Traditions of Islam
RELIGION 220  M/W  2:15 PM-4:05 PM

Bucksbaum 269
Course Description

Who is Muḥammad? Why is his face veiled? What power is signified by the fiery halo around him? As an in-depth introduction to the traditions of Islam, this course focuses on such questions in order to motivate our quest for sympathetic and reasoned understanding of Islamic faith and practice. Though historically misunderstood or ignored by non-Muslims, emulation of and devotion to the Prophet are central elements in Islamic self-understanding. Thus the course begins by exploring Muḥammad? s prophetic status as a Messenger of God (rasūl Allāh) and his exemplary role in Islamic ethical and mystical traditions. The latter part of the course will go on to highlight the Prophet? s political leadership in the context of Islam? s Arabian origins and its rapid expansion into a world culture. Finally, we will consider broader questions of Islam in the contemporary world, especially issues of race, gender and conflict. By focusing on the complex personality of the Prophet, the course aims to situate these pressing questions in relation to the rich complex of Islam? s ethical, devotional, mystical and political dimensions. In the process, I hope that students will develop both a personal understanding of and a sense of profound encounter with the Prophet of Islam.

Office Hours

Tuesday & Thursday, 9:30-11:30. If you would like to meet with me during office hours, please sign up on the weekly schedule, which will be posted on my office door. If you have a regular scheduling conflict with my office hours, please let me know within the first two weeks of class.

Required Texts


Lincoln, Bruce. Holy Terrors: Thinking about Religion after September 11. University of Chicago Press, 2003. (Note: Dr. Lincoln will give a lecture at Grinnell, 2/15-
17.)


*Other readings will be posted on Pioneertoweb (Blackboard) and will be marked (B) in the reading schedule below. Students are required to print out posted readings and have them in hand in class.*

**Course Requirements**

The following components will comprise the final grade for this course. Please let me know within the first full week of classes if, for any reason, you believe that special considerations need to be taken into account in evaluating your performance this semester (e.g., a learning disability). I would be glad to talk with you about this.

**Attendance and Participation (20%)**

Students are expected to attend the class punctually and regularly, to ask informed questions, and to respect each other, the professor, and guests. An attendance sheet will be passed around at the beginning of each class; it is students’ responsibility to be sure to sign this sheet every class. Since late arrivals and early departures disrupt class, I will count two tardies, two early departures, or any combination of the two as an absence. More than two unexcused absences during the course of the semester will have a significant, adverse effect on your final grade. For an absence to be excused requires: an e-mail from you before the class meets alerting me of your coming absence and the reason for it, as well as documentation from a relevant source (Health or Student Services, etc.).

To facilitate students’ ability to actively join in discussion, the class will be divided into two seminar groups (A and B), each of which will usually meet with me for one hour on Wednesdays (see schedule for variations). If these discussions are to be successful, students will need to have carefully read the assigned texts and to have them in hand (including those posted on Blackboard) in class. In addition to the basic requirement of attendance and preparation, a large portion of the grade for this section will be determined by the extent to which the student’s actual
participation in these discussions demonstrates his or her engagement with and understanding of the course materials.

Finally, **attendance is required at three extra-class activities:**

1) Friday, 2/24, 4:15-5:30 p.m. in Flanagan black box theater (schedule tentative):
   Session with Pakistani musicians

2) Friday, 2/24, 8 p.m. in Sebring-Lewis:
   Sufi Music Concert

3) Tuesday, 4/11, 7 p.m. (location TBA):
   Screening of the (rather long) movie, *Malcolm X* (3 hrs. 21 mins)

Mark your calendars now!

**Short Response Paper (2-3 pages) (10%)**

Students will be asked to write a short, clearly-focused response paper (due date: 2/15). I will circulate a list of essay questions related to our readings from which students may select. (Students may be permitted to write on a topic of their own design, provided they come to speak with the Professor about it before writing.)

**Seminar Leadership (10%)**

By the end of the first week, each student is required to sign-up as seminar leader for one week of the term. Seminar leader have the following four responsibilities: 1) preparation and posting of an agenda of questions to ?Discussion Board? (Pioneerweb) by 6 p.m. Tuesday night; 2) preparation of a short (2-3 page) seminar paper to be presented to the group (including copies for all seminar participants) at the beginning of seminar; 3) active presentation of your own thoughts and questions, and active leadership of the discussion in seminar; 4) short reflection on presentation/discussion to be handed in with agenda and seminar paper by Friday of that week.

**In-Class Mid-Term Examination (20%)**

Students will take a mid-term exam covering material from the first half of the course.
Group Presentations (20%)

During Week 7 of the class, I will hand out a list of possible themes/topics related to the course from which students will select their preferred choices according to their interests. (Again, student suggestions on possible topics are welcome, so long as they are shared with the Professor before this time.) Presentation groups will be determined on the basis of student interest and formed by Week 8 of the class. Presentation proposals will be due on 4/14 by 3 p.m. (hard copy in my mailbox in Steiner), and the presentations themselves will be made in class, during the last week and a half of the term.

Final examination (20%)

Students will take a take-home final examination covering material from the entire semester.

Note on Handing in Assignments

All assignments must be turned in in hard copy form either in class or to my mailbox in Steiner. No e-mail copies will be accepted in place of a hard copy.

Academic Honesty

For a helpful discussion of and practical guidelines for following Grinnell’s Academic Honesty policies see:
http://web.grinnell.edu/WritingLab/CitationGuides/achondiscuss.html

Class and Reading Schedule

Week One
1/23 Introduction

1/25 Edward Said and Orientalism
read: Edward Said, ?Orientalism,? pp. 63-93
(B)
Week Two
1/30 Prophets (nabi) and Messengers (rasūl)

read: Ayoub, Chapter 2, pp. 30-40
Cragg, pp. 113-120, 139-150 (B)
Khalidi, The Muslim Jesus, pp. 3-30, 49-65 (B)

2/1 The Seal of the Prophets (Seminar Groups)

read: Ayoub, Chapter 1, pp. 8-29
Schimmel, ?Muhammad?s Unique Position,? pp. 56-66, 81-104 (B)
Cragg, pp. 177-181, 219-225 (B)

Week Three
2/6 The Religion of the Book

read: Ayoub, Chapter 2, pp. 40-50
Sells, ?Introduction,? Approaching the Qur?an, pp. 1-31

Recommended reading
Cragg, pp. 86-102. (B)

Recommended Weblink
To view a richly decorative, ?virtual? Qur?ān, go to:
http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/ttp/ttpbooks.html
At the bottom right of the page click on ?Baybar?s Magnificent Qur?ān?

2/8 The Qur?ān: Content, Use and Sound (Seminar Groups)

read: Sells, pp. 35-103
Graham, pp. 79-109 (B)

Week Four
2/13 Sunna and Hadith

read: Schimmel, Chapter 2, ?Muhammad the Beautiful Model,? pp. 25-55
Ayoub, Chapter 7, ?The Religious Sciences,? pp. 110-122

read from Website:
Introduction to Hadith and The Sahih Hadith of Bukhari
(in Bukhari choose only TWO of the subject headings!)

2/15 How to Follow the Prophet (Seminar Groups)
read: Ayoub, Chapter Three, ?Faith and Worship?, pp. 51-69
Sells, ?Hearing the Qur?án?, pp. 145-155

Recommended reading:
Cragg, ?Faith and Religion?, pp. 276-295 (B)

Short Response Paper Due Friday, 2/17 by 3 p.m.

Week Five
2/20 Following the Prophet to Paradise
read: Ayoub, Chapter 8, pp. 139-158
Schimmel, ?The Prophet?s Night Journey and Ascension?, pp. 159-175 (B)

Recommended Reading
Schimmel, ?The Light of Muhammad??, pp. 123-143 (B)

2/22 Performing Ecstasy (Seminar Groups)
read: Ernst, ?Sufi Music and Dance?, pp. 179-198 (B)
Asani, ?Propagating the Message? (B)

2/24 Qawwali Live
Class Session with Pakistani Musicians
4:15-5:30 p.m., Flanagan Black-box Theater, Bucksbaum
(attendance required)
Sufi Music Concert
8 p.m., Sebring-Lewis (attendance required)

Week Six
2/27 Saints, Shrines and The Spread of Islam
read: Ayoub, Chapter 6, ?The Spread of Islam?, pp. 91-108
Ernst, ?Saints and Sainthood?, pp. 58-80 and ?The Sufi Orders?, pp. 120-146 (B)

3/1 Sufism in Modern Pakistan (Seminar Groups)
read: Ewing, *Arguing Sainthood*, pp. 65-90, 128-162 (B)

**Week Seven**

3/6 *The Spiritual Path (tariqat and haqiqat)*

read: *Conference of the Birds*, "Introduction" and pp. 27-127

3/8 *Finding Simurgh (Seminar Groups)*

read: *Conference of the Birds*

*Selection of Presentation Topics due Wednesday in class*

**Week Eight**

3/13 *Library Session and Meeting with Presentation Groups*

No reading: Preparation for Mid-term

3/15 *In-class Mid-term Exam (no Seminar Groups)*

**Second Semester Recess 3/18 -4/2**

**Week Nine**

4/3 *The Prophet, Politics and Power*

read: Ayoub, pp. 70-80 and pp. 123-27

Sells, pp. 104-141

*Recommended reading*


4/5 *The Party of ?Alī and the Field of Karbala (Seminar Groups)*

read: Ayoub, pp. 81-90, 127-138

Pinault, *Horse of Karbala*, pp. 29-86 (B)

**Week Ten**

4/10 *Brother Malcolm*

read: Ayoub, Chapter 11, "Islam and Modernity," pp. 197-218

*Autobiography of Malcolm X*, select chapters TBA
4/11 Screening of Malcolm X (3 hrs. 21 mins.)

4/12 Brother Malcolm (Seminar Groups)

   read: Autobiography of Malcolm X, select chapters TBA

Proposals for Group Presentations Due Friday, 4/14 by 3 p.m. in my box in Steiner

Week Eleven

4/17 Rhetoric and Religious Terror

   read: Bruce Lincoln, Holy Terrors

   Recommended reading
   Cragg, 329-335 (B)

4/19 Literary Terror (Seminar Groups)

   reading: TBA

Week Twelve

4/24 Group Presentation Preparations

4/26 Feminism and Islam

   read: Mahmood, Chapters 1-3

Week Thirteen

5/1 Feminism and Islam (Seminar Groups)

   read: Mahmood, Chapters 4, 5 and ?Epilogue?

5/3 Group Presentations

Week Fourteen

5/8 Group Presentations

5/10 Group Presentations