

ISLAM IN THE MODERN ERA
HIS-REL 267-01 (SPRING 2016)
GRINNELL COLLEGE

CALEB ELFENBEIN
ELFENBEI@GRINNELL.EDU
STEINER HALL 201, X. 4352
OFFICE HOURS: T 1-2, F 2-3

Throughout our lives, we are members of myriad communities, some intensely local and others more distant and abstract. What is the nature of the attachments that draw us into these communities? Toward what ends (goals) do these communities exist? Who decides what these goals are and how best to reach them? What are our responsibilities to others in our communities? What are the bases of these responsibilities? We can just as easily ask these questions about communities distant from us in time and space—they are, in other words, the kinds of questions appropriate to humanistic inquiry. In this course, we will be asking them in specific relation to Muslim communities in Egypt and South Asia during the modern period. Of particular concern are the historical processes through which conceptions of community changed during this time, most especially regarding the idea of the common good or, in other words, the goals of collective life. After establishing a framework for our investigation, we will turn to a general account of how Muslim communities defined and maintained collective life prior to the modern era. We will then explore modern colonial histories in Egypt and South Asia, investigating reforms in many areas related to collective life, such as education and law, as well as the religious reform movements that emerged over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Together, these areas of inquiry will help us understand how Muslim communities in these contexts came to ask—and answer—the above questions in transformed ways during the modern period, especially concerning the place of religion in collective life.

COURSE TEXTS:

Samira Haj, *Reconfiguring Islamic Tradition*

Wael Hallaq, *An Introduction to Islamic Law*

Charles Tripp, *Islam and the Moral Economy*

Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam*

These texts form the backbone of our course, but throughout the semester we will also be working with articles or excerpts from books. Some of these readings are accessible via “Library Resources” on our Blackboard course site, in which case they will have an “R” next to them on the syllabus, or on the course site itself, in which case they will have “pweb” next to them.

You can read scholarly sources 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 or chapters 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 her or his argument?
- How does the reading relate to the broader questions we discussed at the beginning of the course?

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

- Who is writing? What do you think was her or his purpose in so doing?
- What is the larger relevant context? (Beware of anachronistic analysis!)
- What is the author's relative position of power in the context of the document's production?
- How does this document support or call into question claims made by the authors of our secondary sources?

From a skill-building perspective, then, **two important 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.

COURSE EVALUATION AND POLICIES

Engagement: 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, and 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 you proof-read and edit *all* your written work carefully—the quality of your efforts in this regard plays a role in your engagement grade, too. At the same time, nothing illustrates engagement like a willingness to be a vocal participant

in our course. In the end, your (individual and collective) engagement with the course will be a significant determinant of what kind of experience we have together.

Vocabulary Quiz: 5%

Weekly Journal: 10%

Each week, you will be responsible for writing approximately 250-300 words relating to course readings and discussion. For the first three weeks, your journal entries will be brief treatments of the readings built around the above “scholarly source” reading questions as well as a note about something from readings or discussion that was of particular interest to you, that helped you grab onto some of the larger ideas or themes we discuss. After this initial period, your weekly entries should include (pared down) treatments of sources (using readings questions as appropriate), a statement about how the reading relates to the idea of a tradition, which as you will see is a core theoretical framework for the course, and something from the readings or discussion that was of particular interest to you. I also encourage you to use the journal as a means of keeping track of your personal reflections on course material and discussion. I will not formally grade/comment on each of your journal entries (though I will be reading them), but the more time and effort you put into them the easier your reflection essays, which I describe below, will be. The “points of interest” from your journals will also figure centrally into your final essay, and any personal reflection you do will make the final reflection essay easier. You will be responsible for completing a total of thirteen journal entries. They should be complete by noon on Sunday. The journal is thus the foundation for a **third learning goal** in the course: developing the capacity to reflect on material over time, developing new understandings of things you have already learned based on new information or material.

Reflection Essays: 20%

You will be responsible for completing two two-page, single-spaced, reflection essays during the semester (10% each). Successful essays will make specific reference to your weekly journal entries and course materials, using your “points of interest” to reflect on how they illuminate core themes of the course.

Short Essay: 5%

Early in the semester, you will complete a two-page, double-spaced essay in response to a prompt based on course readings and discussion.

Mid-Term: 15%

You will have a timed take-home mid-term.

Class Session Leadership: 5%

In the second half of the semester, you will each work with a group to plan and lead small-group activities for a class sessions around questions related to course material.

Final Essay: 15%

You will complete a five-to-seven-page, double-spaced, essay drawing together course materials and themes. Successful essays will use at least five of the points of interest you articulated in your weekly journals to illuminate what you consider to be the course “thesis.”

Final Reflection: 5%

Reflecting the larger liberal arts and humanistic settings for the course, this final three-page assignment provides you with an opportunity for more personal reflection about how the course may or may not have affected the way you think about one or more of the core questions of the class. Specific reference to journal entries a plus.

Course Policies:

- Email policy part I: I am generally good about returning email in a reasonable amount of time. Please always reach out to your colleagues first with logistical questions about our course; you can do so via the email function on the course site. If no one can figure out the answer, then by all means get in touch. You can always ask in class, too, and you will find that I am quite accessible outside of class. I’d much rather meet you in person—and you can email to set up an appointment! [This policy does not apply to real emergencies.]
- Email policy part II: I encourage you to use email to share interesting news or course-related information you come across. This is actually a great way to help promote a collective learning experience.
- Unless I instruct otherwise, submit all written work to elfenbei.grinnell@gmail.com. Please be sure to submit all work as pdf. The subject heading of your submission should include “HIS-REL 267” and the name of the assignment. Assignments are always due by 5 p.m. on the due date.
- 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. It is essential to keep lines of communication open.
- If I suspect that you are using computers in class for anything other than note taking or document viewing, you will lose your computer privileges for the remainder of the semester. (If I suspect that you are texting in class I will ask that you leave your phone with me at the start of each class. Cell phones should be set on silent.)
- If you are involved in an extracurricular 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.

- Breaches of academic integrity will result in an official disciplinary process guided by the Dean's office. Although I will inform you of any action I take, I will not negotiate with you privately about such matters. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism I suggest you consult the Student Handbook 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

FRAMEWORKS

January 26

- Introductions

January 28

- Craig Calhoun, "The Public Good as a Social and Cultural Project." (R)

February 2

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

February 4

- Frederick Cooper, "Introduction: Colonial Questions, Historical Trajectories" (R)

FOUNDATIONS FOR UNDERSTANDING HISTORICAL CHANGE

February 9

- Hallaq, *An Introduction to Islamic Law*, 1-56

February 11

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

February 16: Vocabulary quiz

- Hallaq, *An Introduction to Islamic Law*, 83-114
- William Dalrymple, "The East India Company: the original corporate raiders" (pweb)

RE-FORMING COMMUNITY, RE-FORMING ISLAM: LAW AND EDUCATION

February 18

- Zaman, *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam*, 1-37
- Group Work: Divorce in Colonial South Asia

February 23: SHORT ESSAY DUE

- Zaman, *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam*, 60-86

February 25

- Asad, "Thinking about Secularism and Law in Egypt" (R)
- Muhammad 'Abduh, "The Necessity of Religious Reform" (pweb)

March 1

- Starrett, *Putting Islam to Work*, 3-19 (R)

March 3

- Starrett, *Putting Islam to Work*, 23-61 (R)
- Archival Materials Relating to Educational Reform (pweb)

RE-FORMING COMMUNITY, RE-FORMING ISLAM: ECONOMICS

March 8: FIRST REFLECTION ESSAY DUE

- Tripp, *Islam and the Moral Economy*, 1-45

March 10

- Tripp, *Islam and the Moral Economy*, 46-76

March 15

- Individual Meetings

March 17

- Individual Meetings

March 18: Mid-Term Due by 5 p.m.

SOURCES OF RE-FORM

April 5

- Haj, *Reconfiguring Islamic Tradition*, 1-30 and 67-108

April 7

- Haj, *Reconfiguring Islamic Traditions*, 109-152

April 12

- Hallaq, *An Introduction to Islamic Law*, 115-139
- Haj, *Reconfiguring Islamic Tradition*, 153-187
- Archival Materials Relating to Legal Reform Re: Divorce (pweb)

NEW TRADITIONS? ECONOMICS AND MORAL ECONOMY

April 14

- Tripp, *Islam and the Moral Economy*, 77-102

April 19

- Tripp, *Islam and the Moral Economy*, 103-150

April 21

- Charles Tripp, *Islam and the Moral Economy*, 150-201
 - Focus your reading on 150-167, skim remainder
- Sayyid Qutb, *Social Justice in Islam*, pp. 37-49, 51-53 and 79-92 (pweb)

NEW TRADITIONS? COMMUNITY AND POLITICAL FORMATIONS

April 26

- Hallaq, *An Introduction to Islamic Law*, 140-162
- Zaman, *The 'Ulama in Contemporary Islam*, 87-110
- Mawdudi, *Political Theory of Islam* (pweb)

April 28

- Zaman, *The 'Ulama in Contemporary Islam*, 144-180 (181-192 recommended)

REFLECTIONS ON THE COMMON GOOD

May 3: SECOND REFLECTION ESSAY DUE

- Muhammad Qasim Zaman, "Contestations on the Common Good" (R)

May 5

- Jakob Skovgaard-Petersen and Bettina Graf, "Introduction," in *Global Mufti: The Phenomenon of Yusuf al-Qaradawi*, 1-16 (R)
- Armando Salvatore, "Qaradawi's *maslaha*: from ideologue of the Islamic awakening to sponsor of transnational public Islam," in *Global Mufti: The Phenomenon of Yusuf al-Qaradawi*, 239-250 (R)

May 10

- Work Day/Wrap-Up

May 12

- Work-Day/Wrap-Up