

STANDARD SYLLABUS

**Introduction to Islam
THEO 295**

This course provides an introduction to Islam.

Knowledge Area(s) satisfied: Theological and Religious Studies Knowledge
Skill(s) Developed: Critical Thinking Skills and Dispositions
Values Requirement(s) satisfied: Understanding Diversity in the United States or the World, Understanding Spirituality or Faith in Action in the World

Learning Objectives:

Knowledge Area (Theological and Religious Studies Knowledge):

Through taking this course, students will be able to demonstrate knowledge, with attention to historical development, of the central texts, beliefs, ethical understandings, and practices of Islam. By way of example, students who take this course should be able to:

- (1) name and discuss some of the most important Muslim scriptures;
- (2) articulate the general outline of the historical evolution of Islam;
- (3) define and discuss key Islamic concepts, terms, values, and religious practices;
and
- (4) understand the diversity within Islam in terms of sectarian, regional, and historical developments.

Essay portions of the midterm and final exams and/ or required papers will demonstrate students' abilities to write clearly and effectively. These written exercises along with structured class discussions will require students to formulate effective messages via verbal systems of communication.

Writing assignments will include short reaction papers to writings by Muslims, as well as longer essays analyzing classical and modern texts. This class will also foster a critical and informed familiarity with Muslim cultures in Africa, Asia, the Middle East and the West and thus will fulfill the "diversity" values requirement. The course will foster in students an ability to identify distinctive patterns of thought and behavior that contribute to the formation of Muslim cultures.

Skills (Critical Thinking Skills and Dispositions):

The class will require students to

(a) comprehend, paraphrase, summarize, and contextualize the meaning of Islamic religious texts, histories, and ideas, as well as scholarly arguments about those texts, histories and ideas;

(b) develop strategies for seeking and synthesizing information to support arguments that students wish to make about the materials studied in the course or to critique arguments to which they are exposed in the class; and (c) monitor students' own individual thinking or behavior in relationship to Islam in order to question, confirm, validate, or correct presuppositions and prejudgments.

Values Area (Understanding Diversity in the United States or the World):

This course satisfies the value of "Understanding Diversity in the US or the World" by addressing the diversity of Islamic traditions in several parts of the world that have historically seen themselves as divergent. For example, the course will cover Sunni, Shi'a, Wahhabi and mystical forms of Islam; these distinct traditions are practiced in different parts of the world; e.g., Shi'ism in Iran; Sufism in South Asia, and Wahhabism in Saudi Arabia. Through documentary film, readings, and class discussion the course will discuss the history, nature, and/or practice of Islam in at least two--and usually more than two--different countries, such as Iran, Turkey, South East Asia, Egypt or the United States. In addition, the course considers the following topics: the place of women in Islam and Muslim women's reactions to classic and contemporary discourses about gender; the rise of devotional traditions such as Sufism as forms of protest against legalistic orthodoxy; and recent "proto-Islamic" movements such as the Nation of Islam.

Values Area (Understanding Spirituality or Faith in Action in the World):

This course will also address the value "Understanding Spirituality or Faith in Action in the World." By taking this course, students will be able to "demonstrate knowledge of and capacity to articulate the foundations of Islam, whether they are themselves Muslim or not. They will also be able to demonstrate how Islam has been or can be related to the intellectual and cultural life of Muslims (e.g., Islamic systems of philosophy, Islamic art and music, Muslim marriage practices and life-cycle rituals, beliefs about the relationship between humans and other kinds of living beings, Islam and pluralism, and so forth).

Learning Activities:

Possible array of texts:

- Michael Sells Approaching the Qur'an
- Jamal Elias Islam
- Fadiman and Frager Essential Sufism

Note: (Instructors may vary the textbooks.)

Possible evaluation methods:

- Lecture
- Discussion
- Examinations
- Papers
- Participation

Note: (Instructors may vary the evaluation categories.)

Sample Semester Schedule:

- Week 1: Introduction to the Academic Study of Islam
 Issues facing Muslims Today
 The Image of Islam in the West
- Week 2: Pre-Islamic Arabia
 The Life of Muhammad
- Week 3: The Role of the Prophet in Muslim
 Life and Piety
 Major Teachings of the Qur'an
 Qur'an: Introduction
 Revelation and the Role of the Qur'an in Muslim Life and Piety
- Week 4: Themes of the Qur'an: Allah
 The Human Condition
 Themes of the Qur'an: The Qur'an on Jews and Christians
 Prophecy, Other Religions and Pluralism religions
- Week 5: Five Pillars
- Week 6: Hadith
- Week 7: Early Community/Expansion
 Beginnings of Shi'ism
- Week 8: Emergence of the Shari'a
 Applied Law/the Legal Schools
- Week 9: Islamic Theology-- Kalam

Sufism-Ulema and Sufis
Forms of Islamic
Knowledge and Authority

Week 10:

The Sufi Orders
Film-The Inner Life
Islam and Culture
Islamic Art

Week 11:

Issues Facing Muslims Today
Muslim Societies in the Contemporary World: An Overview
Islam and The West: The Crusades/Islamic Influence on Europe
Pre-Modern Reform Movements

Week 12:

The West and Islam : Colonialism
Types of Modern Islamic Thought
Islamism vs. Nationalism
Modernism vs. "Fundamentalism"
Contemporary Islamic Thought

Week 13:

Women and Gender Issues
Paradise Lies at the Feet of Mothers

Week 14:

Muslims in America

Note: (Instructors may vary the presentation of topics to some degree, but the material covered will remain the same.)