

**Islamic Thought and Practice: An Introductory Lecture**  
**Summer Session II 2015, MTWR 10:45am-12:45pm**  
**Maguire Building 101**

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***Course Description:*** What do we mean when we talk about Islam? How can a time, place, or people be identified as Islamic? Who is a Muslim and why? This course will introduce us to many different people who, across the centuries, each offered their own responses to these questions. The semester will open with an introduction to the early Islamic period, with pride of place given to the Qur'ān and the Prophet Muḥammad. From here, we will move on to discuss some general categories of Islamic belief, thought, practice, and experience. The remaining two-thirds of the course will consist of a series of “case studies” from across Islamic history. Each class session and its accompanying readings will focus on specific themes, places, times, and people. For each “case study” we will look at together, we will ask ourselves ‘How does this show us what Islam is?’ No previous study of Islam or Islamic languages is required for this course, although relevant personal experiences from elsewhere are welcome.

***Course Objectives:*** There are three major lessons the student will learn in this course. First, the student will come to understand something of the great complexity of Islam as a tradition. The historical reality called Islam is enormous, containing within itself billions of human lives and countless cultures and places. Therefore, instead of giving the student “everything you need to know about Islam,” by the end of the semester the student will have learned methods of approaching Islamic topics from various times, places, and perspectives. Second, this classroom will operate as a sphere of inter-religious dialogue. We are collectively learning about each others’ religious beliefs, while simultaneously putting our own opinions into public view. This course will help the student learn to discuss a critical but sensitive topic (i.e., religion) in a way that is at once informed, honest, and sensitive to those with other opinions. Third, critical reading skills will be developed inside and outside of the classroom. The student will learn to look at texts with eyes that are at once trusting and doubtful; compassionate and critical; that acknowledge foreignness but strive to transcend this.

***Required Texts:*** The major text we will be using will be:

Daniel W. Brown, *A New Introduction to Islam, Second Edition* (Oxford: WileyBlackwell, 2009).  
ISBN: 1405158077 (Usually around \$40 new, but much less for used or rented copies)

This textbook will be used in concert with primary texts from across history. These primary texts will also be provided by the instructor from a number of other sources.

***Grading:*** *Class Participation/Attendance (20%):* Does the student come to class, ask questions and find answers, and engage the assigned material? Does she express informed opinions while still taking counter-arguments seriously? Does she admit when she does not understand? One absence will be excused. Further absences will be dealt with at the instructor's discretion.

*Reading Reflections (30%):* Throughout the semester students will be asked to engage the readings and in-class discussion. These assignments will take several forms, but all will be based *directly* upon the readings and classwork (i.e., there will be no tricky questions).

*Midterm Exam (20%):* At the end of the first half of the semester, all students will be asked to recall significant pieces of information covered in class and in the readings. Questions will require answers of various length and complexity, including knowledge of major terms, people, and ideas.

*Final Exam (30%):* At the end of the semester, all students will need to recall a significant amount of information for a long-form exam. The questions will cover the entirety of the material covered in the class and in the readings.

Grading numerics will be as follows: 100-93 (A), 92-90 (A-), 89-87 (B+), 86-83 (B), 82-80 (B-), 79-77 (C+), 76-73 (C), 72-70 (C-), 69-66 (D), 65-0 (F).

***Technology in the Classroom:*** The digitization of information can be a major aid in education. However, as experience and several studies have shown, laptop use in the classroom is not conducive to learning. The odds of the student, her classmates, and the instructor being distracted are very, very high. Furthermore, it has also been shown that taking notes by hand is significantly better for learning and remembering information than typing is. Therefore, computers will not be permitted in the classroom. The use of phones and tablets is also not permitted, and all such devices are to be silenced.

***Helpful References:*** There is plenty to be found about Islam on the internet. However, there is also a great deal more misinformation. Please use the internet with **extreme caution**. If you are not sure if a website or online tool is what it claims to be, please consult the instructor. Here, however, are some sources that are usually reliable if you are in need of further information:

*The Encyclopedia of Islam* (either the 2nd or 3rd editions): For decades the *EI* was the gold standard for modern Islamic scholarship, and it roughly remains so today. It can be accessed online through the library with your ID and password. Each entry is written by a specialist in the given topic, and included in each entry is the most significant opinions on the given subjects, both traditional and modern, along with very helpful bibliographies. Remember that the *EI* is a perpetual work-in-progress, so some entries are outdated while others are the current state of the field.

*JSTOR*: The treasure trove of peer-reviewed articles. Also available through the library's off-campus login, *JSTOR* allows for specific searches for any number of topics in many languages. Again, make note of the date of the material you may find.

***Transliteration:*** A major issue for students new to Islamic studies is the use of Arabic terms. Because Arabic does not use the Western-Latin alphabet and has a number of sounds that are not reflected by any Latin letter, spellings may be very different for just one term. This can make it difficult to look up a word or name the student may not know. For instance, the central scripture for Muslims can be the Koran, the Qur'ān, the Quran, the Qur'aan, etc. Further, the English spelling may not always help in pronunciation. If the student is confused by the diacritical markers above and below the letters, just read the problematic term as if they are not there and write the term without them. For example, rather than write "sharī'a" (divine law), the student may just write "sharia," and so forth. Ask the instructor if you need any help. If the student does know some Arabic, here is a system of transliteration which is fast becoming the unofficial standard for English language scholarship: a/ā, b, t, th, j, ḥ, kh, d, dh, r, z, s, sh, ṣ, ḍ, ṭ, ḏ, ḥ, f, q, k, l, m, n, h, w/ū, y/ī. Please try to use this system if you are familiar with Arabic.

***Academic Integrity:*** At any principled institution of higher learning, you are expected to create original and thoughtful work that expresses honesty and quality. Because this is a Jesuit institution, we are also interested in the cultivation of the entire person. Therefore your ethical choices are part of what we learn here. So, all work that the student produces ought to be utterly her own. If you are not sure what is academically honest and what is not, please consult the instructor, who will be pleased to help you. Also, consult the policies of your given school for more information on academic integrity.

***Special Needs:*** The greatest tool in education is knowing when to ask for help. If in or beyond the classroom there is any special consideration the student requires in order to learn to the best of her abilities, please consult the instructor outside of the class hours, or contact the Office of Academic Support.

***Safe Space:*** The classroom and office hours is a forum for exploration and creative dialogue. No student is to feel pressured, bullied, silenced, or tokenized because of their sex, sexual/gender identity, personal history, religion, age, race, ethnic group, linguistic group, physical abilities, appearance, legal status, or politics. The instructor reserves the right to lead the class discussion, including ending discussions that are not productive. Please also note that the instructor is available to help students in times of personal crisis, however, under Title IX the instructor is ***obligated*** to report all knowledge of sexual misconduct and harassment. If you are in need of confidential assistance, please contact University Services and speak to the trauma or sexual assault/relationship violence liaisons immediately.

*(Tentative) Course Schedule:*

July 6	Introductions and Nomenclature
July 7	Islam in a Global Perspective
July 8	Arabia
July 9	The Pre-Islamic Near East
July 13	The Life of Muḥammad
July 14	The Qur'ān
July 15	The Tradition Literature
July 16	The Conquests
July 20	Religion of Empire
July 21	The Caliphate
July 22	<i><u>Midterm Exam</u></i>
July 23	Islamic Law
July 27	Islamic Theology and Philosophy
July 28	Ṣūfism
July 29	Turks, Crusaders, and Mongols
July 30	Revival and Reform
August 3	Islam and the West
August 4	The Turbulent Twentieth Century
August 5	Islam in the Twenty-First Century
August 6	<i><u>Final Exam</u></i>