 44-48, 93-99, 345-360; Nasr, Ch. 2

GROUP PRESENTATIONS I: Readings for this week

- Muslim Perceptions of the Colonial Masters and their Thought and Culture
- Diagnosing Crisis and Early Reactions
- Early Muslim Thinkers – Afghani, ‘Abdu, Tahawi, Sayyid Ahmad Khan

WEEK 6 (Oct 1 - Oct 5): “The Political Crisis”: The Question of Governance

Readings: *Islam in the World Today*, Part One Section IV, Part Two Section I & IV (p.70-104, 127-140 & 605-618); *Islam in Transition*, 24-31, 39-43, 49-92, 100-142 & 261-340.

GROUP PRESENTATIONS II: Readings for the Week

- Popular opinions
- Diversity of Political Arrangements within the Islamic world
- The Case of Iranian Revolution

WEEK 7 (Oct 8-12): State, Economy and Law (*Shari’ah*)

Readings: *Islam in the World Today*, 193-220; *Islam in Transition*, 228-260; *Who Speaks*, Ch.2

GROUP PRESENTATIONS III: Two countries per group

OCT 12: MIDTERM EXAM

FALL BREAK: Fri, Oct 12 (4:30 p.m.) - Wed, Oct 17 (8:30 a.m.)

WEEK 8 (Oct 17-19): Muslim Response I: Reformist/Modernist Tradition

Readings: *Islam in Transition*, 143-156 & 215-260; Soroush, 26-38 (selections – will be provided)

- Origins, Developments and Characteristics of the Modernist thought
- Its Major Proponents
- Significant Ideas and Method of Inquiry
- Influence and Impact

WEEK 9 (Oct 22-26): Response II – Fundamentalist/Salafi Tradition

Readings: *Islam in the World Today*, 682-696; *Global Salafism* (readings will be announced)

GROUP PRESENTATIONS IV: Selected Chapters (*Salafism*)

- Origins, Development & Characteristics of Salafi Movement
- Salafi Doctrine and its Critique
- Varieties of Salafism
- Its Major Proponents
- Significant Ideas and Method of Inquiry
- Influence and Impact

WEEK 10 (Oct 29-Nov 2): Did Something Go Wrong? Response III – The Tradition & the Traditionalists

Readings: *The Crisis of the Modern World* (complete); Nasr, Chapter 1, 5, 10 & 11

- Development and Characteristics of the Traditional Response
- ‘Traditional’ vs. ‘Traditionalist’
- Critique of the Modern World
- Centrality of the Sacred
- Revival of Islamic Thought, Culture and Rise of New Muslim Intellectual Elite

WEEK 11 (Nov 5-Nov 9): Special Topics: Gender and Jihad

Nov 5: In-Class Debate: *Which Muslim response to modernity is best and why? Why others are wrong?*

Nov 7: Response Paper is Due Today: *Which Muslim response to modernity in your informed opinion is the best and why? Why others are wrong?*

OR

Response Paper of your Choice (you need to get instructor’s approval of your topic no later than Nov 2)

Nov 7 & 9: **GROUP PRESENTATIONS V:** Readings for this week

Readings (Pick One Topic, One Section per group):

Gender:

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

OR

Jihad:

1. *Islam in the World*, 682-698; *Islam in Transition*, 393-470, Nasr “Jihad” (will be provided)
2. Lumbard, Ch. 1, 4, 6 & 9; *Who Speaks*, Ch. 3

WEEK 12 (Nov 12 -Nov 16): Clash of Civilizations? Islam and the West

Movie: *Mooz-lum* (you will watch this movie the weekend prior to the Nov 12 class)

Readings:

1. *Occidentalism* (complete);
2. *Islam in Transition*, 341-344, 366-381 & 507; Nasr, Ch. 11 & 13;
3. Lumbard, Ch. 5; *Who Speaks*, Ch.5

Nov 12 & 14: **GROUP PRESENTATIONS VI:** Readings for this week

Nov 16: IN-CLASS DEBATE II: ISLAM AND THE WEST

Nov 14: Book Report is Due Today

WEEK 13 (Nov 19): Islamic Spirituality – Rise or Decline?

Readings: *Islam in the World*, 697-710; Lumbard, Ch. 2; Nasr, Ch. 5 & 6

- Debate Surrounding Relevance and Place of Spirituality in the Modern World
- Defense and Criticisms of Islamic Spiritual Traditions

THANKSGIVING BREAK: Tue, Nov 20 (4:30 p.m.)-Mon, Nov. 26 (8:30 a.m.)

WEEK 14 (Nov 26-30): Globalization and the Future of Islam and Modernity

Readings:

1. *Modernity*, 436-502;
2. Lumbard, Ch. 8;
3. Nasr, Ch. 12

GROUP PRESENTATIONS VII: Readings for this week (pick one)

WEEK 15 (Dec 3-7): Group Project Presentations & Concluding Thoughts

IN-CLASS PRESENTATIONS & CLASS DISCUSSION

Dec 7: Group Research Paper is Due Today

December 10-12 (Optional Class Days): *If needed these will be used for presentations*