

**Islam**  
**RLST 220**  
**Tuesday/Thursday 7:10-10:00PM Logan Room**  
**Fall '04**

Professor Debra Majeed  
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### **Explanation of Syllabus**

This syllabus provides an overview of the course, course organization, requirements and methods of evaluation. This syllabus is subject to change; you will be notified in class and/or by email of any modifications to the course. It is your responsibility to be aware of any such changes.

### **Course Overview**

This is an introduction to Islam or, for some of you, an introduction to the religion as Muslims perceive it themselves. The course is designed for students with a general interest in the "Islamic world," the cultural and historical aspects of Islam, or in the life, practices and beliefs of Muslims. The course focuses on a number of themes selected to characterize some of the many ways Muslims have understood their religion, themselves and their world.

Students are not expected to have any prior knowledge of Islam, and are encouraged to approach the materials in this course with an open but critical academic perspective.

This study of religion and of Islam places particular emphasis on an analytical understanding of culture as a human, and especially social, construct. In our attempt to compare diverse cultural products and generalize about the human condition, the study of religion and Islam may be more appropriately described in relation to anthropology rather than theology.

### **Purposes of the Course**

- 1) To introduce the manifold religious themes which characterize the development, expansion and opposition of and attraction to the fastest growing religion in the world.
- 2) To examine the rituals and beliefs of Muslims and the diverse perspectives that exist among Muslims from the perspective of Muslims.
- 3) To broaden our learning – with understanding -- about Islam and Muslims.
- 4) To provide an opportunity for non-Muslims to intellectually engage adherents of Islam.

- 5) To access the influence of media groups and other online resources to the propagation and contextualization of Islam and the depictions of Muslims.
- 6) To utilize inter-disciplinary methods and perspectives within Beloit's liberal arts tradition.

### **Required Readings:**

Karen Armstrong, *Muhammad: Biography of the Prophet*  
 Carl W. Ernst, *Following Muhammad*  
 Jane I. Smith, *Islam in America*  
 Asma Barlas, *Believing Women in Islam*  
 Edward W. Said, *Covering Islam*

### Additional readings:

You may receive periodic handouts and be assigned readings from other online sources as well as The Holy Qur'an. You are not required to purchase a translation of the Qur'an; instead you may access an English translation online at <http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/HolKora.html>

### **Students with Disabilities**

If you have a disability and would like to speak to someone about possible accommodations, please visit the LSSC (Learning Support Services Center) located on the first floor of 643 Church St. You will need to provide appropriate documentation of your disability to Diane Arnzen, Director of the LSSC. If you wish to receive accommodations in my class please provide me the LSSC Accommodation Verification Letter dated for this semester as soon as possible so your learning needs may be appropriately met.

### **Course Requirements**

Class sessions will combine seminar, audiovisual, lecture, a field trip, and small group formats with emphasis on student discussion of primary and secondary sources. Significant outside engagement is also required and attendance is mandatory. Your final grade will be determined by points earned from six areas of involvement:

Class Membership	worth up to 15 percent of final grade
Quality of Written Work	worth up to 20 percent of final grade
Intellectual Journal	worth up to 15 percent of final grade
Creative Autobiography	worth up to 10 percent of final grade
Discussion Leadership	worth up to 15 percent of final grade
Collaborative Project	worth up to 25 percent of final grade

**15%** Class Membership: Your prompt arrival and attendance are essential to the success of this learning experience. You are expected to complete reading assignments by the date indicated, and be prepared to contribute to class discussions about the readings, lectures, presentations, and other feedback. No late assignments or make-up tests will be accepted unless there is a clear medical emergency or death in the family. **You are allowed TWO absences.** I encourage you to save them for when you are sick or must

attend an important event. (If you are a member of a sports team in competition this semester, see me before our next class.) For every absence beyond the allotted limit of two, you will lose one letter grade from your final grade. So, for example, if you are absent four times during the course and you have an “A” average, you will earn a “B” for the course. It is your responsibility to keep track of your absences and to keep up with the class. If you are absent, it is up to you to obtain class notes and/or handouts from one of your classmates.

- 20%** Quality of Written Work: Experience has encouraged me to make the quality of written assignments a separate area of evaluation. You are encouraged to follow the directions given to each assignment, to submit work that you have proofread and is an articulate response to the assignment. Each written assignment should: include your name, title of assignment, word count, date and title of course. If the assignment is submitted as a hardcopy (rather than via email), you should also number each page and staple submissions in excess of a single page. A helpful resource in this regard is Diana Hacker’s *A Pocket Style Manual* fourth edition. It is available online via [dianahacker.com/pocket](http://dianahacker.com/pocket).
- 15%** Intellectual Journal: This assignment serves as an encouragement to you to keep up with your reading, enhance class discussion (since more students will have read the assignment), and offer a forum to record your personal responses to the readings, thereby personalizing the course and, at the same time, sharpening your skills in thinking critically and writing fluidly. Journal entries must be typed and approximately 250 words. Journal entries may be submitted via email or as a hard copy, and are due each Tuesday, by 7 p.m., beginning Week 2. Your entries will be returned to you by the next class period. You should keep all entries, for the entire journal is due on the last day of class. Each journal entry should (1) quote or summarize one passage in one assigned text for that one day and (2) record your honest and informed reflections on the reading. As with ALL written work, be sure that the journal entry includes your name and the date of the class. Also, for this assignment include journal entry number. Each entry should engage the ideas expressed in the text in some direct and thoughtful way. These entries will be graded as either acceptable (check) or unacceptable (minus). A check means that you handed it in on time (by 7 p.m.) and followed the instructions fully. **An entry which earns a check minus may be resubmitted only once**, after consultation with me, but must be received within 48 hours. Late entries will be returned unevaluated. As with other assignments, you control how well you do on this journal assignment since your grade is determined by how many acceptable journal entries you submit (ones with a check, that is). Here is the scale:
- A=14 entries;
  - B=11 entries;
  - C= 8 entries;
  - D= 6 entries (scattered over at least 5 weeks);
  - F= 4 or fewer entries.

Although most of the journal entries will focus on the readings, there are three exceptions: (1) one journal entry should respond to a film; (2) another journal entry should respond to a lecture, performance outside of class, from items listed on the Schedule; (3) you may choose to write a journal entry on the visit to the Islamic art exhibit at the Ackland Art Museum. These special event journal entries should be turned in within a couple of days after the event, and for either of the first two items, you will need to think about how to relate the event to themes discussed in class.

The journal entry for the last day of class is required of everyone.

**10%** Creative Autobiography: 1,000 words.

Give yourself an Arabic name, tribe, and identity in the lifetime of the Prophet Muhammad. You can be a pagan, a Jew, Christian, or Muslim or..... Write a first-person account of your dealings with Muhammad and his movement. You are an individual history has discovered until now. Do not take on a famous personality. Essay should reflect knowledge of and research about Arabia (what today is called Saudi Arabia) in the time of the Prophet as well as the lived experiences of Prophet Muhammad.

**15%** Discussion Leadership:

**Part One:** Beginning Week 2, a student will briefly summarize for the class an article dealing with Islam or Muslims that appeared in an online news sources. Up to 5 points is devoted to this “Islam in the News” assignment. You will post the link to the article on the course webpage 48 hours before class so that co-learners (classmates and professor) may download the article and bring to class. During, your presentation, you will use the classroom’s online access to project the article on the large screen. Students will be encouraged to keep a file of these articles, the contents of which may appear in the mid-term exam and may be helpful for the final project.

**Part Two:** In the second part of this assignment (worth up to 10 points, you and a partner will be responsible to use no more than 12 minutes to introduce the topic for one class session. Your team will post an outline of your presentation to the course web page 48 hours before the class you lead. Students then will be able to print out that outline at home so they have a copy to write on when they come to class. You will then open the web page in class to your outline and refer to it as you speak. Send the class outlines to me and I will post it for you. Each team must meet with me three class sessions before your turn to introduce the topic of the day. I will give you as much help as you need on this, including suggestions about extra reading and presentation style.

**25%** Collaborative Project: “Citizenship and Religious Understanding: As a *Muslim*, What do YOU mean by Islam?” is the overarching theme of this project. In groups of two, three, or four, you will select a topic related to this theme. With more than one billion Muslims around the world, one

might say your possibilities are endless. Still, consideration could be devoted to such topics as Ahmadiyyah Movement in Islam, Liberal Islam, Progressive Islam, the Nation of Islam, Fundamentalist Islam, Islamic Ethics, Gay and Lesbian Muslims. If you desire and we are able to accommodate you, your project could make use of the methodology of your major or address issues in on-going research. Obviously, by the theme, your research needs to include conversations with Muslims aligned with your research topic. Thus, your project must include evidence of personal interactions with at least two Muslims – one of whom may not be affiliated with Beloit College. The professor must approve your topic. The research you conduct on your topic is to be published on the course website. Your project may consist of a critical essay, video, powerpoint presentation or oral history. It may include music and other forms of art. Further details for this project will be given throughout the semester. Your timeline is:

- Submit in writing (or via email) names, email addresses and telephone numbers of collaborative group and identity of project leader to whom professor will communicate team by Tuesday, September 14.
- Submit topic, Tuesday, September 21.
- Submit research proposal, Tuesday, October 5.
- Progress Report #1, Tuesday, November 9.
- Progress Report #2, Tuesday, November 30.
- Presentation on research and submission, Thursday, December 9.

## Course Calendar

### **Overview: The Study of Islam and the Nature of Religion**

#### WEEK 1

August 31                      Film: "Chocolat"  
Review of syllabus

### **Civilizations & Islam**

Sept. 2                      Video: "Islam: History, Society and Civilization"  
(Thursday)                Readings: Ernst, Preface and ch. 1

#### WEEK 2

September 7                **Islam in the Media: Liz**  
Readings: Armstrong, pp. 1-71  
**DUE:** Weekly journal entry is due today and all succeeding Tuesdays unless otherwise stipulated.

### **Muhammad and the Background of Islam**

September 9                **Islam in the Media: Raphael**  
(Thursday)                Video: "Muhammad: Legacy of a Prophet"  
Readings: Ernst, pgs 73-93; Esposito handout, pgs 1-17

### **The Qur'an**

#### WEEK 3

September 14                **Class travels to Madison to meet with members of the Muslim Student Association at UW Madison.**  
Readings: Ernst, pgs 93-107; Armstrong, chapter 4; Barlas, chapter 1; "In the Beginning, There Were the Holy Books" at [http://www.bintjbeil.com/articles/en/020211\\_islam.html](http://www.bintjbeil.com/articles/en/020211_islam.html);  
"Gender based Exclusion at a Muslim Student Association" at [http://theamericanmuslim.org/2003jul\\_comments.php?id=347\\_0\\_21\\_0\\_C](http://theamericanmuslim.org/2003jul_comments.php?id=347_0_21_0_C)

#### WEEK 4

September 21                **Islam in the Media: Anne**  
Readings: Barlas, chapter 2; Sur'ahs 1 and 53 at <http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/HolKora.html>  
"Brief History of the Compilation of the Qur'an" at <http://www.usc.edu/dept/MSA/quran/compilationbrief.html>;  
"Interpretation and Exceptionalism" at [http://www.theamericanmuslim.org/2002aug\\_comments.php?id=28\\_0\\_13\\_0\\_C](http://www.theamericanmuslim.org/2002aug_comments.php?id=28_0_13_0_C); "On Interpreting the Qur'an" at [http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=story\\_10-9-2002\\_pg3\\_3](http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=story_10-9-2002_pg3_3); "From the Heart of the Qur'an Belt" at <http://www.unc.edu/%7Ecernst/rsnews.htm>; EXPLORE  
"Qur'an and Qur'anic Interpretation" at <http://www.uga.edu/islam/quran.html#qur'an>

## **Islam and Law**

WEEK 5

September 28

### **Islam in the Media: Nathan**

Readings: Ernst, chapter 4; Armstrong, chapters 5-6; Barlas, 3; "Crisis of Male Epistemology in Islamic Jurisprudence" at <http://www.people.virginia.edu/~aas/article/article1.htm>

**DUE**: Creative Autobiography

**FIELD Trip**: Sunday, Oct. 3. Van departs at noon for "Symposium on the Abrahamic Faiths" in Chicago. We should return around 6:30 p.m.

## **Ritual Practices and Beliefs**

WEEK 6

October 5

### **Class held at Clara Muhammad School, Milwaukee, WI**

Readings: Armstrong, chapter 7; "Some Basic Muslim Beliefs" in "A Brief Illustrated Guide to Understanding Islam," Chapter 3: General Information on Islam at <http://www.islam-guide.com/>

WEEK 7

October 12

### **Islam in the Media: Meggan & Logan**

Video: "The Guests of God"

NO Readings BUT:

**Web assignment** (report in class): Visit at least three different American Muslim groups' web pages. Be prepared to answer three questions: Who are the sponsors of these sites? What seems to be their motivations? How do they present themselves for the non-Muslim audience?

## **Mid-term Break**

## **Islamic Art**

WEEK 8

October 26

### **Islam in the Media: Philip & Michael**

Video: "Islamic Art"

Readings: "Art and Architecture" in *The Oxford History of Islam* (on reserve)

## **Sufism**

WEEK 9

November 2

### **Islam in the Media: David & Emily P.**

Readings: Ernst, chapter 5; Armstrong, chapter 8; Esposito handout, pgs 100-109

## **Shi'ism**

WEEK 10

November 9

### **Islam in the Media: Zeke & Erika**

Readings: Esposito handout, pgs 109-114; Armstrong, chapter 9; explore “The Faith of Shi’a Islam” website at <http://home.swipnet.se/islam/shia-faith.htm>. Be prepared to discuss two of the six chapters.

## **Women and Islam**

WEEK 11

November 16

**Islam in the Media: Emily E. & Andy**

Video:

Readings: Barlas, chapters 4-7; “Aisha’s Legacy” at [http://www.findarticles.com/cf\\_0/mOJQP/2002\\_May/87424387/p1/article.jhtml](http://www.findarticles.com/cf_0/mOJQP/2002_May/87424387/p1/article.jhtml); “Is Head Cover for Women Mandatory in Islam?” at [http://www.irfi.org/thepeoplewhothink.org/Women/is\\_head\\_cover\\_for\\_women\\_mandator.htm](http://www.irfi.org/thepeoplewhothink.org/Women/is_head_cover_for_women_mandator.htm)

## **Islam in the West, Islam & the West**

WEEK 12

November 23

No class: Professor attending American Academy of Religion Conference

Readings: Smith, through chapter 4

WEEK 13

November 30

**Islam in the Media: Kelly & Janna**

Video:

Readings: Smith, to end; “Growing Presence of American Converts to Islam” at <http://www.wrmea.com/backissues/0190/9001042.htm>

## **The Resurgence of Islam in America**

WEEK 14

December 7

**(Tentative) Class to meet with members of the contemporary Nation of Islam at Mosque #xx in Milwaukee**

Islam in the Media: \_\_\_\_\_

Readings: Turner handout; Barboza handout

December 9  
(Thursday)

Readings: None

**DUE**: Collaborative Project presentations

## **Islam and the Media**

WEEK 15

December 14

Final class session

Video:

**Islam in the Media: Luke & Scott**

Readings: Said, in its entirety

**DUE**: Intellectual Journal