

George Mason University, Spring 2024

RELI 344-002: Muhammad: Life and Legacy

Monday, 4:30 PM-7:10 PM

Classroom: Horizon 4001

Instructor: Sarwar Alam, Ph.D.

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Preferred method of meeting: by appointment.

Introduction

This course introduces students to the life and legacies of Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him), the Prophet of Islam. This course surveys the sources of the biographical narratives in understanding his prophetic career. By engaging leading scholars of Islam, this course examines his important life events, revelations, persecution and opposition, his statesmanship, his teachings, and his image among Muslims. Students of this course will learn why and how the life of the Prophet Muhammad relates to contemporary Muslims and non-Muslims' concerns.

Outcomes:

Students who successfully complete this course will learn:

- The socio-cultural and religious environment of 6th century Arabia
- Critically review of the source materials of the Prophet's biography
- Origins of the early Muslim community in the Arabian Peninsula
- The formation of political authorities among the early Muslims
- Prophet Muhammad's teachings
- Prophet Muhammad's image among Muslims and non-Muslims
- Why the life of the Prophet Muhammad relates to contemporary Muslims and non-Muslims' concerns,
- Various sects of Islam,
- Islamic legal and mystical traditions, and
- How to write an academic term paper.

Grade distribution and scale:

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|--|-------|------------|
| Attendance/active participation* | 40.0% | 200 points |
| Quiz 1 (2/12/2024) | 5.0% | 25 points |
| Outlines of the term paper (due 2/12/2024) | | |
| Open book Mid-term Exam (2/19/2024) | 10.0% | 50 points |
| Article(s) review 1 (due 3/4/2024) | 5.0% | 25 points |
| Article(s) review 2 (due 3/25/2024) | 5.0% | 25 points |
| Quiz 2 (4/1/2024) | 5.0% | 25 points |
| Presentation | 5.0% | 25 points |
| Term paper** (due 4/29/2024) | 15.0% | 75 points |
| Take-home final (due 5/6/2024) | 10.0% | 50 points |

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|-------|------|------------|
| Total | 100% | 500 points |
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* Students are required to read the weekly reading assignments and actively participate in classroom discussions. Students are also required to pass the final examination. Students are strongly encouraged not to miss any class days scheduled for tests, presentations and turning in papers. Without any valid reason (run through and accepted by the instructor prior to the deadline) any delay in presenting or turning in assignments will result in a 50% grade reduction the first day it is late and a 100% grade reduction for any additional days it is late.

**The term paper should be no less than 12 pages in length with at least 5 scholarly (books or recognized journals) references.

***Any submissions in this course should be type-written with one inch margin on each side, double spaced in Times New Roman 12-pt font size.

****Miscellaneous/extracurricular activities (attending lectures, watching recommended movies, etc) may grant up to 5 points (1%) to student's grade.

| | | |
|----|-------------|--------------------------|
| A+ | 96.0-100% | (roughly 481-500 points) |
| A | 93.0-95.99% | (roughly 466-480 points) |
| A- | 90.0-92.99% | (roughly 451-465 points) |
| B+ | 87.0-89.99% | (roughly 436-450 points) |

| | | |
|----|-----------------|--------------------------------|
| B | 83.0-86.99% | (roughly 416-435 points) |
| B- | 80.0-82.99% | (roughly 401-415 points) |
| C+ | 77.0-79.99% | (roughly 386-400 points) |
| C | 73.0-76.99% | (roughly 366-385 points) |
| C- | 70.0-72.99% | (roughly 351-365 points) |
| D | 60.0-69.99% | (roughly 301-350 points) |
| F | 59.9% and below | (roughly 300 points and below) |

Classroom Etiquette

Please be respectful towards your fellow students by listening to their comments and questions as well as not disturbing others during class time. Class time is not the time to text, nap, or listen to music. Also, please note that use of cell phone is prohibited in the classroom at all times.

Syllabus Changes

The contents of this syllabus and course schedule are subject to change at my discretion. Any changes will be announced by email, Blackboard, and/or in class.

Academic Honesty

This course has a zero tolerance policy for any type of cheating, including but not limited to plagiarism. Plagiarism occurs when a student claims credit for work he or she has not done personally, and includes turning in a paper written by another student, or putting sentences or ideas originally expressed by someone else into a paper without noting their source. Any work suspected of violating the University's academic honesty code will be subject to disciplinary sanctions, including failure in the course and suspension from the University. If you have any questions related to course assignments and the academic honesty policy, please don't hesitate to ask me. For GMU honor code, please visit [Mason Honor Code – Office of Academic Integrity \(gmu.edu\)](https://www.gmu.edu/honor-code).

Accommodation for Students with Disability

George Mason University is happy to provide reasonable accommodations for students who have documented disabilities. If a student has a learning disability, a chronic illness, or any physical or mental health disability that may have some impact on their work for this class, please notify the GMU Disability Services, located at 4400 University Drive, MSN 5C9, Student Union Building 1, Suite 2500 or call 703-993-2474 or email (ods@gmu.edu). Please inform me within the first two weeks of class so we have adequate time to make any provisions.

Inclement Weather Policy

If the University decides that we are faced with "Inclement Weather" conditions, we will not meet. If a test or an assignment is scheduled, it will be administered or due during the next class meeting. For GMU Inclement Weather/Emergency Closure Policy, please visit [Inclement Weather/Emergency Closure | University Policy | George Mason University \(gmu.edu\)](#).

Active Shooter:

- CALL 9-1-1
- Exit the classroom/building immediately, if possible.
- Barricade the door with desk, chairs, bookcases or any items. Move to a place inside the room where you are not visible. Turn off the lights and remain quiet. Remain there until told by police it's safe.
- Use chairs, desks, cell phones or whatever is immediately available to distract and/or defend yourself and others from attack.
- In the event that you are confronted by an individual with a weapon and as a last resort, defend yourself and others by whatever means necessary and do not relent until the aggressor is incapacitated or law enforcement arrives.

For GMU active shooter policy, please visit [On Campus Violence | Environmental Health & Safety | George Mason University \(gmu.edu\)](#).

Mask policy:

Please check <https://core.sitemasonry.gmu.edu/safe-return-campus/faqs-safe-return/faqs-face-coverings> for mask policy updates.

Textbooks:

Martin Lings. *Muhammad: His Life Based on the Earliest Sources* (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 2006) – Available online at GMU library.

Lesley Hazleton. *The First Muslim: The Story of Muhammad* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2013) – available at GMU library.

Class Schedule and themes**Week 1 (January 22):** Introduction

Readings: Fred M. Donner. *Muhammad and the Believers: At the Origins of Islam* (Cambridge, MA and London, 2010), pp. 1-38 (The Near East on the Eve of Islam).

Supplementary readings:

Karen Armstrong. *Muhammad: A Biography of the Prophet* (London: Phoenix, 1991), pp. 55-71 (Jahiliyah).

Sidney Smith 1954. "Events in Arabia in the 6th Century A.D.," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 16 (3): 425-468.

Week 2 (January 29): Muhammad the Orphan

Readings: Lings, pp. 1-41

Week 3 (February 5): Muhammad the Prophet

Readings: Lings, pp. 42-94.

Supplementary readings:

Hazleton, pp. 86-96, 99-116, 117-150.

Week 4 (February 12): Muhammad the Enemy

Readings: Lings, pp. 95-125.

Supplementary readings:

Hazleton, pp. 151-185.

Quiz 1

Term paper: Outlines due

Week 5 (February 19): Mid-Term Exam (open book)**Week 6 (February 26):** Muhammad in Medina

Readings: Lings, pp. 126-163, 172-208, 175-208, 212-236.

Supplementary readings:

Fred M. Donner. *Muhammad and the Believers: At the Origins of Islam* (Cambridge, MA and London, 2010), pp. 227-232 (The Umma Document).

Hazleton, pp. 186-201.

Week 7 (March 4): SPRING BREAK!

Week 8 (March 11): Muhammad and the Jews of Medina

Readings: Lings, pp. 164-171, 209-211, 237-241.

Supplementary readings:

Hazleton, pp. 237-242.

Week 9 (March 18): Truce and Pilgrimage

Readings: Lings, pp. 271-316.

Week 10 (March 25): After the Meccan Victory

Readings: Lings, pp. 317-362.

Supplementary readings:

Hazleton, pp. 271-306.

Week 11 (April 1): Muhammad the Model

Readings: Annemarie Schimmel. *And Muhammad is His Messenger: The Veneration of the Prophet in Islamic Piety* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1985), pp. 24-66.

Quiz 2

Week 12 (April 8): Muhammad and His Teachings

Readings: Carl Ernst. *Following Muhammad: Rethinking Islam in the Contemporary World* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003), pp. 71-105.

Week 13 (April 15): Muhammad and His Successors

Readings: Asma Afsaruddin. *The First Muslims: History and Memory* (London: Oneworld, 2008), pp. 19-58.

Stephen J. Shoemaker. *A Prophet has Appeared: The Rise of Islam through Christian and Jewish Eyes* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2021), pp. 138-143 (Jewish perspectives), and 93- 100, 150-163 (Christian perspectives).

Week 14 (April 22): Humanism, Law and Mysticism

Readings: Asma Afsaruddin. *The First Muslims: History and Memory* (London: Oneworld, 2008), 129-147.

Annemarie Schimmel. *And Muhammad is His Messenger: The Veneration of the Prophet in Islamic Piety* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1985), pp. 123-143.

Week 15 (April 29): Presentations + **Term Papers due**

Week 16 (May 6): **Take-home final due**