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OFFICE HOURS: MONDAY 10-12, THURSDAY 9:30-10:30

ISLAM AND MODERNITY

Course Description

Much academic and popular writing by non-Muslims about Islam and its relationship to modernity falls into one of two camps. On the one hand, some scholars and journalists claim that many forms of Islam in modernity are derivative of, and thus largely reducible to, Enlightenment-centered ideas of what it means to be modern. Both “liberal” (or reformist) and “Islamist” forms of Islam fit into this larger framework, with the former “accepting” modernity and the latter “rejecting” modernity and, simultaneously, building on modern ideological scaffolding. On the other hand, some scholars and journalists posit the relationship between Islam and modernity as a clash of civilizations, wherein the values of the Enlightenment and those of Islam are wholly incompatible. In this view of an “age-old” battle between Christendom (and “post-Christendom” as some view the modern West) and Islamdom, Muslims become modern only by ceasing to be Muslim.

We will work to explore the relationship between Islam and modernity by critically examining these dominant modes of understanding. Both of the perspectives outlined above assume that modernity is a stable referent that points to a set of ideas and institutions that collectively constitute the modern world. Some of these include: democracy, civil society, bureaucratic (civil) government, capitalism, science, secularism, and human rights (and accompanying notions of the individual). Around the world, the many debates about each of these ideas and institutions show that there is no consensus about which term on the above list is most central to modernity and, moreover, what exactly each item means. The most effective way of unseating the bi-polar framework of “Islam” and “modernity” is to think about and investigate how and under what conditions, since the mid-nineteenth century, Muslim communities have asked the question: What does it mean to be modern? By exploring even some of the myriad answers to this query we gain some insight into how Muslims answer an equally (or more?) important question: What does it mean to be Muslim in the context of modernity?

Course Readings and Learning Goals

I have kept the readings at a manageable level. In return, I expect that you will come to class each day having completed them. You will see that I make extensive use of reserve readings (any reading that is not from a required text). Please treat these as you would treat readings from required texts. They appear in the syllabus with an (R) beside them. You can find them (1) via P-Web or, in some cases, on the course site itself.

Required Texts:

Esack, *On Being Muslim*

Hallaq, *An Introduction to Islamic Law*

Kadri, *Heaven on Earth*

Tripp, *Islam and the Moral Economy*

Zaman, *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam*

The readings from the first half of the course are largely scholarly in nature and will provide us with a strong foundation for the second half of the course, which includes much more engagement with primary sources. What follows is a general reading guide that will help you prepare for class and for writing assignments.

As you complete the reading for each secondary text, please always read for argument. You can do so with a few questions in mind:

- Can you identify a sentence or sentences that constitute the thesis statement?
- Can you state the author's thesis – even regarding a single chapter or article – succinctly in your own words?
- If part of a larger work, how does a particular chapter fit into the bigger picture? If a stand-alone piece, can you relate this reading to another that we have completed in the course?
- Can you identify at least two examples the author uses to support their argument?

As you read the primary documents with which we will work, please keep the following questions in mind:

- Who is writing? What do you think was their purpose in so doing?
- What is the larger relevant context? (Beware of anachronistic analysis!)
- What is the author or collator's relative position of power in the context of the document's production?
- If dealing with scripture, do these same questions apply? What are the implications of how we answer that question?
- How does this document support or call into question claims made by the authors of our secondary sources?

From a skill-building perspective, then, the **first and second learning goals** of this course are (1) reading scholarly sources for argument and presenting that argument and exemplary evidence in succinct terms and (2) cultivating the ability to offer contextually sensitive readings of primary source documents of different kinds.

Course Grading and Policies

Participation: 20%

As the weighty percentage indicates, I consider your participation in this course to be an essential component of its success. Participation includes regular attendance. In this vein, anything beyond two unexcused absences will result in a reduction of your participation grade. (I realize that things come up – the key to managing your various responsibilities is open communication.) Chronic tardiness will not help your cause, either. However, participation includes much more than attendance. Your participation grade is a reflection of your *engagement* with the course. I understand that not everyone chooses to speak in each class, but there are lots of other ways to show engagement: Make eye contact during lecture. When I request that you post to the course site, do so thoughtfully and punctually. Come by office hours now and then – even if you don't have a particular agenda. Be sure to proof-read and edit your written work carefully – the quality of your efforts in this regard plays a role in your participation grade, too.

Short assignments: 25%

- You will have one 2-to-3-page essay (10%) and one 3-to-5-page essay (15%). I will provide prompts a week in advance. The second short assignment will be a building block for your final paper.

In-class exam: 20%

- The in-class exam will test your knowledge of foundational concepts and vocabulary in the study of Islam

In-class writing assignment: 15%

- The in-class writing assignment will put an emphasis on advanced preparation and will test your ability to write a coherent, source driven essay during one class period.

Final project: 20%

- The final project will be 10-12 pages and will require that you focus on one “site of investigation” in our exploration of Islam and modernity, branching out into bodies of literature to develop depth of understanding in one area.

A note about written work: In all cases, unless otherwise noted, you are to use normal margins, 12-point font, and double spacing. In text (parenthetical, with author and page number) citation is acceptable when accompanied by a works cited page. Please include a minimal header – your name, the course name and, if you choose, a title. All papers should be double-sided and should have page numbers.

Course Policies:

- I will return your e-mail within 24 hours whenever possible. If you have questions about finding material, etc., you can always check with a colleague first (to likely receive a more immediate response).
- Know that I am pre-disposed to saying no to requests for extensions. I provide plenty of notice for each of the assignments – it is your responsibility to plan your time accordingly. That said, please do not be shy about approaching me for an extension if you have extenuating circumstances. As I mention above it is essential to keep lines of communication open.
- I do not want to hear about printer problems when assignments are due (in class), nor will I accept emailed papers (unless we have made previous arrangements). Please plan your time accordingly.
- If you are involved in an extra-curricular activity that will take you away from campus be sure to let me know beforehand. Regardless of the reason (except for dire family emergency, hospitalization), if I do not hear from you *before* you miss class I will assume you are simply skipping class.
- I take breaches of academic integrity very seriously. If I suspect that you have plagiarized I am left with no option but to bring the case to the administration, setting in motion the disciplinary processes put in place by the college. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism I suggest you consult the Student Handbook or me immediately.
- It is essential to me that everyone in the class has the same opportunity to thrive. Please let me know of any particular learning needs you have (assuming they are on file with the college) and we will work together to make sure that you get the most out of this learning experience.

Course Schedule

PART I: MODERNITY AND ITS TRANSFORMATIONS

Thursday, August 30

- Introduction to Islam and Modernity: exploring what we bring to class

INTERDISCIPLINARY EXPLORATION

Tuesday, September 4: Working with the concept of modernity

- Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question*, 113-149 (R)

Thursday, September 6: Working with the concept of religion

- Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World*, 325-365 (R)
- Tayob, *Religion in Modern Islamic Discourse*, 1-16 (R)

FOUNDATIONS: ISLAM AND COLLECTIVE LIFE

Tuesday, September 11

- Kadri, *Heaven on Earth*, 3-52

Thursday, September 13: **Short Assignment Due (in class)**

- Kadri, *Heaven on Earth*, 53-70
- Hallaq, *An Introduction to Islamic Law*, 1-37

Tuesday, September 18

- Kadri, *Heaven and Earth*, 71-106
- Hallaq, *An Introduction to Islamic Law*, 38-56

Thursday, September 20

- Hallaq, *An Introduction to Islamic Law*, 57-82

THEORIZING TRADITION AND MODERNITY

Tuesday, September 25

- Salvatore and Masud, *Islam and Modernity*, pp. 3-56 (R)

Thursday, September 27

- Asad, "The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam" (R)

Tuesday, October 2: **In-class exam**

SITES OF TRANSFORMATION, GROUNDS OF DEBATE

Thursday, October 4

- Hallaq, *An Introduction to Islamic Law*, 85-114
- Langhor, “Colonial Education Systems and the Spread of Local Religious Movements: The Cases of British Egypt and Punjab” (R)

Tuesday, October 9

- Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *The ‘Ulama in Contemporary Islam*, 1-59.

Thursday, October 11

- Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular*, 205-256 (R)

Tuesday, October 16

- Zaman, *The ‘Ulama in Contemporary Islam*, 60-86
- Starrett, *Putting Islam to Work*, 3-22 (R)

Thursday, October 18

- Starrett, *Putting Islam to Work*, 23-61. (R)

Tuesday, October 30

- Charles Tripp, *Islam and the Moral Economy*, 1-76.

PART II: BEING MODERN, BEING MUSLIM

MUHAMMAD ‘ABDUH AND THE QUESTION OF MODERNITY

Thursday, November 1

- Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age*, 130-161 (R)
- Muhammad ‘Abduh, “The necessity of religious reform” (R)
- Muhammad ‘Abduh, *Theology of Unity* (selections) (R)

Tuesday, November 6: **In-class writing exercise**

Thursday, November 8

- Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age*, 161-192 (“‘Abduh’s Egyptian Disciples: Islam and Modern Civilization”) (R)
- ‘Ali ‘abd al-Raziq, “The Problem of Caliphate” (R)

Tuesday, November 13

- Hallaq, *An Introduction to Islamic Law*, 115-162

ON CREATING A TRULY MUSLIM SOCIETY

Thursday, November 15

- Richard Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers*, 1-11, 209-259 (R)
- Hassan al-Banna, “Letter to a Young Muslim.” (R)

Tuesday, November 20: **Short Assignment Due (in class)**

- Charles Tripp, *Islam and the Moral Economy*, 150-201

Tuesday, November 27

- Sayyid Qutb, *This Religion of Islam* (R)

Thursday, November 29

- Zaman, *The ‘Ulama in Contemporary Islam*, 87-110
- Mawdudi, *Political Theory of Islam* (R)

GUIDING THE LIVES OF MUSLIMS IN THE MODERN WORLD

Tuesday, December 4

- Zaman, *The ‘Ulama in Contemporary Islam*, 144-151
- Jakob Skovgaard-Petersen and Bettina Graf, “Introduction,” in *Global Mufti: The Phenomenon of Yusuf al-Qaradawi*, 1-16 (R)
- Qaradawi, *The Lawful and Prohibited in Islam* (selections) (R)

Thursday, December 6

- Farid Esack, *On Being a Muslim: Finding a Religious Path in the World Today*

Tuesday, December 11

- Farid Esack, *On Being a Muslim: Finding a Religious Path in the World Today*

Thursday, December 13

- Wrap-up