

HIST 387-005
History and Politics of Shiism

Spring 2015
T 4:30-7:10
RA208

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office hrs.: T 11-12pm

Shiism is a branch of Islam that is dominating the news about the Middle East and Islamic world. But a certain amount of confusion remains as to how this branch of Islam relates to the larger Islamic context. Explaining Shiism usually consists of a review of seventh century disputes, which are considered to manifest in failed or weak states as violent sectarianism, or as a theocracy in the revolutionary republic of Iran. Such an explanation and the conclusions drawn from it do not adequately represent the range of experiences in the long and complex development of Shiism as an integral part of Islam. In exploring a variety of different sources from the seventh century to the present, this course will chart the evolution of Shiism, its various aspects and expressions, in the global Muslim community. Course readings will consist of primary and secondary historical, legal, religious, anthropological, visual and literary sources.

By the conclusion of the course, students should have a grasp of the major chronology of Shii history, as well as its distinct ritual, legal, social, cultural and political roles. They should also have the ability to demonstrate the continuities and connections as well as departures between it and Sunni Islam. Students will be expected to demonstrate these outcomes through class participation, two essay exams, and a research paper that will involve evaluating the sources, both primary and secondary, textual and other, used in providing explanations and interpretations of Shiism. These outcomes are designed to fulfill the Global Understanding common core objectives at GMU: to demonstrate understanding of global patterns and processes; of the interconnectedness, difference, and diversity of a global society; and to explore individual and collective responsibilities within a global society through analytical, practical, or creative responses to global problems or issues, using resources appropriate to the field.

Grade Distribution:

Participation 15%
Midterm 25%
Final 25%
Research Paper 35%

Students are to complete all the assigned readings for each class before that class. Participation is expected and strongly suggested as failure to do so will adversely affect the student's grade. Dates for both exams are absolutely non-negotiable; so make sure to plan work, study, and vacations around these dates. There will be no exceptions made for these reasons. Study guides with further instructions for both papers and exams will be provided at the appropriate times. .

Required Readings: The following are all required and available at the bookstore:

Halm, H., Shiism, 2nd ed., Columbia, 2004

Mottahedeh, R., Mantle of the Prophet, 2nd ed., Oneworld Publication, 2008
Nakkash, Y., Reaching for Power: The Shia in the Modern Arab World, Princeton, 2007
Satrapi, M., The Complete Persepolis, Pantheon, 2003

ADDITIONAL ISSUES:

Students are not allowed to eat or text in class. And students are not allowed to use laptops for any purpose other than taking notes. Cell phones must be turned off. Walking in late is not only rude and disruptive, but will adversely affect your grade. Walking out during class for a bathroom break, etc., is equally disruptive. If a student is not prepared to participate, it is better not to attend, as attendance of warm bodies alone does not qualify as participation.

ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS:

Disabilities and Academic Accommodations: If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at 703-993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office.

Academic Honesty and Plagiarism: This class and all of your work as an undergraduate are governed by GMU's Honor Code: "Student members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, or lie in matters related to academic work."

Plagiarism is presenting another person's words, ideas, or sequence of arguments as your own without attribution. We will discuss what constitutes plagiarism and how to cite sources properly in this course. It is my duty to report all violations of the Honor Code. To read more about the Honor Code, the Honor Committee, and its procedures, see go to <http://honorcode.gmu.edu>.

Last Day to Add Classes: 1/27/2015

Last Day to Drop Classes: 1/27/2015

Selective Withdrawal Period: 1/27-2/20/2015

Tentative Reading and Assignment Schedule:

Week 1 Introduction

T: Introduction to course

Week 2 The Beginnings

T: Halm, Ch. 1

“Ali’s instructions to Malik al-Ashtar”, <http://www.al-islam.org/nahjul-balagha-part-2-letters-and-sayings/letter-53-order-malik-al-ashtar>

Week 3 The Imamiyya

T: Halm, Ch. 2, pp. 28-44

Ibn Babawayh, “Belief Concerning Prophets and Apostles and Imams and Angels, etc.” chs. 34-37, 41: <http://www.sicm.org.uk/index.php?page=suduk/main>

Week 4 The Zaydiya and Ghulat

T: Halm, Ch. 5, 3

#Morris, J. W., “Revisiting Religious Shiism and Early Sufism” (Reason and Inspiration in Islam, ed. Lawson, IB Tauris, 2005, pp. 102-116).

Week 5 The Ismailis

T: Halm, Ch. 4, pp. 160-200

Week 6 The Fatimids

T: #Ibn Yaqub’s *Risala fi’l-imama*, tr. Makarem (The Political Doctrine of the Ismailis, Delmar NY, 1990, pp. 21-23); Hunsberger, “Glory Regained” (Nasir Khusraw, The Ruby of Badakhshan, Edinburgh, 2006, pp. 241-254); Cortese and Calderini, “Outside the Palace Walls” (Women and the Fatimids in the World of Islam, Edinburgh, 2006, pp. 101-147).

Review for Midterm and Research Paper Guide.

Week 7 The Jafari madhhab

T: : Halm, Ch. 2, pp. 45-73, #Shaykh al-Mufid, selection from the *Kitab al-Irshad*, “The Prophet’s Farewell Pilgrimage and the Declaration at Ghadir Khumm, pp.

Midterm Exam

Week 8 **Spring Break**

Week 9 The Safavids

T: Halm, Ch. 2, pp. 79-97; **Shah Abbas Documentary Research Paper Bibliography Due.**

Week 10 Modern Iran

T: Halm, Ch. 2, pp 98-123

Khumayni, The Relationship between Religion and Politics: <http://www.imam-khomeini.com/web1/english/showitem.aspx?cid=2012&pid=2346&h=13&f=14>

Week 11 A Day in the Life of a Sayyid

T: Mottahedeh, Mantle of the Prophet
Outline of Paper Due

Week 12 Revolutionary Iran

T: #Cole, J., "The Modernity of Theocracy" in Sacred Space and Holy War, IB Tauris, 2002, pp.189-211
www.jadaliyya.com Critical Islam page, "Fatwas and Nose Jobs in Iran".

Week 13 Shiism in South Asia

T: #Hyder, S., "Visions and Re-visions of Kerbala," in Reliving Karbala, Oxford, 2006, pp. 13-59.
Rough Draft of Paper Due

Week 14 Shiism in the Arab World

T: Nakash, Prologue, chs. 2-5.
Final Exam Study Guide

Week 15 Epilogue

T: Persepolis
Review for Final Exam and Research Paper due

FINAL EXAM DATE: Tuesday May 12, 4:30-7:15.