

# ISLAM

## RELS 3350

Dr. Erkan Kurt  
Fall 2011 (August 22 - December 16, 2011)  
Class meeting: TuTh 2:30 pm - 4 pm  
Class location: SEC 205  
Office hours: Tue 11:00 am - 1 pm  
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### **Description and objectives**

This course is an introductory study of the historical, doctrinal, cultural, and societal aspects of Islam. It will cover the historical foundations of the religion, the elements of Muslim faith and practice, the diversity of Islamic sects and denominations, the essential characters and themes of Islamic disciplines (namely Islamic theology, philosophy, law, ethics, and mysticism), the cultural manifestations of Muslim faith, the modern Islamic movements and trends, and the communities of Muslims in the United States. The course is structured so that you may develop an understanding of Islam as a universe of social and human phenomena. What makes such a study significant is the fact that we all live in a global community in which all others are our own neighbors.

### **Required book**

Frederick Mathewson Denny, *An Introduction to Islam* (4<sup>th</sup> Ed.), Pearson, 2010, ISBN 978-0-13-814477-7

### **Class format**

Classes will include the instructor's lecture, open discussion, questions and comments. Your presentations are also an essential component of the class, as explained below. In some sessions, we will watch videos and have guest speakers as well.

### **Attendance and participation**

In order to benefit from this class, your regular and on-time attendance is essential. Failure to attend class more than 4 times without prior notice will have a negative impact on your grade. You are strongly encouraged to participate in class discussions and to raise questions and comments during and after lectures. All are expected to exhibit professional behavior during the class and not to use electronic devices including computers except for relevant purposes.

### **Reading assignment**

You are required to read the assigned text to come to class prepared.

**Book review or presentation**

You are required to select a book, which may be related to your own academic interests, from the “Bibliography” file in the “Course Content” folder on Blackboard, write a review of it or prepare a brief presentation on it for the class. All books in the “Bibliography” are available at University of Houston libraries. I recommend that you preview the book (read its “summary” and “content”) at the library's website before you make your selection. You may want to choose a book not listed in the mentioned file. In this case, you need to consult the instructor. Both the review and presentation should introduce the content, main idea or thesis, and major points and arguments of the book, as well as your overall evaluation of it. The review should be 1,500 to 2,000 words and include adequate and proper citations. The assignment must be submitted via Blackboard by November 18, 2011, 5 pm. The presentation should be 15-20 minutes. You need to let me know the book you have selected via email by September 9, 2011 so that I can make a schedule for your presentation. You are also expected to bring a copy of the book to the class in order to make the presentation more appealing.

**Reflection paper on media coverage**

You are required to write a reflection paper on a recent media story related to the topics we discuss in class. It can be a news story or an article from a newspaper, magazine, TV or radio program. Written sources may be either printed or online. This reflection paper should summarize the coverage you have chosen and then discuss the theses, opinions, and information presented, and it should reference at least 3 other online or printed sources. Do not forget to attach a scanned copy of the first page of the media story, if available, as a separate PDF file. The assignment must be submitted via Blackboard by November 18, 2011, 5 pm. During the last three classes of the semester (November 22, 29, and December 1, 2011), we will share these news stories and reflect on them. You are expected to talk briefly and informally about the coverage you have selected, based on your reflection paper.

**Take-home final exam**

The final exam will be take-home, open book, and open notes. You will be asked to choose 5 of the given questions and write your responses according to the required length. The questions will be available between December 7 and December 15, 2011. The assignment must be submitted via Blackboard by December 15, 2011, 5 pm.

**Extra credit**

For extra credit (up to 10%) you can visit an Islamic center (mosque, cultural center, institute, etc.), meet with and interview the people if possible, and write 2 to 3 pages on your observations and impressions. Papers submitted for extra credit are due by December 15, 2011, 5 pm and must be submitted via Blackboard. (A good choice would be the Turquoise Cultural Center, which includes the Houston Blue Mosque and the Houston Institute of Islam, located at 9301 W. Bellfort Ave. Houston, TX 77031.)

**Due dates**

September 9 – Inform the instructor of the book you have selected.

November 18 – Submit your book review via Blackboard.

November 18 – Submit your reflection paper via Blackboard.

December 15 – Submit your final exam via Blackboard.

December 15 – Submit your (optional) extra credit paper via Blackboard.

### **Grading**

Attendance: 20%

Book review or presentation: 30%

Reflection paper: 20%

Take-home final exam: 30%

### **Grade matrix**

93-100 A

90-92 A-

86-89 B+

84-85 B

80-83 B-

76-79 C+

74-75 C

70-73 C-

66-69 D+

64-65 D

60-63 D-

00-59 F

### **Academic honesty**

Students are required to do their own work on exams and papers. Students are responsible for knowing the standards of academic honesty. Plagiarism, using research without citations or using a created production without crediting the source, is forbidden and will result in a grade of zero for the assignment. Any words, phrases, or sentences taken from another text must be enclosed in quotation marks and the source cited. Whether you are quoting word for word or borrowing an idea and putting it in your own words, you must credit the source.

### **COURSE SCHEDULE**

#### **1. Islam: Submission and Commitment to God**

Introduction: pp. 1-2 / 23 Aug

Chapter 1: pp. 7-31 / 25 Aug

#### **2. History of the Revelation**

Chapter 2: pp. 32-46 / 30 Aug

Chapter 3: pp. 49-73 / 1 Sept

3. Qur'an: The Book
  - Chapter 6: pp. 130-139 / 6 Sept
  - Chapter 6: pp. 140-149 / 8 Sept
  
4. Sunnah: The Prophet's Way
  - Chapter 7: pp. 150-159 / 13 Sept
  - Chapter 7: pp. 159-163 / 15 Sept
  
5. Formation of the Muslim Community
  - Chapter 4: pp. 74-84 / 20 Sept
  - Chapter 4: pp. 84-96 / 22 Sept
  
6. Essentials of Faith
  - Chapter 5: pp. 99-101 / 27 Sept
  - Chapter 5: pp. 102-105 / 29 Sept
  
7. Principles of Worship
  - Chapter 5: pp. 105-116 / 4 Oct
  - Chapter 5: pp. 116-129 / 6 Oct
  
8. Theology and Philosophy
  - Chapter 8: pp. 164-184 / 11 Oct
  - Chapter 8: pp. 184-186 / 13 Oct
  
9. Law and Ethics
  - Chapter 9: pp. 187-198 / 18 Oct
  - Chapter 9: pp. 198-208 / 20 Oct
  
10. Sufism: Mystical Way of Islam
  - Chapter 10: pp. 211-237 / 25 Oct
  - Chapter 11: pp. 238-259 / 27 Oct
  
11. Cultural Manifestations
  - Chapter 12: pp. 263-288 / 1 Nov
  - Chapter 13: pp. 289-311 / 3 Nov
  
12. Modern Islamic Movements and Trends
  - Chapter 14: pp. 315-340 / 8 Nov
  - Chapter 15-16: pp. 341-352, pp. 365-382 / 10 Nov
  
13. Muslims in the United States
  - Chapter 15: pp. 352-359 / 15 Nov
  - Chapter 15: pp. 359-364 / 17 Nov

14. Reflections on the news stories and final remarks

First group / 22 Nov

Second group / 29 Nov

Third group / 1 Dec