Islam: Faith and Practice – REL 2260
Fall Term II 2015, Mon. 6:00-10:15
Cañada College Campus
Instructor: Cassie Lipowitz
Office: TBD
Office hours: by appointment
clipowitz@ndnu.edu

Wheresoever you turn, there is the face of God... ~Qur’an 2:115

If ever a society is established in which justice would reign, it will not survive unless its citizens have first learned and understood what justice is and how it is to be embodied. ~ Ali, cousin of the Prophet

God said, “I was a hidden treasure who wished to be known, so I created the universe so that I would be known.” ~hadith qudsi

If knowledge does not liberate the Self from the self, then ignorance is better than such knowledge. ~ Sana’i

Marvel, a garden among the flames! My heart can take on any form: a meadow for gazelles, a cloister for monks,
For the idols, sacred ground,
Ka’ba for the circling pilgrim,
the tables of the Torah,
the scrolls of the Qur’án.
I profess the religion of love; wherever its caravan turns along the way,
that is the belief,
the faith I keep.

~Ibn Arabi

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will constitute an introduction to Islam, one of the three Abrahamic religious traditions, through a study of central beliefs, religious movements, prominent figures, and key texts. While the course will provide an overview of Islamic foundational history, beliefs and practices, special emphasis will be placed upon an engagement with primary source material from Islam’s foundational texts (the Qur’an and hadith). The course will also emphasize the many “voices” of Islam—demonstrating the wealth of diversity among the world’s Muslim population, and will aim to dispel and deconstruct common stereotypes about Islam pervasive in today’s world. Finally, Islam’s cultural and religious context will be considered, as well as its relation to Judaism and Christianity.

NDNU CATALOGUE DESCRIPTION

REL2260 Islam: Faith and Practice (CDiv) (3) This course seeks to introduce the major religious and cultural dimensions of the Islamic world, both those that express its diversity and those that express its
continuity. No previous work is presupposed. The course has two major purposes: (1) to provide students with a better and deeper understanding of the importance of the Islamic past upon the Islamic world of today and (2) to introduce students to the spiritual, ritual, ethical, and cultural practices of Islam. Fulfills Core Curriculum Religious Studies requirement.

**TEXTBOOKS**


**Additional readings may be posted on the portal**

**COURSE OBJECTIVES/LEARNING OUTCOMES**

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

1. Describe the central beliefs and faith practices of Muslims (Mission ILO)
2. Demonstrate an understanding of the historical context that gave rise to Islam (RS PLO)
3. Critically examine and analyze foundational Muslim texts in a class presentation (Critical Thinking ILO)
4. Articulate/appreciate the many “voices” of Islam, past and present (Mission ILO)
5. Discuss Islam in the modern world by engaging with news articles (Critical Thinking ILO)
6. Compare and contrast central concepts in Islam, alongside Judaism and Christianity (Mission ILO)

**GRADING**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance &amp; Class participation</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>1-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qur’an surah presentation</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary/Reflection papers</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>1, 2, 4, 6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Research Paper</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>2, 4</td>
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**Total points possible = 1000**

A= (1000-900); B= (899-800); C= (799-700); D= (699-600); F= (599-0)

If at any time you are concerned about your grade, consult with the instructor.

**Attendance and Class Format:** Your presence and participation in class is vitally important, as it furthers not only your own education, but also the education of others. Intensive classes require a stringent absence policy since even one absence may significantly affect achievement of course learning objectives. With only 28 class contact hours as opposed to the traditional 45 contact hours, all class time is critical. A student who misses more than one class period or the equivalent (four accumulated hours) must withdraw from the class and will be assigned a failing grade for the course unless officially dropping the class. It is the student’s responsibility to initiate the drop or withdrawal. There are no exceptions.

As the instructor, I promise to do all I can to create a lively and engaging class environment. In order to include various learning styles and opportunities, class sessions will generally include lecture, small group work, class discussion, as well as video clips and films.
Assignment Policy: The intensive program penalizes late work. Late assignments will be marked down. **Late assignments will not be accepted more than 2 weeks past the due date.** If you are absent for one class, you must complete the reflection paper for that class session and submit it online via the NDNU web portal by the due date. Please note that the very first class has required reading and a writing assignment (the first paper must be submitted during the first class, or may be submitted beforehand on the NDNU class web portal).

Academic Honesty: Academic honesty is a cornerstone of our values at NDNU. If any words or ideas used in an assignment submission do not represent your original words or ideas, you must cite all relevant sources and make clear the extent to which such sources were used. Words or ideas that require citation include, but are not limited to, all hard copy or electronic publications, whether copyrighted or not, and all verbal or visual communication when the content of such communication clearly originates from an identifiable source. First offense of plagiarism will result in an F on the assignment. Second offense will result in an F for the class. Consult the NDNU Student Handbook regarding consequences of misrepresenting your work.

Privacy and Confidentiality: One of the highlights of the NDNU academic experience is that students often use real-world examples from their organizations in class discussions and in their written work. However, it is imperative that students not share information that is confidential, privileged, or proprietary in nature. Students must be mindful of any contracts they have agreed to with their companies.

Learning and Other Disabilities: If you have a learning disability or other circumstance that requires accommodations in this class, you must bring it to the attention of Program for Academic Support and Services (PASS) to arrange for possible accommodations (650-508-3670).

ASSIGNMENTS

Weekly Summary/Reflection Papers: Each week, students will turn in a 2-3 page paper based on the assigned readings, to be submitted in class on the day they are due, or on the NDNU portal. Prompts for the reflection papers will be posted on the NDNU portal website. The purpose of writing these papers is to assist you in clarifying and refining your ideas as you engage with the readings. Writing the papers will also prepare you to engage in class discussions.

Qur’an Surah Presentation: For this assignment, students will collaborate in preparing and giving group presentations (groups will consist of 3-5 people). Each group will be assigned two surahs from Michael Sells’ book, *Approaching the Qur’an: The Early Revelations* to analyze and present during an in-class presentation. Presentations should be about 15-20 minutes in length. (The group presentation sign-up sheet will be circulated on the first day of class.)

Final Paper: This assignment, due on the last day of class, will require students to choose a particular issue from the course that interests them and write a 6-7 page paper on their topic of choice (a list with topic suggestions will be provided). You must consult with the instructor about your topic by MON. NOV. 30th.

Workload: Intensive classes at NDNU stipulate 3 hours of work (per unit) each week outside of class. For a 3 unit class, this means 12 additional hours a week should be spent on assignments. The
distribution of weekly instruction/study for this course should follow (approximately) the following model:

Distribution of Average Weekly Study/Instruction (total = 16 hours):

Classroom Instruction                      4  
Text Readings                                  4  
Weekly Writing Assignments         5  
Presentation Planning                      1  
Term Paper Research/Writing         2  

NOTES

- Please be respectful during class. **Turn off cell phones or switch them to silent.** Although we live in an electronic age where texting and facebooking have become the norm, please be mindful of the class community and refrain from such activities during class time.
- You are encouraged to visit the Writing Center for assistance with written assignments. [http://www.ndnu.edu/academics/acad-success-center/writing-center/default.aspx](http://www.ndnu.edu/academics/acad-success-center/writing-center/default.aspx)

SCHEDULE

This schedule is subject to revision. Any major changes will be discussed with the students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading Assignment</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>11/2 - Introduction to the course – Pre-Islamic Arabia</strong></td>
<td>General Intro. (pp. 1-7) Denny, Chapters 1 &amp; 2 (pp. 7-44)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- The Abrahamic Traditions (Judaism and Christianity)</td>
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<td>- Pre-Islamic Arabia: Beliefs, Social Customs and Society</td>
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<td><strong>11/9 - Islam: Beginnings and Expansion - The Prophet Muhammad, the Qur’an, the Early Muslim Community, and the Spread of Islam</strong></td>
<td>Denny, Chapters 3 (pp. 47-73)</td>
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<td>- Muhammad’s Life and Prophethood</td>
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<td>- The Message of the Qur’an</td>
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<td>- The Struggles of the Early Muslim Community</td>
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<td>- The Hijra (“migration”) from Mecca to Medina</td>
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<td>- The Question of Leadership in the Muslim Community</td>
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<td>- Spread of Islam</td>
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<td>- Islam and the Integration of Other Cultural Influences</td>
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<td><strong>11/16 - The Foundation of Islam: Beliefs and Practices</strong></td>
<td>Denny, Chapter 5 (pp. 99-129)</td>
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<td>- The Five Foundational Beliefs</td>
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<td>- The Five Pillars</td>
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<td>- Various Interpretations of the Five Pillars</td>
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11/23 - The Qur’an and Hadith

- Qur’an: Content and Message
- Qur’an: Literary and Symbolic Significance
- Interpretation of the Qur’an
- The “Inimitability” of the Qur’an
- Hadith Tradition
- Muhammad as Ideal Human Being

Denny Chapters 6 & 7 (pp. 130-163)
Sells, Surahs 1, 82, 87, 96, 102, 107, 109, 110, 112, including Sells' commentaries

11/30 - Islamic Theology, Philosophy, Law (shari’a)

- Islamic Theology and Theological Issues
- The Great Debate between Asharites and Mu’tazilites
- Balancing Revelation and Rational Thought
- The Qur’an and Shari’a
- Shi’a and Sunni Schools of Thought

Denny, Chapters 8 & 9 (pp. 164-208)
Final Paper Topic Due

12/7 - Islamic Mysticism and Islamic Art & Aesthetics

- What is Sufism?
- Historical Outlines of Sufism
- Mystical Interpretations of the Qur’an and Hadith
- Sufism and the Art of the Teaching Story
- Islamic Art and Architecture

Denny, Chapters 10 & 11 (pp. 209-259)

12/14 - Islam in the Modern World

Topics for lecture and discussion:

- Islam and Western Colonialism
- Islam in the Modern World
- The Status of Women in Islam

Denny, Chapters 15 & 16 (pp. 341-382)

Final Papers Due in Class