



SCHOOL OF
Historical, Philosophical
& Religious Studies

ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

INTRODUCTION TO ISLAM

Rel 260

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This course is designed as an introductory journey into the Islamic world. The course will cover a variety of issues delving into the complex, dynamic, multiple, historical, and living traditions of Islam. The course takes a “religious studies” perspective, providing methodological and interpretative tools to further our knowledge of Islam. As an introductory course, we will touch upon diverse issues, some of them sensitive in today’s political climate. However, the course is not designed to answer media-generated issues concerning Islam. As a religious studies course, students will be expected to engage theoretical and methodological issues in addition to learning about Islam.

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

- To appreciate the historical, philosophical, theological, and social contributions of Muslims throughout world history;
- To gain basic knowledge of Islamic beliefs and practices from different parts of the Muslim world;
- To learn methodological and interpretative tools for studying religious phenomena;
- To enjoy ourselves as we journey through the complex and diverse worlds of Islam.

EXPECTATIONS

- That each student keep up with reading assignments, participate fully in class discussions, and attend class regularly;
- Students respect the classroom environment and the learning experience of their fellow classmates by: respecting their opinions, not disrupting class by talking privately or out of turn, turning cell phones to silent, and not coming late or leaving early;
- No cell phones, no cell phones ringing, no texting;
- No computer usage during class hours;
- No leaving early without prior permission, no arriving late (if you are more than 5 minutes late, don’t bother coming to class).

REQUIRED READINGS

Daniel Brown. 2017. *New Introduction to Islam*, 3rd Edition. Wiley-Blackwell.

Bruce Lawrence. 2016. *Who is Allah?* University of North Carolina Press.

Additional readings will be made available on Blackboard.

ASSIGNMENTS

The assignments for the course are designed to evaluate your engagement with course materials and to provide creative opportunities to delve into the historical, social, and philosophical worlds of Islam and Muslims.

Interpretative Analysis (10 Points) October 1st

In class we will watch a short video of a particular Islamic ritual. You will then write an interpretation of the ritual based on historical, sociological, and/or theological tools of analysis. You will be given specific questions to engage.

Critical Review (10 points) November 14th

You will be expected to write a 3-page critical review of an *academic* book that is not assigned as part of the reading requirements. The book you select should be undertaken in consultation with the professor. Information on writing critical reviews will be discussed in class and posted on Blackboard.

Mid-Term Examination (20 points) October 17th

The mid-term will be short answers, definitions, and an essay covering material from the first half of the course.

Final Examination (40 points) Take-Home Due December 5th

The final exam will cover short answers from the second half of the course along with several longer essays drawing upon material from the entire semester. The final will be a take-home exam. You will have one week to complete it and we will have in-class review session.

Class Participation (15 points)

The class will be a mixture of lecture with extensive discussion, mostly driven by critically engaging the reading assignments. Participation in class discussions is your opportunity to reflect, analyze, and compare the ideas and information we engage in class. It is your opportunity to show that you are keeping up with reading assignments and are engaged with the issues. All discussions will be public, based on respect and tolerance towards one another.

Discussion Leader (5 points)

You will select one class session over the semester to be the discussion leader. You will be expected to post questions to the entire class the night before the class drawn from the assigned readings for that day. You will then introduce the reading, giving a brief review, and initiate class discussion based on your questions.

Attendance

Daily attendance in the course is mandatory; your grade will be deducted by any absence. More than five absences will result in failing the course. Coming late or leaving early will be considered an absence.