

PHIL 2691
Classical Islam
Religious Studies Program

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Office hours: Tuesday 9:30 – 11:00 a.m. and 2:00 – 4:00
Thursday 9:30 – 11:00 a.m.

Course Description:

This course is an historical and topical survey of the origins and development of Islam. Special attention will be given to pre-Islamic Arabia, the life and career of the Prophet Muhammad, the religious life described in the Qur'an and the hadith, the development of the Muslim community and its principal institutions, theological and legal schools, philosophical and mystical developments, and art of the early period. By way of these inquiries, the student should be able to:

- Identify the Islamic beliefs, practices, narratives, history, and art in the early period and
- Compare and contrast the assumptions, beliefs, and outlooks of different Islamic traditions and the practices that result from those cultural assumptions.

Students in this course will also:

- Cultivate critical thinking and reading comprehension skills and
- Enhance their ability to communicate more effectively, verbally and in writing.

These objectives will be attained through lectures and classroom discussions. Challenging readings from a variety of disciplines will supplement these strategies.

GRADING:

- Two exams with essays and short answers (20% each)
- Four quizzes or film review (5% each)
- Attendance and class participation (10%)
- Final research paper or project (15%)
- Cumulative final exam (15%)

REQUIRED READINGS:

- Esposito, *Islam: The Straight Path*, Third Edition, Oxford University Press, ISBN: [0-19-518266-9](https://www.oxfordup.com/9780195182669)
- Tahrike Tarsile, *Qur'an: Text, Translation & Commentary Ali*, ISBN: [0-940368-32-3](https://www.oxfordup.com/9780195182669)

Additional readings will be available on the course Blackboard website. <http://ecu.blackboard.com/> Students are responsible for checking their email address linked to Blackboard system so that they are assured of remaining up-to-date with reading assignments, exam dates, and any other information relating to the course.

EXAMS:

Exams will consist of essays and short questions. Generally, I will provide several essay questions from which the student may select two to answer. Short questions may be multiple choice, true and false, and simple identification. Check the ECU catalog in order to determine the date and time of the final exam. **Students who maintain at least a 94% average throughout the semester will be exempt from the final.**

QUIZZES:

Quizzes will be brief and focused on a narrow body of information. For example, one quiz will be on mapping the Muslim world. There is a series of maps on the Blackboard webpage. Students are expected to become familiar with these maps on their own time.

FILM REVIEW:

Students will be expected to watch a film and write a three page review summarizing and reacting to the content.

CLASSROOM PARTICIPATION AND ATTENDANCE:

Students who attend all classes, read all assignments on time, and demonstrate that they are capable of being fully involved in all class discussions will earn full marks for participation.

An absence for a legitimate university-sanctioned reason will be excused. Students should consult the following site to become familiar with the relevant ECU policies:

<http://core.ecu.edu/psyc/wuenschk/docs00/University-Excused-Absence.htm>

Quizzes, exams, and other assignments may be made-up only if the absence is officially excused by the University or is medically related (See Student Health for a note).

Students who must be absent – excused or not – are responsible for obtaining notes from a peer. After they have done so, they may ask me for further clarification, but they should not ask me first.

Unexcused absences will result in grade reduction. After the 3rd unexcused absence, 3% will be deducted from the final grade. Each additional absence will result in a deduction of a further 3%. Please plan on attending our class.

RESEARCH PAPER STANDARDS:

A research paper is a particular form of writing that articulates and then argues for a thesis. A thesis is a clear and unambiguous statement that a research paper proves; it has the form, "I will argue that X is true." For example:

- This paper will demonstrate that in the development of Islam in the classical period was largely a result of Muhammad's strategic choices.
- Islamic norms relating to the social and legal roles of women elaborated in the classical period made them the most liberated women in the world at that time.

A thesis must be controversial enough to raise interesting questions, a test that is failed by the statement, "ECU students are human beings." However, it does not need to be something utterly revolutionary. A thesis is a statement about which the author could be wrong. A matter of taste, such as the statement, "Jimi Hendrix is the greatest guitarist in history," does not count as a thesis. Also off limits would be an argument in favor of some normative posture, such as, "People throughout the world should practice democracy."

In preparation for writing papers, each student will submit a two-page proposal for their paper on a date to be specified. Each student will write a critique of the paper proposals of three other students according to standards I will make available later. The final papers should be 12-15 pages. Please see the following website for helpful guidance on writing research papers.

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/workshops/hypertext/ResearchW/>

Authors must employ a standardized style for footnotes and bibliography, such as the MLA style. A paradigm, along with other helpful information relevant to writing papers is available on-line at:

<http://core.ecu.edu/encl/hecmovichg/4170-f03/writerstoolbox/writingtools.htm>

See also:

<http://www.ecu.edu/cs-lib/Reference/refdesk/style.cfm>

Both the ideas and the quoted words of others must be footnoted properly. Failure to do so could constitute plagiarism. While it is fine for you to share resources and references with your peers, each person must do their own work. If you are uncertain as to whether you might be crossing the line between helpfulness and cheating, please consult with me. On-line resources, such as web pages, can be extremely unreliable when it comes to religion. If you have doubts as to the authenticity of your sources, please ask for my advice. If you use material from the web, the particular URL of a referenced idea or passage must be footnoted just like any other source. In no case should you rely entirely upon websites.

Based on the writing displayed in the paper or project proposal, some students will be directed to take a draft of their paper to the Writing Center. The final version of the paper will not be accepted and graded without a note from the Writing Center.

One of the most powerful resources available for the study of religion is the **ATLA** (American Theological Library Association) Religion Database. This valuable tool provides information from 1949 on many topics in religious studies and includes: more than one million bibliographic records covering the research literature of religion in 35 languages, more than 350,000 article citations from 600 journals, more than 200,000 essay citations from 15,500 multi-author works, and over 360,000 book review citations. In order to foster research skills, **each student is required to use two resources found through the ATLA system.** Please mark those resources in your bibliography by placing the acronym “ATLA” beside those sources. Access it at <http://www.lib.ecu.edu/erdb/atla.htm>

Students may employ web page resources, but they should be used sparingly. In no case should they constitute more than 25% of the sources employed.

Both the ideas and the quoted words of others must be footnoted properly. Failure to do so could constitute plagiarism. While it is fine for you to share resources and references with your peers, each person must do his or her own work. If you are uncertain as to whether you might be crossing the line between helpfulness and cheating, please consult with me. On-line resources, such as web pages, can be extremely unreliable when it comes to religion. If you have doubts as to the accuracy of your sources, please ask for my advice. If you use material from the web, the particular URL of a referenced idea or passage must be footnoted just like any other source.

Based on the writing displayed in the paper or project proposal, some students will be directed to take a draft of their paper to the Writing Center. The final version of the paper will not be accepted and graded without a note from the Writing Center.

Additional resources for research and writing papers in the field of Religious Studies can be found at www.ecu.edu/religionprogram under “Resources for the Academic Study of Religion”.

HONORS:

It is possible for Honors student to take this course for Honors credit. Such students will be required to do an additional project towards fulfillment of the Honors part of the course. Normally, this will consist of an extra paper on a topic that is different from their other paper. Students are free to pitch some other idea to me. Papers or other approved projects are due on the day the main paper is due.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

All students are expected to comply with the principles of Academic Integrity embodied in the [ECU Honor Code](#). Since violations can result in expulsion from the University, suspension, or a grade of “F” for the course, students should

become familiar with what constitutes plagiarism, cheating, falsification, and other violations. Note also that according to ECU policy mere attempts to plagiarize, cheat, or falsify qualify as violations. Consult the ECU Clue Book for details. <http://www.ecu.edu/studenthandbook/III.htm>

UNIVERSITY RESOURCES:

The Writing Center offers students in-person and on-line assistance in learning writing skills. Contact the Writing Center for hours and locations at Bate (GCB) 2026 (328-2820). <http://www.ecu.edu/cs-acad/writing/writingcenter/index.cfm>

In addition to providing students with personal counseling, the Center for Counseling and Student Development in Wright Building 316 (328-6661) offers various resources to assist students in their academic development. These include training in time management, test taking, overcoming test anxiety, and academic motivation. <http://www.ecu.edu/studentlife/counselingcenter/>

East Carolina University seeks to comply fully with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Students requesting accommodations based on a disability must be registered with the Department for Disability Support Services located in Slay 138 (252) 737-1016 (Voice/TTY).

MEETING WITH ME:

I have 5 hours of scheduled office hours a week. Aside from those hours, I can often be found in my office. If the times I have indicated are not practical, students are encouraged to see me before or after class. If students need to meet at another time, I am sure I can be accommodating. I encourage all students to come and see me as they begin to formulate their research papers. This will insure that the selected paper topic is appropriate and relevant.

LIBRARY:

All students at ECU should become proficient in using library resources. The Joyner Library at ECU (accessible on-line at <http://www.lib.ecu.edu/>) has many valuable resources on Islam. There are hundreds of books on religion in the stacks of Joyner Library. See the following website for help in navigating your way around the Library. Books on Philosophy, Psychology, and Religion have call numbers beginning with the letter B. Books on Islam have call numbers beginning with BP. Navigate your way around the library with the following source:

<http://geography.miningco.com/library/congress/blb.htm>)

Additionally, you can find information on religious traditions in books in other sections of the library, including anthropology, art, geography, history, literature, philosophy, and psychology. You may also explore the film and music resources the library collects. One of the best resources available is the library's collection of journals. Not only does the library have numerous religion journals in paper and bound forms, but it is also possible to access a very large number of journals

on-line. (<http://www.lib.ecu.edu/locator/main.cfm>) The library staff can be extremely helpful in learning to use all of these resources. Don't be shy about asking for their help.

As a student of East Carolina University, you also have free use of the Library system at University of North Carolina — Chapel Hill (www.lib.unc.edu). Moreover, you can access just about any book, journal or other resource in the world through the Inter-Library Loan. Many resources can be obtained within a matter of days. Often, journal articles can be delivered electronically within a day or two. The Joyner Library has a special office for Inter-Library Loan services, located to the left of the front desk. You can access these resources on-line at: <http://jill.lib.ecu.edu/illiad/logon.html>