MEIS-UA 674
Islam and Politics
Fall 2018

Monday 4:55-7:45
Kevorkian Center, Room LL1

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Office Hours: Monday 3-5, or by appointment

About this Course

Popular Western perceptions of Islam has often identified the religion with threatening images of theocracy and terrorism. The Iranian revolution of 1979, the rise of Islamic radicalism from West Africa to Southeast Asia, as well as the emergence of the short-lived ISIS "caliphate" have contributed to this impression. While the study of Islam has devoted considerable attention to radical interpretations of the religion, in historical terms, Islam has consisted of varied interpretations, from those that can be described as theocratic to those that voice concerns parallel to Western liberalism. Among the concerns of these voices were issues related to political modernity and the nation-state from theocracy, democracy, guarantees of the rights of women and non-Muslims in Islamic countries, freedom of thought, and belief in the potential for human progress. This course introduces students to the thoughts of late Nineteenth and Twentieth centuries Muslim intellectuals, leaders, and activists representing diverse intellectual and ideological spectrums, and their engagement with Islam and political modernity in the Muslim World. We will be reading and discussing the works of these authors. Readings include, but not limited to, the works of al-Tahtawi, Abduh, Afghani, Rashid Ridha, Ali Abd al-Raziq, Mahmud Taleqani, Mohamad Natsir, Khomeini, Muhammad Iqbal, Rachid Ghannouchi, Hasan Turabi, Yusuf al-Qaradawi, Ali Shari’ati, Abdullahi Ahmed al-Na’im, Nurcholis Madjid, Fazlur Rahman, Sayyid Qutb, Amina Wadud. By the end of the course, students will be familiar with modern intellectual history of Islam and the thoughts of the most influential makers of modern Islam.

The format of the seminar will be active discussion between the students and the instructor on the assigned primary sources. There will only be partial lectures. The seminar is designed to facilitate the pursuit of independent research on a topic of interest to the student. You should be warned that the reading load is fairly heavy. The evaluation of your performance is distributed evenly through written work, oral presentations on the readings, and participation in seminar discussion, all of which demand that you keep up with the readings. Over the course of the semester, students will be asked to prepare two oral presentations discussing the readings. Class
participation, requiring skills for both listening and building a dialogue, will be essential for the success of our seminar and for student evaluation. Attendance is mandatory.

**Expectations, Academic Integrity, Special Needs**

***No Electronics in the Classroom***

Being in the classroom means taking part in a collective effort, and your presence there must be mental as well as physical. When you are distracted, it is not your learning alone that suffers, it distracts those around you. No electronic devices (laptops, iPads, phones) may be used for any reason during class, and any devices present in the room must be powered off before class begins. This policy will be strictly monitored and enforced.

The readings and seminars go together, and none is sufficient in itself for understanding the class. Therefore students must attend seminars having read the assigned readings, and turn in the assignments on time. Participation in seminars are mandatory and will reflect 30% of the final course grade. Failure to attend seminars will therefore significantly affect your grade: more than three absences from the seminars (unless accompanied by a physician’s excuse or other extraordinary circumstances) may result in a failing course grade.

We take academic honesty to be a non-negotiable requirement for passing this course. Cheating in any manner will result in a failing grade for the entire course. This includes plagiarism. For information about plagiarism and academic integrity, you may start with this:

https://www.nyu.edu/about/policies-guidelines-compliance/policies-and-guidelines/academic-integrity-for-students-at-nyu.html

and

http://cas.nyu.edu/page/academicintegrity

On proper way to cite, see:

http://guides.nyu.edu/c.php?g=276562&p=1844731

If you have any doubts about what is or is not plagiarism, please ask the professor for clarification.

We are always happy to accommodate students with special needs, according to the guidelines of the University’s Moses Center for Students with Disabilities; please consult the center’s website for more information:
Assignments & Grading

Seminar participation (30%)
Weekly reading responses (10%)
Presentation I (10%)
Presentation II (10%)
Research Essay proposal (10%)
Research Essay (30%)

Seminar Participation
Participation in seminars is mandatory and will reflect 30% of the final course grade. Participation involves not only attending seminars, but coming to class prepared — having read the assigned readings — and taking active part in the discussions. When participating in class discussion, students should focus on discussing the assigned readings. As such, it will be quite evident to the professor who has done the reading and who has not.

Weekly Reading response
Each week, students need to submit a paragraph of written response of the readings. This should not be a mere summary of the arguments presented in each reading, but it should be a creative attempt of finding what are the broad themes and problematics linking the readings. In other words, what do you think connect the readings? how are they similar to one another? How do they differ? The weekly response should be posted on the Forum on NYUClasses by 12pm on Monday.

Presentation on Readings
Over the course of the semester, students are required to give two oral presentations based on the reading materials and students reading responses. Each presentation is to be done by a team of two students working together. Each presentation is worth 10% of your course grade. Each student is responsible for presenting (1) a summary of the substantive content, major theses and core concepts of the materials; (2) engaging the class in discussion and/or some form of interaction relative to the materials and the student reading responses by posing a set of questions based on critical reading of the materials; (3) making connections between your presentation and other concepts, issues, and readings that have been discussed in the class.

Research Essay Proposal
Due: October 23

This is an exercise in writing an academic research essay proposal and it is worth 10% of the final course grade. As 30% of your final grade hinges on the quality of the essay, this exercise is designed so that you can receive useful critical feedback on your research topic and design from
the instructor before you begin writing them. You need to decide as soon as possible on what you want to write on and begin collecting information on your topic. You will then be asked to write a short 2 pages proposal (not including bibliography) that addresses:

1. Proposed Research Topic: One paragraph of brief description of the focus of your research, including specifying the boundaries of your research (timeframe, geographic focus, scholar of interest etc.).
2. Purposes: One paragraph describing what you hope to accomplish, the argument you are trying to form, and the desired outcomes (what perspective to be gained).
3. Background: One paragraph describing the context of the proposed research, i.e. what other scholars have been arguing and how your argument fit into the debate.
4. Method: One paragraph describing the steps you will take in attempting to answer your research question.

The proposal should conclude with a bibliography consisting of relevant primary materials, books, and journal articles that you will be using in your research essay. The minimum requirement is 10 sources (books/articles). Of course, the more relevant materials you can include, the better.

**Research Essay**

**Due: December 4**

The research essay is worth 30% of your course grade. The essay should be between 10-15 pages. Students can choose to write on topic of their own interest in consultation with the professor provided that it is relevant to the general topic and discussion of the class. Students can write on an Islamic ethical treatise, elaborating and contextualizing it in its historical context, or on the development of a specific ethical theory or practice. Students should demonstrate a thorough research in preparing for the essay. A minimum of 12 sources (books and/or journal articles) should be used, and these sources should be referenced and cited using either APA, MLA, or Chicago style [for citation style guide see: http://guides.nyu.edu/c.php?g=276562&p=1844731]. A late paper can only be accepted with a written medical excuse.

**Policy on Regrading**

I am open to students requesting for their paper to be regraded. Request for a regrade should be made by emailing the professor. Regrade request must be accompanied by a written explanation (250 words) of why you would like your paper regraded. Such an explanation should be specific, as it will enable the professor to re-read your essay more effectively. Regrade requests sent without a specific written explanation will not be accepted.

**Policy on the use of electronics**
Being in the classroom means taking part in a collective effort, and your presence there must be mental as well as physical. When you are distracted, it is not your learning alone that suffers, it distracts those around you. As such, computers and other electronics must not be used. Mobile phones must remain on silence during the class. This policy will be strictly monitored and enforced.

**Readings**

For this course you will need to purchase one textbook:


All other readings have been scanned and stored in the class website on NYUclasses under the “Resources” tab. **Readings should be completed prior to coming to the class.**

**Schedule**

**Week 1: Introduction**


— Initial Challenges of Modernity —

**Week 2: Political Reform**


Namik Kemal (1840-1888), “And Seek their Counsel in the Matter”.

Week 3: Religious Interpretation


Sayyid Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1838-1897), “Lecture on Teaching and Learning” and “Answer to Renan”

Muhammad ‘Abduh (1849-1905), “Laws should change in Accordance with the Conditions of Nations” and “The Theology of Unity”


Muhammad Hasyim Asy’ari (1871-1947), “Some Advice”.

Week 4: Cultural Revival

Muhammad Iqbal (1877-1938), “Islam as a Moral and Political Ideal.”


Ahmad Dahlan (1868-1923), “The Unity of Human Life.”


Week 5: Women’s Rights

Qasim Amin (1863-1908), “The Emancipation of Woman” and “The New Woman.”

Bahithat al-Badiya (1886-1918), “A Lecture in the Club of the Umma Party.”

Mansurizade Sa’id (1864-1923), “The Muslim Woman: Polygamy can be Prohibited in Islam.”


— Contemporary Political Questions —

Week 6: Theocracy


**Week 7: Islamic/Secular State**


**Week 8: Democracy**


Rachid Ghannouchi (b. 1941), “Participation in Non-Islamic Government.”


**Week 9: Rights of Women**


Amina Wadud (b. 1952), “Qur’an and Woman.”


**Week 10: Rights of Non-Muslims**


**Week 11: Freedom of Thought**

Yusuf al-Qaradawi (b. 1926), “Extremism.”

Mohamed Arkoun (1928-2010), “Rethinking Islam Today.”


**Week 12: Jihad**


**Week 13: Progress**


Mamadiou Dia (1910-2009), “Islam and Humanism.”
