Theology 114: Reform in Contemporary Islamic Thought
Fall 2015
Sunday 5:45-8:25
Classroom 0A07

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Office Hours: Sunday 1:00-3:00 pm or by appointment

In order to contact me, please use my email. I will check emails until 6pm daily. If you email after 6pm, do not expect a response until the following morning.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

It has been argued that the Muslim world is in crisis. For many this crisis is centered upon religious authority which has become increasingly pluralized, and increasingly contested. This course will explore arguments for intellectual reform in Islamic Thought starting in the 19th century by systematically reading the texts of international reform intellectuals. By doing so, this course will explore the various ways in which Islamic authority has been defined and redefined in contemporary Muslim societies. Additionally, this class will explore the complexity of this topic by looking at various external circumstances to the debate such as globalization, mass migration, colonization and the commodification of knowledge. By the end of the course, students should be able to: understand political, social and religious causes for reform movements; meaningfully engage with various reform arguments, and; identify points of convergence and divergence between various groups and actors.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

This course is designed as a senior seminar, which means it is to be a conversational class, not a lecture class. The main objective of the course is to push students to a deeper level of engagement with both texts and arguments. Beyond merely reading and digesting the books which are required, the students should ideally put different books into conversation one another, engage in debate and come to a deeper understanding of how critical conversations and arguments are constructed and deconstructed.

This course is also a Doyle Seminar, part of the Doyle Engaging Difference Program, a new campus-wide curricular initiative, and gives faculty the opportunity to enhance the student research component of upper-level seminars that address questions of national, social, cultural, religious, moral, and other forms of difference. The Doyle seminars are intended to deepen student learning about diversity and difference through enhanced research opportunities, interaction with thought leaders, and dialogue with the Georgetown community and beyond.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

ATTENDANCE AND ACTIVE PARTICIPATION (20%)

The attendance and participation grade is determined both by your physical presence in the classroom at the beginning of the appointed hour, and your continued participation in the class discussion. Attendance is mandatory and will be taken each session. Excused absences from class will be given for acceptable circumstances, if you discuss it with me prior to class. After two absences (excused or not), the professor reserves the right to fail you from the class. Coming more than 5 minutes late to class, or consistently coming late to class will result in an unexcused absence.
Participation in the class is mandatory. You must come to class having adequately prepared the required readings, and you must contribute constructively to the discussion section of each class. Your participation includes the moderation of class discussion on the days you prepare a book review.

*Your successful participation in class will often require directly citing the readings so bring your assigned readings to class daily. If you show up to class without your book, this will impact your participation grade.*

**BOOK REVIEWS (30%)**

You will be required to write three book reviews during the course of the term on a book of your choosing, with each book review being from a different unit. The book review is *not a summary* of the arguments; rather, it is a detailed engagement with the author’s argument and you should state what you agree with, what you disagree with and why. You should also coordinate with other students who are writing book reviews on the same book to ensure that you all discuss different themes, and potentially even different chapters.

Your book review must be sent to ALL of your classmates a minimum of twelve hours before class. It is the job of ALL classmates to read the book reviews BEFORE coming to class. Then in class I will call on two people to respond to the book reviews written by their colleagues—again agreeing, disagreeing and engaging. This means everyone should bring a printed copy of the book reviews to class having read them carefully and made notes. You don’t know how often and when you will be called on to respond!

**FINAL RESEARCH PAPER OF 20-25 PAGES (40%)**

This paper is meant to provide you the opportunity to write a substantial, well-researched, paper tying together the various investigations undertaken in the class. **You will be required to create your own research question and submit a ½-1 page proposal no later than October 16th. After turning in the research question we will meet, ideally each week during office hours or another agreed upon time to ensure proper progress on your research paper.** Our meetings will be targeted at developing your research question, methodology, bibliography and finally the outline of the paper. The final papers should be double-spaced and in a font size no smaller than 12 pt. I am happy to review short elements of drafts until the end of the eleventh week and I will review full outlines until the paper is due. The required citation style is that outlined by the *Chicago Manual of Style.*

**FINAL PRESENTATION 10%**

At the end of the term you will be required to present your research paper and findings to the class in a 10-15 minute presentation. You will be evaluated on the quality of your research, your engagement with your colleagues, and your ability to cogently and coherently present your ideas.

*Late work on any of the book reviews and final paper will not be accepted.*
### Grading Parameters

#### Percentage Grades: Literal Descriptors

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<th>Grade Range</th>
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<td><strong>A/A- Exceptional</strong></td>
<td>A superior performance with consistent strong evidence of&lt;br&gt;a comprehensive, incisive grasp of the subject matter;&lt;br&gt;an ability to make insightful critical evaluation of the material given;&lt;br&gt;an exceptional capacity for original, creative and/or logical thinking;&lt;br&gt;an excellent ability to organize, to analyze, to synthesize, to integrate ideas, and to express thoughts fluently.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>B+/B Excellent</strong></td>
<td>An excellent performance with strong evidence of&lt;br&gt;a comprehensive grasp of the subject matter;&lt;br&gt;an ability to make sound critical evaluation of the material given;&lt;br&gt;a very good capacity for original, creative and/or logical thinking;&lt;br&gt;an excellent ability to organize, to analyze, to synthesize, to integrate ideas, and to express thoughts fluently.</td>
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<td><strong>B-/C+ Good</strong></td>
<td>A good performance with evidence of&lt;br&gt;a substantial knowledge of the subject matter;&lt;br&gt;a good understanding of the relevant issues and a good familiarity with the relevant literature and techniques;&lt;br&gt;some capacity for original, creative and/or logical thinking;&lt;br&gt;a good ability to organize, to analyze and to examine the subject material in a critical and constructive manner.</td>
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<td><strong>C/C- Satisfactory</strong></td>
<td>A generally satisfactory and intellectually adequate performance with evidence of&lt;br&gt;an acceptable basic grasp of the subject material;&lt;br&gt;a fair understanding of the relevant issues;&lt;br&gt;a general familiarity with the relevant literature and techniques;&lt;br&gt;an ability to develop solutions to moderately difficult problems related to the subject material;&lt;br&gt;a moderate ability to examine the material in a critical and analytical manner.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>D/D+ Minimal Pass</strong></td>
<td>A barely acceptable performance with evidence of&lt;br&gt;a familiarity with the subject material;&lt;br&gt;some evidence that analytical skills have been developed;&lt;br&gt;some understanding of relevant issues;&lt;br&gt;some familiarity with the relevant literature and techniques;</td>
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attempts to solve moderately difficult problems related to the subject material and to examine the material in a critical and analytical manner which are only partially successful.

| F | An unacceptable performance. |

**Plagiarism/Academic Dishonesty:**

"**Plagiarism:** the presentation of the work or idea of another in such a way as to give others the impression that it is the work or idea of the presenter. There is an onus on every student to become informed as to what constitutes academic dishonesty and plagiarism. Ignorance of applicable standards of ethical writing is not an acceptable excuse. “

For full details see: [http://qatar.sfs.georgetown.edu/academics/honor/full](http://qatar.sfs.georgetown.edu/academics/honor/full)

**CONSEQUENCES:** Any and all cases of suspected plagiarism WILL be forwarded to the Honor Council. If plagiarism is found, an automatic grade of 0 will be given on the assignment. If the student is found to be a repeat offender, consequences beyond a 0 for the assignment will be considered.

**THE WRITING CENTER**

This class is writing intensive and combines different styles of writing so I strongly encourage you to go to the Office of Academic Services (OAS) for writing help. It is located on Floor 1 in the wring across from Student Affairs.

Visit: [http://qatar.sfs.georgetown.edu/148400.html](http://qatar.sfs.georgetown.edu/148400.html)

**ACCOMMODATIONS FOR DISABILITIES**

As per university policies, if you have a disability that may impact your academic performance, please contact the Office of Academic Services (OAS) immediately so that arrangements can be made for daily note taking and your exams.

**INSTRUCTIONAL CONTINUITY**

If access to the SFS-Qatar building or Education City is ever curtailed, thus making regular class meetings impossible, every effort will be made to ensure that this class will continue to meet virtually. Further information will be sent to each student’s Georgetown email address should the need ever arise. Students are expected to comply with any and all instructions and to participate fully in any and all virtual class activities.

**CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT**

A successful class emerges from the efforts of the students and the efforts of the instructor. A classroom where all are equally participating is an important part of an effective classroom environment. You are expected to be prepared to participate throughout class regardless of whether your hand is raised.

As we will equally participate together, it is **essential** that we work toward fostering an open, friendly, and communicative environment that emphasizes our mutual respect for differing opinions and narratives.
Cell phones and other such technological devices are wondrous inventions that can quickly cripple our learning environment. Please, let your friends outside of this class know that you will be unavailable during our class time and keep your cellphones and texting capabilities silent and unavailable. **Continuous use of cell phone during class will result in a lowering of your attendance/participation grade.** You also may use your laptop computer for note taking, but browsing on the web and doing activities unrelated to the class will also result in a lowering of your attendance/participation grade.
Reading Schedule

Unit One: Understanding Islam and the Big Questions

Week 1: August 21st: Looking into Modernity and the Concept of Reform

Week 2: August 28th: The Big Questions: Reason vs. Revelation and Traditionalism vs. Reform
Reading: Approximately 250 pages

Reason vs. Revelation:
(1) Ayman Shihadeh, “Theories of Ethical Value in Kalam” (24 pages)
(2) Sherman Jackson, “The Alchemy of Domination” (18 pages)
(3) Pessagno, “Intellect and Religious Assent” (10 pages)
(4) Ulrich Rudolph, selections from al-Maturidi and the Development of Sunni Theology (14 pages)

Traditionalism vs. Reform
(5) Wael Hallaq, selections from Authority, Continuity and Change (60 pages)
(6) Mohammad Fadel, “The Social Logic of Taqlid” (40 pages)
(7) Charles Kurzman “Modernist Islam” (26 pages)
(8) Charles Kurzman “Liberal Islam” (24 pages)
(9) Shireen Hunter, “Reformist Voices of Islam” (28 pages)

Week 3: September 4th: Defining and Re-defining Islam
Shahab Ahmad, What is Islam?

Week 4: September 11th: Eid Break

Unit 2: The History of Early Reform

Week 5: September 18th: Origins of Islamic Reform
Samir Haj, Reconfiguring Islamic Tradition: Reform, Rationalist and Modernity

Week 6: September 25th: Questioning Salafism
Henri Lauziere, The Making of Salafism: Islamic Reform in the 20th Century

Unit 3: Islam and Legal Reform

Week 7: October 2nd: Islamic Legal Reform Pt. 1
Khaled Abou Fadel, Speaking in God’s Name

Week 8: October 9th: Islamic Legal Reform Pt. 2
Kecia Ali, Sexual Ethics in Islam
Unit 4: Islam and Political Reform

Week 9: October 16th: Islam and Secularism
Abdullah Na’im- *Islam and the Secular State*

Week 10: October 23rd: Islam and Secularism Con’t
Nader Hashemi, *Islam, Secularism and Liberal Democracy*

Week 11: October 30th: Islam and Secularism Con’t
Hussein Ali Agrama, *Questioning Secularism*

Unit 5: Responses from the Tradition

Week 12: November 6th: Responses from the Sub-Continent
Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *Modern Islamic Thought in a Radical Age*

Week 13: November 13th: Responses from America
Jonathan Brown, *Misquoting Muhammad*

Week 14: November 20th: Specific Issues of Legal Reform and Guest Speakers

Week 15: November 27th: Student Presentations