

Program in Arabic and Middle Eastern Studies
Department of Classics
University of Notre Dame

Introduction to Islamic Civilization
MELC 20070

Fall 2021
TR 2:00-3:15 pm
Office hours: zoom meeting by appointment
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Code of Honor:

The Code of Honor will be strictly applied as described in *The Academic Code of Honor Handbook*. Students will not give or receive aid on exams. This includes, but is not limited to, viewing the exams of others, sharing answers with others, and using books or notes while taking the exam. For the group project, teams must work completely independently. Relying on solutions from other groups, whether or not they are currently in the course, constitutes plagiarism.

Course Description:

This course is designed to introduce students to Islamic civilization and Muslim cultures and societies. As the second largest and the fastest growing religion in the world today, Islam shares many features with the other monotheistic traditions of Judaism and Christianity. What we will explore in this course, however, is the peculiarly Muslim response to the concepts of one God and divine guidance in human history. Our focus is, therefore, to view Islam as Muslims see it. To this end we will read and discuss translated source materials by Muslims in addition to works of academic scholarship on Islamic civilization.

The course will cover the foundations of Islamic belief, worship, and institutions, along with the evolution of sacred law (*al-shari'a*) and theology, as well as various aspects of intellectual and cultural activities. The Qur'an (Koran) and the life of the Prophet Muhammad will be examined. Both Sunni and Shi'i perspectives will be considered. Major Sufi personalities will be discussed to illuminate the mystical and popular tradition in Islam. Some aspects of Muslim contributions to the art and science will be explored. Although the course is concerned more with the history of ideas than with modern Islam as such, it has relevance for understanding contemporary Muslim attitudes and political, social, and cultural trends in the Muslim world today.

Class Formant:

Our tools for the course are lectures and discussions, films and online media, readings and our own active interpretation of the materials. We divide the lectures and readings into three units: (1) *Historical survey* will give a general overview of the history of the Muslim world from the advent of Islam to the present day; it will be complemented by (2) *Thematic presentations* of the Islamic institutions (doctrine, law, theology) and cultural heritage (arts, literature, science). (3) *Special topics* will address issues concerning modern Islam.

Learning goals:

The ultimate goal of this course is for students to gain a better understanding of the Muslim peoples and their culture and societies within the broader context of Islamic civilization.

By the end of the semester, students should be able to:

1. Obtain an overview of the canons and basic tenets of Islam as a world religion;
2. Identify major social and political trends in Islamic history from the rise of Islam to present;
3. Recognize major technical terms and their concepts;
4. Acquire some knowledge of Islamic culture (art and architecture, science, intellectual life);
5. Gain a balanced understanding of the religion of Islam and of its meaning for Muslims, with a deepened insight into Islamic tradition and its significance on current affairs.

Textbooks:

1. Daniel Brown, *A New Introduction to Islam*, third edition, Wiley-Blackwell Publishing, 2017, ISBN: 9781118953464 (pbk)
2. Andrew Rippin and Jan Knappert, eds., *Textual Sources for the Study of Islam*, University of Chicago Press, 1990
3. Ross Dunn, *The Adventures of Ibn Battuta: A Muslim traveler of the 14th century* (library online access)
4. Library course-reserves (online)

Evaluation:

The semester grade is determined as follows:

Attendance and participation	30%
Mid-term	25%
Final exam (take-home)	25%
Term paper: book review	20%

Readings and lectures:

I: Formation and expansion

Week One

- T Orientation
R Islam and Islamic world: an overview
Reading: Brown, 1-17.
- Week Two
T Pre-Islamic Near East
Reading: Brown, 19-54.
R Muhammad
Reading: Brown, 55-75.
- Week Three
T Qur'an I: history
Readings: Brown, 77-88; Rippin, 1-4.
R Qur'an II: format and content
Reading: Rippin, 34-42.
- Week Four
T Qur'an III: interpretation and commentary
Readings: Brown, 88-101; Rippin, 42-59.
R The Tradition: Hadith and Sunna I
Reading: Brown, 103-20.
- Week Five
T The Tradition: Hadith and Sunna II
Reading: Rippin, 4-10, 59-80.
R Islamic conquest
Readings: Brown, 123-52; Rippin, 80-82.
- II: Institutions and cultural heritage**
- Week Six
T The caliphate; Islamic political theory
Readings: Brown, 153-70.
R Islamic Law I: sources and principles
Readings: Brown, 173-83; Rippin, 12-15.
- Week Seven
T Islamic Law II: rituals and duties
Readings: Brown, 183-93; Rippin, 10-12, 89-105; Dunn, 65-80 (chap. 4)
R Islamic Law III: in practice
Reading: Rippin, 105-15; Dunn, 183-210 (chap. 9)
- Week Eight
T review for mid-term
R Mid-term

Week Nine Break

Week Ten

- T Theology and philosophy I
Readings: Brown, 195-210; Rippin, 15-20, 115-26.
- R Theology and philosophy II
Readings: Brown, 210-17; Ibn Tufayl (e-reserve)

Week Eleven

- T Sufism I: origins
Readings: Brown, 219-33; Rippin, 25-29.
- R Sufism II: masters
Readings: Brown, 233-42; Rippin, 158-75; Rumi (e-reserve).

Week Twelve

- T Art and architecture; science and medicine
Readings: Grabar, Sandler, al-Khalili (e-reserve)

III. Challenges of modernity

- R The decline: wars, and crisis
Readings: Brown, 245-62; Dunn, 137-56, 266-87 (chaps. 7, 12)

Week Thirteen

- T Revival or reform: Muslim perspectives
Readings: Brown, 263-89; Rippin, 175-79
- R Islam in West thought
Reading: Hourani (e-reserve)

Week Fourteen

- T discuss final project (book review)
- R Thanksgiving

Week Fifteen

- T Issues of modernity: state and community
Readings: Brown, 291-317; Rippin, 179-85, 192-97.
- R Islamic civilization: past and future
Readings: Brown, 317-51; Rippin, 134-57, 185-90.

Week Sixteen

- T Presentation (book review)

Final take-home exam and book review due (by e-mail) in finals week (time TBA)

