

REL 436 Making Islam

Fall 2020: A Hybrid Course

Contact Information

Email: eszanto@ua.edu

Phone: 205-348-5310

Office: Manly Hall 209

Office Hours: MW 2:15 pm to 3:30 pm on Zoom and F 1:00 to 3 pm in person

Class Location: Zoom (for the foreseeable future, thereafter in Manly 207)

Class Time: 1 pm to 2:15 pm Mondays and Wednesdays

COVID-19 Adjustment

Given numbers of new infections in the state and elsewhere in the country along with UA's response (e.g., mandated social distancing in all classrooms, thereby reducing each room's capacity by 80%) and concerns student have expressed regarding the risks associated with in-person meetings, we will begin this course in a remote fashion, using twice weekly Zoom videoconference sessions that will take place during the class's regularly scheduled times. All students are therefore required to have sufficient technological resources and competencies to participate fully in each weekly class. Should the risks of in-person meetings lessen sufficiently at a later point in the semester then we will discuss, as a class, whether to shift to in-person meetings. There will be optional in person office hours on Fridays in Manly 209. However, office hours will also be held on Zoom on Mondays and Wednesdays.

Course Description

This course is a study of how various agents (both Muslim and non-Muslims) construct, debate, and refute ideas about what constitutes 'authenticity' and 'authority' with regard to Islam in popular culture and academic sources. We will pay particular attention to how scholars attempt to make sense of such diverse accounts, the assumptions that they make, and the roles they play in debates over the nature of Islam.

Student Learning Outcomes

After taking this course, students will be able to:

- Recognize the complexities of Qur'an interpretation and compilation.
- Distinguish between earlier and later forms of constructed authority in Sunnism and Shi'ism.
- Critique simplistic understandings of Shari'a.
- Discern the diversity within Islamic religious boundaries, identities, and social practices.

- Theorize about issues related to identity using data related to Islamicate civilizations and peoples.
- Critically discriminate between reliable and less reliable information from a variety of sources providing data about Islam.

Required Reading Materials

Available at the bookstore:

Huston Smith, *Islam: A Concise Introduction*

Available on Blackboard:

There will be number of assigned articles and chapters that will be available via blackboard.

The instructor also reserves the right to bring in or email students short readings to be discussed in class.

Assessment

Attendance/Participation – meet me twice this semester	20
Quiz on Huston Smith and Vocab	10
Critical Question Podcast	15
Clay Bird (Matir Moina) film worksheet	15
Paper proposal	10
Presentation	10
Research Paper	20
<hr/>	
Total	100 points

Final grades will be based on the following ranges:

97-100 = A+; 92-96 = A; 90-91 = A-; 87-89 = B+; 82-86 = B; 80-81 = B-;

77-79 = C+; 72-76 = C; 70-71 = C-; 60-69 = D; 0-59 = F.

Attendance/Participation (20 points = 2 * 5 points + 10 points)

Because physical attendance is not required, I may never “meet” you. However, I’d like to know who my students are and what they are interested in. Hence, please drop by my office in person or virtually. I will ask you a general question about the course and how you are doing in it. These meetings will be scheduled twice during the semester. Each meeting is worth 5 points. Speaking up and adding substantively to at least every other class will constitute ten points.

Quiz on Huston Smith’s book and the Vocab (10 points)

Muslims use their own vocabulary. Knowing the vocabulary is basic to continued and reflective thinking. Hence, there will be an online multiple choice vocab quiz.

Critical Reflection ‘Podcast’ (15 points)

In a 7 to 10 min audio recording, reflect on one of the questions I will provide to the class. (No editing or special auditory effects are required.) You must also compile and submit an annotated bibliography of at least five sources. The audio recording can be done using your smart phone or Voicethread on Blackboard.

Clay Bird (Matir Moina) film worksheet (15 points)

Watch the Clay Bird, it’s on YouTube. On a provided worksheet, fill out the questions. You’ll be asked to describe individual actor’s conception and interpretation of Islam.

Research Paper Proposal, Outline and Bibliography (10 points)

Students ought to turn in a short proposal consisting of roughly 200 words describing the main thesis of their proposed research paper, a short general outline (outlining the organization of topics discussed) and an annotated bibliography consisting of at least five peer-reviewed academic sources.

UA Librarian James Gilbreath will come as a guest to class and provide an overview of available source.

Research Paper Presentation (10 points)

Prepare a presentation on the research topic proposed earlier. This presentation should consist of a 7 to 10 minute presentation. Students will present during our usual Zoom class meeting, share their screen and thereby their power point presentations and others will respond with constructive feedback.

Research Essay (20 points)

Short research paper (2000 word) and an annotated bibliography (which is not part of the 2000 words). Choose any topic related to the course materials and write about it. Students are expected to make use of the course readings, but must also make substantive use of **at least five** scholarly, peer-reviewed books or scholarly, peer-reviewed journal articles from outside the required readings. **Late papers: 10% will be deducted per day.**

Format for written assignments

Students shall use MLA format. All documents produced on a word processor shall use 12-point Times New Roman font, and shall be submitted electronically through Turnitin.com. Emailed and paper copies will not be accepted.

Policy on Missed Assessments

Do not wait until the last minute to submit your assessments. Work submitted after the due dates listed in Blackboard may result in a grade of zero. The instructor is solely responsible for determining whether provisions will be made for unforeseen circumstances. You must report these circumstances as soon as possible after the event. You will be required to produce documentation.

Please contact the instructor if there are questions about missed due dates.

Notification of Changes

The instructor will make every effort to follow the guidelines of this syllabus as listed; however, the instructor reserves the right to amend this document as the need arises. In such instances, the instructor will notify students in class and/or via email and will endeavor to provide reasonable time for students to adjust to any changes.

Technical Support

To obtain assistance with technical issues, please contact OIT. Please be ready to provide your myBama username, your phone number, your campus location, your device type, and a description of your issue.

Location	125 Gordon Palmer Hall
Hours	8:00am to 4:30pm Monday – Friday
Phone	205-348-5555
After Hours Phone	855-474-3860
Email	ITSD@ua.edu

System Requirements

This online course requires a modern Mac or PC computer and high-speed internet connection. Your computer must also have a [compatible browser](#), PDF viewer, speakers or headphones, microphone, and productivity software such as Office.

Minimum Student Technical Skills

Taking an online course requires a general computer literacy. Students are expected to be able to use Crimson email, Blackboard, web browsers, and general word processing programs prior to enrolling in an online course. Student needing assistance using Blackboard are encouraged to visit the [UA Blackboard support site](#).

Turnitin

The University of Alabama is committed to helping students uphold the ethical standards of academic integrity in all areas of study. Students agree that their enrollment in this course allows the instructor the right to use electronic devices to help prevent plagiarism. All course materials are subject to submission to TurnItIn.com for the purpose of detecting textual similarities. Assignments submitted to TurnItIn.com will be included as source documents in TurnItIn.com's restricted access database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism in such documents. TurnItIn.com will be used as a source document to help students avoid plagiarism in written documents.

The Capstone Creed

The Capstone Creed was created by the Student Leaders Council. In the spring of 2000, a discussion of campus culture among student leaders led to an effort to identify the core values that sustain us as members of the University community. The Student Leaders Council recognized that the Capstone experience is not limited to our formal affiliation with the University during enrollment and that the University community does not end at the geographic boundaries of campus. As members of the Capstone community, there is a common thread that unites us all, and the Student Leaders Council has endeavored to make those core values manifest through the implementation of a campus-wide creed with which all Capstone stakeholders can identify.

The Capstone Creed reads: As a member of The University of Alabama community, I will pursue knowledge; act with fairness, integrity and respect; promote equity and inclusion; foster individual and civic responsibility; and strive for excellence in all I do.

Statement on Academic Misconduct

Students are expected to be familiar with and adhere to the official [Code of Academic Conduct](#) provided in the Online Catalog.

Statement On Disability Accommodations

Contact the [Office of Disability Services \(ODS\)](#) as detailed in the Online Catalog.

Severe Weather Protocol

Please see the latest [Severe Weather Guidelines](#) in the Online Catalog.

Pregnant Student Accommodations

Title IX protects against discrimination related to pregnancy or parental status. If you are pregnant and will need accommodations for this class, please review the University's FAQs on the [UAct website](#).

Religious Observances

Under the Guidelines for Religious Holiday Observances, students should notify the instructor in writing or via email during the first two weeks of the semester of their intention to be absent from class for religious observance. The instructor will work to provide reasonable opportunity to complete academic responsibilities as long as that does not interfere with the academic integrity of the course. See full guidelines at [Religious Holiday Observances Guidelines](#).

UAct Statement

The [UAct website](#) provides an overview of The University's expectations regarding respect and civility.

COVID-19 Statement

All University faculty, staff, and students are expected to maintain a commitment to the health and safety of our campus community. Due to the current COVID-19 pandemic, specific health and safety standards are in place to minimize exposure and community spread on campus. All students must be familiar with and abide by the requirements outlined in the UA Return Plan | UA System Comprehensive Health and Safety Plan. Students must (1) wear a mask or face covering at all times while participating in face-to-face class sessions; and (2) adhere to social distancing standards. More information on these requirements and UA Healthcheck system and screening can be found at healthinfo.ua.edu/returnplan. You are expected to visit the site and comply with all noted requirements related to in-person class attendance.

Schedule

- 1) Wednesday, 19 August Introduction (see Armstrong excerpt available via Box)
How do we know what we know?
-

WEEK ONE: Muhammad

- 2) Monday, 24 August Smith, Huston. *Islam: A Concise Introduction*, pp. 1-16
“Prologue,” “Islamic Background” and “The Seal of the Prophet”
- 3) Wednesday, 26 August We will meet on Zoom for the first half of class, then watch
the film: “Muhammad: The Last Prophet” (2002; 95 min.)

Come to my (virtual) office hour this week. It’s worth 5 percent.

WEEK TWO: Muhammad and “Belief”

- 4) Monday, 31 August Smith, pp. 17-32, and “The Migration that Led to Victory”
and “The Standing Miracle”
- 5) Wednesday, 2 September Smith, pp. 33-56, “Basic Theological Concepts” and “The
Five Pillars”
-

WEEK THREE: Social Teachings

- 6) Monday, 7 September Labor Day
- 7) Wednesday, 9 September Smith, pp. 57-73, “Social Teachings”
-

WEEK FOUR: Sufism and Authority

- 8) Monday, 14 September Smith, pp. 74-94, “Sufism” and “Whither Islam?”

Online Quiz on Huston Smith from Monday to Wednesday. (10 points)

- 9) Wednesday, 16 September
Francesco Piraino, “Who is the Infidel? Religious boundaries and social change in the Shadhiliyya
Darqawiyya Alawiyya,” in *Global Sufism: Boundaries, Narratives and Practices*, edited by
Francesco Piraino and Mark Sedgwick, pp. 75-92 (London: Hurst, 2019).

Recommended reading:

Thomas Joassin, “Algerian ‘traditional’ Islam and Political Sufism,” in *Global Sufism: Boundaries, Narratives and Practices*, edited by Francesco Piraino and Mark Sedgwick, pp. 209-224 (London: Hurst, 2019).

WEEK FIVE: Standardizing the Canon

10) Monday, 21 September Claude Gilliot, “Creation of a Fixed Text,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Qur’an*, edited by Jane McAuliffe, pp. 41-58 (New York: Cambridge UP, 2006).

11) Wednesday, 23 September Harald Motzki, “Alternative Accounts of the Qur’an’s Formation,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Qur’an*, edited by Jane McAuliffe, pp. 59-75 (New York: Cambridge UP, 2006).

WEEK SIX: Creating Legal Orthodoxy

12) Monday, 28 September Leor Halevi. “Wailing for the Dead: The Role of Women in Early Islamic Funerals.” *Past & Present* 183 (2004): 3-39.

13) Wednesday, 30 September Felicitas Opwis, “Shifting Legal Authority from the Ruler to the ‘Ulamā’: Rationalizing the Punishment for Drinking Wine During the Saljūq Period,” *Der Islam* 86 no. 1 (2011): 65–92.

Critical Reflection Podcast is due Friday, October 1, 2020.

WEEK SEVEN: Reinterpreting the Sciences

14) Monday, 5 October Amira Sonbol, “Discourses on and Realities of the life of Canines among Arabs and Muslims,” *Hawwa: Journal of Women of the Middle East and the Islamic World*, vol. 12 no. 1 (2014): 101-120.

15) Wednesday, 7 October Matthew Melvin-Koushki, “Is (Islamic) Occult Science Science?,” *Theology and Science*, 18 no. 2 (2020): 303-324.

WEEK EIGHT: Intra-Islamic Debates over Authority

- 16) Monday, 12 October Juan Cole. "Shi'i Clerics in Iraq and Iran, 1722-1780: The Akhbari-Usuli Conflict Reconsidered," *Iranian Studies* 18 no. 1 (Winter, 1985): 3-34.
- 17) Wednesday, 14 October Hallaq, Wael. "Juristic Authority vs. State Power: The Legal Crises of Modern Islam," *Journal of Law and Religion* 19 no. 2 (2003): 243-258.
-

WEEK NINE: The Anthropologist's Authority

- 18) Monday, 19 October Michael Gilsenan, *Recognizing Islam: an Anthropologist's Introduction*, revised edition (New York: IB Taurus, 2006 [1982]), pp. 1-26.
- 19) Wednesday, 21 October Lawrence Rosen, "Forms of Knowledge: Muslim Scientists as Fundamentalists," in *Varieties of Muslim Experiences* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 133-151.

Clay Bird Film Worksheet is due on Friday, 23 October online.

WEEK TEN: Claiming Islamic Authority in America

- 20) Monday, 26 October Edward Curtis, "Science and Technology in Elijah Muhammad's Nation of Islam: Astrophysical Disaster, Genetic Engineering, UFOs, White Apocalypse, and Black Resurrection," *Nova Religio* 8/2016, 20 no. 1 (2016), Issue 1, pp. 5 - 31
- 21) Wednesday, 28 October Elewa, Ahmed and Laury Silvers, "'I am one of the People': A Survey and Analysis of Legal Arguments on Woman-Led Prayer in Islam," *Journal of Law and Religion* 26 no.1 (2010- 11): 141-171.

Come to my (**virtual**) **office hour** this week. It's worth 5 percent.

WEEK ELEVEN: Authority and the Telos of Islamic Studies?

- 22) Monday, 2 November Omid Safi, Reflections on the State of Islamic Studies, *Jadaliyya* (<https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/30175>)

James Gilbreath will provide an overview of library resources

- 23) Wednesday, 4 November Aaron Hughes, When Bad Scholarship Is Just Bad Scholarship: A Response to Omid Safi, *Bulletin for the Study of Religion* (<https://bulletin.equinoxpub.com/2014/02/when-bad-scholarship-is-just-bad-scholarship-a-response-to-omid-safi/>)
-

WEEK TWELVE: Consensus in Islamic Studies?

- 24) Monday, 8 November Aaron Hughes, “Islamic Religious Studies and the Politics of Identity” in *Islam and the Tyranny of Authenticity: An Inquiry into Disciplinary Apologetics and Self-Deception*, pp. 15-36 (Sheffield, UK: Equinox, 2015).
- 25) Wednesday, 11 November Review
- Friday, 13 November 2020 Research Paper Proposal, Outline, and Bibliography is due via Turnitin.com.
-

WEEK THIRTEEN: Presentations

- 26) Monday, 16 November Presentations
- 27) Wednesday, 18 November Presentations
-

Final Papers due on December 1, 2020