

# Introduction to the Study of Islamic Societies



HUM2302-02

Al Akhawayn University

Spring 2018

TR: 3:30-4:50PM

Building 8, 104

**Instructor:** Dr. Paul Love

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**Office:** Building 6, 009

**Office Hours:** MWF 2-5PM

## Course Description:

Using an interdisciplinary approach, this course introduces students to the historical and contemporary study of Islamic societies. Students explore a variety of topics including history, theology, mysticism, architecture, archaeology, political theory, literature, and the fine arts to gain an appreciation for the vast array of peoples, places, ideas, and things that all gather under the umbrella of "Islam." Rather than a comprehensive course in the history of Islam, the course varies depending on the semester and instructor, who emphasizes different historical and/or contemporary themes.

## Intended Learning Outcomes

Through completing this course, students will have the opportunity to:

1. Grasp the broad contours of the history of societies and peoples associated with Islam
2. Gain an appreciation for the diversity of Islam and Muslims in both the past and present
3. Learn about the academic study of religion and history through readings, videos, and hands-on research activities
4. Carry out an ethnographic study of Islam in Morocco

**Required Texts :** There is no textbook for this class. All texts required for this course will be provided electronically through either Jenzebar or e-mail.

## Tentative Course Itinerary

Readings should be completed by the date under which they appear in the syllabus.  
For example, the readings “Berkey, ‘Introduction” and “Rippin, ‘Pre-History” need to be read *before*  
the class that meets on 1/16.

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### Theme 1: Origins, Muhammad, and the Qur’an

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#### Topic 1: Contexts, Origins, & Beginnings

1/16 Introduction to the Course

**\*\*Podcast #1: “Welcome to HUM2302”\*\*** [[available under ‘Podcasts’ on Jenzebar](#)]

1/18 Talking about Islam & Islamic societies in an academic setting

1/23 The Historical Setting

**Reading:** Jonathan Berkey, “Introduction” & “The Religions of Late Antiquity” from *The Formation of Islam: Religion and Society in the Near East, 600-1800* (Cambridge, 2003), pp.1-9; Andrew Rippin, “Pre-History,” from *Muslims: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices* (Routledge, 2005), pp.15-21.

1/25 The Beginnings of Islam

**Reading:** Adam Silverstein, “The Story” from *Islamic History: A Very Short Introduction* (2014), pp.9-19 & “The Sources,” pp.80-93.

**\*\*Online Syllabus Quiz due by 11:00AM this morning\*\***

#### Topic 2: Life of Muhammad & the Early Muslim Community

1/30 Framing the life of Muhammad and his context

**\*\*Podcast #2: Approaching the Biography of Muhammad\*\***

*The Life of Muhammad (Part 1 of 3)* (BBC Two Documentary, 2011)

**Reading:** Fred Donner, "Muhammad and the Believers' Movement," from *Muhammad and the Believers: At the Origins of Islam* (Harvard University Press: 2010), pp.39-59

2/1 Discussion: Believers? Muslims?

**Reading:** Fred Donner, "Muhammad and the Believers' Movement," from *Muhammad and the Believers: At the Origins of Islam* (Harvard University Press: 2010), pp.60-89

### Topic 3: The Quran & Hadith

2/6 Quran & Hadith: Introduction

**\*\*Podcast #3: A few quick things on the Quran and the Hadith\*\***

**Readings:** T. Lester, "What is the Koran?," *The Atlantic* (January 1999):  
<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1999/01/what-is-the-koran/304024/>

**View (in-class):** "Le Coran, aux origines du livre" [English trans.] (ARTE, 2008)

2/8 Holy Texts, Social Texts 1: The Quran & Commentary

**Primary Sources:** [from Calder et al, *Classical Islam*]: *al-Qurān* (Selection from *sūrat al-bayyina* ); Al-Zamakhsharī on *sūrat al-bayyina* (pp.119-120)

2/13 Holy Texts, Social Texts 2: The Hadith & Commentary

**Reading:** J. Blecher, "A Newly Discovered Manuscript and Its Lesson on Islam," *The Atlantic* (June 2017):  
<https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/06/islam-manuscript-discovery-istanbul/531699/>

**Primary Sources:** [from Calder et al, *Classical Islam*: al-Bukhārī, *al-Ṣaḥīḥ* (pp.39-41); Ibn Ḥajar, (commentary on Ṣaḥīḥ al-bukhārī, pp.42-45).

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## Theme 2: The Expansion and Diversification of Islam

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#### Topic 4: The Diversification of Muslim Communities

2/15 Shi'ism

**\*\*Podcast #4: A few words about Shi'ism\*\***

**Reading:** W. Shepard, "Shi'ism," in A. Rippin, ed., *The Islamic World* (2008), 224-234.

2/20 Ibadis & Kharijites

**Reading:** V. Hoffman, "The Ibadis" in A. Rippin, ed., *The Islamic World* (2008), 235-45.

#### Topic 5: Islamic Theology & Law

2/22 An Introduction to Islamic Theology (*Kalam*)

**Reading:** [print a copy and bring to class] "Islamic Theology: A Debate Exercise"

2/27 An Introduction to Islamic Law & Jurisprudence

**Reading:** R. Gleave, "Sunni Law," in A. Rippin, ed., *The Islamic World* (2008), 167-179.

3/1 In-Class Activity on Legal Rulings

**\*\*Book Review Soft Deadline: Due on Turnitin.com by the Start of Class Today\*\***

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**\*\*Spring Break 5-9 March\*\***

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**\*\*Book Review Hard Deadline\*\***

**Due on Turnitin.com by 10:00AM in the morning on Monday, March 12**

## Topic 6: Sufism

3/13 Sufism

**Reading:** Rippin, "Sufism," from *Muslims*, pp.139-148.

## Topic 7: Pilgrimage & Commerce

3/15 Islamic Banking & Finance (Guest Lecture)

**Reading:** TBA

3/20 The Hajj

**Reading:** Rippin, "The Hajj," 114-116

**Primary Source Readings:** Ibn Jubayr, "A Pilgrimage to Mecca"

**Watch (in class):** *Inside Mecca* (National Geographic documentary, 2003)

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## Theme 3: Early Modern & Contemporary Issues in Islam

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## Topic 8: Modernity, Islam & the 'Islamic State'

3/22 Could a state be 'Islamic?' (Should it?)

**Primary Source Readings:** Shaykh Muhammad Abduh, "Islam, Reason, and Civilization;"  
Abul-l-Ala Mawdudi, "Nationalism and Socialism" from Donohue & Esposito, eds., *Islam in Transition*

3/27 Contemporary 'Islamic state' 1: Iran

**\*\*Podcast:** "A Few Things About Iran"

**Primary Source Reading:** Ayatullah Khumayni, "Islamic Government" from Donohue & Esposito, eds., *Islam in Transition*, pp.332-340

### Topic 10: Ethnography and 'Popular' Islam

3/29 Anthropology and 'Popular' Religion

**Reading:** [Selections from] Clifford Geertz, *Islam Observed: Religious Development in Morocco and Indonesia* (1968)

**Reading:** "Ethnography of Religion: Instructions" under handouts on the main Jenzebar page.

4/3 \*\*Discussion of Ethnography of Religion assignment\*\*

### Topic 11: Islamic Societies in Comparative Contexts

4/5 Comparative Contexts I: Zapatistas & Islam in Chiapas, Mexico

**Reading:** N. Strohlic, "See the Small Mexican Town Embracing Islam," *National Geographic* (2017). On the Jenzebar site under "Online Readings" or available at:

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/photography/proof/2017/10/muslims-mexico-indigenous-religion-islam/>

4/10 \*\*Discussion of Final Project Options\*\*

**Reading:** "Final Project Options" (under Handouts on Jenzebar)

4/12 \*\* Day to work on Final Project Topic\*\*

**\*\*Final Project Forum Post on Jenzebar due by 6:00PM tonight\*\***

4/17 Comparative Context II: "The Stambeli & Ethnomusicology"

**Reading:** : R.C. Jankowsky, "The Stambeli," on the Jenzebar site under 'Online Readings' or available at: <http://www.stambeli.com>

4/19 Comparative Context III—(either) "Islam in China" or "African Islam"

**Reading:** R. Loimeier, "Is There an 'African Islam'?" *Muslim Societies in Africa: A Historical Anthropology* (2013), 1-34.

(or)

**Reading:** Jones-Leaning & Pratt, "Islam in China: From Silk Road to Separatism," *The Muslim World*, (2012), 308-334.

#### Topic 12: Representing & Defining Islam in the Present

4/24 Islam & Comic Books: *The 99* (Guest Lecture)

**Reading:** TBA

4/26 Inventing the Muslim World

**Reading:** Asma Afsaruddin, "The Myth of the Muslim World," [Review of C. Aydin, *The Idea of the Muslim World: A Global Intellectual History* (Harvard University Press, 2017)]. Link available on Jenzebar homepage or available at: <https://www.chronicle.com/article/The-Myth-of-the-Muslim-World/240069>.

5/1 What is Islam?

**Reading:** Shahab Ahmed, "Chapter 1: Six Questions about Islam" from *What is Islam? The Importance of Being Islamic* (Princeton, 2016), pp.5-109 [assigned group sections]

5/3 Conclusion

**\*\*Final Project Due on Turnitin.com on Thursday, 10 May @ 14:50PM\*\***