Course Syllabus -- DRAFT

HIST 387-DL7: Jihad in the Islamic World

Department of History and Art History
George Mason University

Location: Online Course (Asynchronous Instructional Method with weekly Synchronous Discussion Sessions)

Faculty: Dr. Christopher Anzalone (canzalon@georgetown.edu)
Ali Vural Ak Center for Global Islamic Studies
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Phone: (703) 993-5406
Virtual Office Hours: By appointment.

Please e-mail me at least 24 hours in advance to schedule.

Course Description

What are the historical origins of the Islamic spiritual, legal, and military conceptions of “striving in the path of God” (jihad)? How have understandings of the term changed and been contested over time and in different geographical and social environments? What role has jihad played in the development of Islamic spirituality, mysticism, and state-building? How do modern militant movements interpret and present jihad in their revolutionary thought and campaigns of political violence and insurgency? Far from holding a unified view of jihad, Muslim religious scholars, jurists, political leaders, and laity have debated its proper definition, practices, and requirements since the emergence of Islam in the seventh century CE.

This course will provide students with an understanding of the competing interpretations and understandings of “jihad” throughout Islamic history in global perspective. Beginning with a comparative overview of concepts of war and peace and religiously-sanctioned violence in the Abrahamic religious traditions (Islam, Judaism, and Christianity), the course proceeds with a focus on the development of different interpretations about jihad as a concept among Muslim religious scholars and jurists, mystics, political and military leaders, and reformists. We will examine the breadth of Islamic history from the founding of the religion by Muhammad in the deserts and oases of the Arabian Peninsula and the expansion of the early Islamic polity in the decades after his death through the impact of the Crusades and European colonialism throughout the Islamic world up to the emergence of contemporary radical clandestine organizations such as Al-Qaeda and Islamic State/ISIS. In addition to key secondary scholarship, students will also engage with a variety of primary sources ranging from selections from the Qur’an and Hadith to the poetry, songs, and essays about jihad produced by modern groups.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course students will have a comprehensive overview and understanding of the multiplicity of meanings and interpretations of jihad as a concept in Islamic history as well as how these understandings have evolved and been influenced over time by changes in the social, political, and economic environments of different Muslim societies. Students will develop the skills needed to analyze primary and secondary sources so they can share their
newly acquired knowledge with others and to produce analytical response essays and a term paper based on independent research.

**Mason Core Course**  
This course is a Mason Core course and fulfills the requirements for the Global Understanding category in the university's undergraduate general education requirements: [https://chss.gmu.edu/general-education/global-understanding](https://chss.gmu.edu/general-education/global-understanding)

“The goal of the global understanding category is to help students see the world from multiple perspectives, reflect upon their positions in a global society, and be prepared for future engagement as global citizens. While it may include a historical perspective, global understanding courses focus primarily on a contemporary understanding of one’s place in a global society.”

Learning outcomes in the Mason Core, Global Understanding category include:

1. Identify and articulate one’s own values and how those values influence their interactions and relationships with others, both locally and globally.
2. Demonstrate understanding of how the patterns and processes of globalization make visible the interconnections and differences among and within contemporary global societies.
3. Demonstrate the development of intercultural competencies.
4. Explore individual and collective responsibilities within a global society through analytical, practical, or creative responses to problems or issues, using resources appropriate to the field.

**The Organization of the Class, Virtual Discussion Sessions, & Office Hours**

**Accessing Course Lectures & Some Readings on Blackboard:** This is an online asynchronous course. Course lectures will be posted weekly to Blackboard. PDFs of some weekly readings and other course content including video clips/films (marked below in the “Class Schedule and Readings” section with “[Blackboard]”) will also be posted to the course Blackboard.

**Course Lectures & Lecture Outlines:** Course lectures for the week will be posted on Tuesdays by 3 p.m. unless otherwise noted by Blackboard and GMU e-mail.

**Class Synchronous (Real-time) Virtual Sessions:** Although this is an asynchronous course, I will organize regular weekly synchronous virtual sessions [platform TBD, either Zoom or Blackboard Collaborate Ultra, & time slot TBD] at a time that works for the majority of the class. These sessions are intended to facilitate questions and real-time discussions as a group/class. Attendance and participation in these sessions is optional but encouraged. At the beginning of the semester I will set up a poll to determine possible time slots that work for the majority of the class.

**Virtual Office Hours:** Throughout the semester I am available to meet with you individually during virtual office hours via Zoom. Please e-mail me at least 24-48 hours in advance to schedule a meeting. Please also feel free to raise questions about course readings and lectures during the synchronous virtual sessions for broader class discussion.
Course Grading & Assignments

*Submit all assignments to me directly via e-mail: canzalon@gmu.edu.*

(1) **Introductory Short Essay (500 words) + Introductory Post:** 10%
    *See Instructions & Due Date Below*

(2) **Response Analysis Papers (4 in total; 1500-2000 words each):** 10% each (40% total)
    *See Instructions & Due Dates Below*

(3) **Primary Source Analysis Essays (2 in total; 1500 words each):**
    10% each (20% total)
    *See Instructions & Due Dates Below*

(4) **Take-Home Final Exam:** 30%
    *See Description and Due Date Below*

All assignments must be submitted as a Word document that is double-spaced and typed in 12-point, Times New Roman or similar font and include on the front page your full name and G Number.

For all written assignments you must utilize and cite the relevant assigned course readings in your essays. Citations can be in parenthetical or footnote format in Chicago Manual of Style format ([https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/chicago_manual_17th_edition/chicago_style_introduction.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/chicago_manual_17th_edition/chicago_style_introduction.html)) style format but must include, at a minimum, the author’s last name, publication date of the source or “n.d.” if there is no known publication date, and page number(s). **All written assignments MUST include a Bibliography or Works Cited final page.**

**Introductory Short Essay & Introductory Post (DUE by 2 p.m. EST, AUGUST 31)**
This assignment has two parts: (1) a 500-word Introductory Essay submitted directly by e-mail to me and (2) an abridged Introductory Post to the course’s Blackboard site. For the Introductory Post, you can either post your essay verbatim or, if you choose, an edited/abridged version of 2-3 paragraphs or a 2-3 minute video introduction. Post in Blackboard as a “New Thread” in the “Introductions” Forum.

**Questions:** Why did you decide to take this course? What questions/topics related to the course do you find most interesting and hope to explore and have answered through the class? How do you see the course fitting in to your educational and professional career development? Please feel free to address other questions related to your interest in the course topic and other details about your personal interests and educational and career trajectories that you feel are pertinent to this Introductory Short Essay.

**Response Analysis Papers (4 in total)**
You will write four (4) Response Papers during the course of this semester critically reflecting on the main themes in readings and lectures. Each Response Paper will cover the readings and class lectures for a set number of weeks and will be due at intervals throughout the semester. You should not simply summarize the readings and lectures but rather focus on
critically and analytically reflecting & responding to the Prompts that I will provide for each Response Paper (see further instructions and a list of the prompts on the hand-out).

In addition to responding to the prompts provided, additional issues to consider in each Response Paper include:

1. What are the main historical themes, social and political processes, intellectual development and trends, and other dynamics (social, political, economic/class, religious, etc.) at play?

2. What primary sources and data do we as scholars and students of history have about the topics/periods and places of history being studied?

3. How does the availability of primary sources/data impact our study of these periods/topics/places/individuals/groups/states?

4. What factors were/are at play in influencing shifts over time in state and society and religious and political thought, military policies, and other social changes?

DUE DATES:
- Response Paper #1: SEPTEMBER 21 by 2 p.m.
- Response Paper #2: OCTOBER 26 by 2 p.m.
- Response Paper #3: NOVEMBER 9 by 2 p.m.
- Response Paper #4: NOVEMBER 30 by 2 p.m.

Primary Source Analysis Essays (2 in total; 1500 words each)
For each Primary Source Analysis Essay, I will distribute/post one or more primary sources during the semester that have been produced by one of the individuals, states, or organizations we are studying. Drawing on the course readings and lectures as well as your own historiographical analysis, you will engage in historical source critical evaluation (source criticism).

You must utilize and directly or indirectly cite, where relevant, the relevant assigned course readings in your essays. The essays should, however, be primarily composed of analysis in your own words. Focus on providing your own analysis based on the questions and points listed below while discussing how our readings, lectures, and course discussions relate to the primary source(s) in question.

This assignment will allow you to practice historical source evaluation and criticism relating to the use of primary source documents and other sources in academic and other professional research and writing.

Focus on answering the following questions about the primary sources/data:

- What does the source say?
- Origin (Who created the source? What type of source is it?)
- Perspective (What is the point of view of the producer of the source?)
- Context (When was the source produced? What was the historical context that may have had an impact on the creation of the source?)
- Audience (Who is/was the intended audience? There may be more than one.)
Purpose (Why was the source created?)
Usefulness (How relevant is the source for the historical study of the topics under study?)
Reliability (How trustworthy is the source? Does it have potential biases or is it unclear about certain issues? If so, how/which issues?)

See also a helpful short essay on evaluating and critiquing secondary and primary sources in history produced by GMU’s Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media: https://teachinghistory.org/teaching-materials/ask-a-master-teacher/24472.

and this checklist on evaluating primary sources from the University of Southern California’s Libraries: https://libguides.usc.edu/primarysources/evaluate.

Primary Source Analysis Essay #1: DUE OCTOBER 8 by 2 p.m. EST

Primary Source Analysis Essay #2: DUE NOVEMBER 20 by 2 p.m. EST

Take-Home Final Exam: DUE by 5 p.m. EST, DECEMBER 12
Students will complete a take-home final essay exam that will be distributed during the last week of the class. Final exams must be typed and double-spaced in 12-point Times New Roman or similar font. The exam will be distributed/posted on December 5.

Your final letter grade derives from the following scale (after rounding to the nearest 0.1%):

A+ 98.5% and higher
A  94-98.4%
A- 90-93.9%
B+ 87-89.0%
B  84-86.9%
B- 80-83.9%
C+ 77-79.9%
C  74-76.9%
C- 70-73.9%
D  60-69.9%
F  59.9% and lower

Statement on Special Accommodations for Students with Disabilities
If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please let me know within the first week of the class and contact the Disability Services at (703) 993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through Disability Services.

Statement on Academic Integrity
Faculty in the department have zero tolerance for academic dishonesty and will strictly enforce Mason’s honor code (see: https://oai.gmu.edu/mason-honor-code/). All work completed in your name must be yours alone. Any work or ideas you gather from other sources must be cited properly per university regulations and academic requirements. As required, instances of plagiarism will result in a withholding of credit for the assignment and notification to the Office of Academic Integrity for referral to the Honor Committee.
Please see me if you are concerned about proper citation. The University Libraries also has several short tutorials on plagiarism and proper research citation available at https://library.gmu.edu/tutorials/student-tutorials and https://library.gmu.edu/sites/default/files/common/tutorials/PDF-tutorials/understanding_plagiarism.pdf.

What is Plagiarism? (https://oai.gmu.edu/mason-honor-code/what-is-plagiarism/)

Plagiarism is defined by Webster as “to steal and pass off (the ideas or words of another) as one’s own; use (another’s production) without crediting the source.” It is also considered an act of “literary theft: {to} present as new and original an idea or product derived from an existing source.” Often in academic work we are asked to draw upon the scholarship of others to support our arguments. While this is a tradition that dates back almost to the beginning of the educational experience, it is also a tradition to properly credit those whose ideas you are using to develop your own argument. This includes incorporating your own scholarship into new pieces. The ability to analyze and synthesize prior research into an argument is at the core of developing as a scholar. Using the ideas of others without proper attribution is unethical and a violation of the Honor Code.

Categories of plagiarism violations include but are not limited to the following:

- Self-plagiarism
- Inadequate citation
- False citation
- Failure to quote sources/material

Course Policies

Correspondence: Students will be notified about posted content on Blackboard or other course developments via their GMU e-mail. I recommend that you check your GMU e-mail account at least once every 24 hours. Please contact me only via your GMU e-mail.

Late Work: All assignments must be submitted to me by the provided deadlines. I reserve the right to refuse to accept, grade, and comment on any assignments submitted late. Please contact me before the deadline to discuss in advance any problems you are having with a particular assignment and completing it on time to discuss the possibility of an extension. Unless you contact me before an assignment deadline, late assignments, even if accepted, will lose 5% per day.

Course Readings

The majority of assigned readings, except where otherwise noted, for this course are available online through GMU’s University Library or will be made available in PDF format via Blackboard.

To access readings and assigned primary sources (including videos) marked as available on Blackboard, click on the “Course Content” folder on the left-hand side of the course’s Blackboard site; within this folder, each Week (for which there are PDFs available) has its own folder.
**Required Textbooks:**


*Other readings are available either electronically via the GMU Library or will be uploaded to Blackboard.*

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**Weekly Class Schedule & Readings**

**Week 1 (Aug. 24-29): “Striving in the Path of God”: Jihad in Islamic History & Thought, Part 1**

This week we will cover the origins of Islam in seventh century Arabia and examine how understandings of jihad developed during the lifetime of the Prophet Muhammad and during the time of his immediate successors. We will also begin considering the spiritual, mystical, political, and military interpretations of jihad.

**Readings:**


**RECOMMENDED FURTHER READING:**


**Week 2 (Aug. 30-Sept. 5): Jihad in Islamic History & Thought, Part 2**

This week we will begin to cover the role of the Prophet Muhammad in the formation of early Islamic society and trace the development of different conceptions of jihad from early to medieval Islam. The relationship of ideas regarding religiously-sanctified warfare across the Abrahamic faith traditions will also be examined.

**Readings:**
PRIMARY SOURCES:
(1) Michael Bonner, *Jihad in Islamic History: Doctrines and Practice* (Princeton University Press, 2006); Chapter 3: “Muhammad and His Community.”


**Week 3 (Sept. 6-12): Sufi Conceptions of Jihad in Early & Medieval Islamic History**

This week we will examine Sufi interpretations of jihad in its mystical, spiritual, and political/military forms and how these have played out throughout Islamic history. We will also be introduced to Shi’ite and Kharijite views of spiritual and military jihad.

**Readings:**

(2) David Cook, **Chapter 4:** “Sectarian Islam: Sunni, Shi’ite and Sufi Martyrdom,” in *Martyrdom in Islam* (Cambridge University Press, 2007).

(3) Harry S. Neale, **Chapter 4:** “The Concept of Spiritual Jihad in Learned Sufi Texts,” **Chapter 5:** “The Martial Jihad in Learned Sufi Texts,” and **Chapter 7:** “Historical Role of Sufis in Military Endeavors,” in *Jihad in Premodern Sufi Writings* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016). [Blackboard]

**Week 4 (Sept. 13-19): Jihad and the Early Islamic Conquests**

This week we will look at the evolution of the concept of jihad as religiously-sanctioned warfare in years after the death of the Prophet Muhammad in 632 CE and particularly during successive waves of military, political, cultural, and economic/trade expansion beginning in the mid-seventh century up to the emergence of the Ottoman Empire in the fourteenth century.

**Readings:**
(1) Michael Bonner, *Jihad in Islamic History: Doctrines and Practice* (Princeton University Press, 2006); **Chapter 4:** “The Great Conquests,” **Chapter 5:** “Martyrdom,” and **Chapter 6:** “Encounter with the Other.”

**PRIMARY SOURCE:**
Week 5 (Sept. 20-26): From Expansion to Empire
This week we will cover the expansion of the early Arab-Islamic state from the central Arabian Peninsula and its gradual transformation into a dynastic monarchy under the Umayyads and an empire under the Abbasids.

Readings:
(1) Michael Bonner, Jihad in Islamic History: Doctrines and Practice (Princeton University Press, 2006); Chapter 7: “Embattled Scholars” & Chapter 8: “Empires, Armies, and Frontiers.”


PRIMARY SOURCES:


Week 6 (Sept. 27-Oct. 3): Jihad in the Age of the Crusades
This week we will see how the Crusades led to a reorientation of conceptions of jihad to favor a military meaning, particularly as a means to defeat the European Crusader states after the fall of Jerusalem in 1099, and how savvy political leaders like Nur al-Din al-Zengi (1118-1174) and Saladin (1137-1193) used jihad as a political tool to expand their own realms against Muslim rivals.

Readings:


(3) Carole Hillenbrand, Chapter 3: “Jihad in the Period 493-569/1100-1174,” (pgs. 89-127) and (pg. 161 from “Jihad Literature from the Time of Nur al-Din” to pg.


**PRIMARY SOURCE:**


Read the Introduction & Hadith #s: 11, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 23, 24, 25, 30, 31, & 40. [Blackboard]

**RECOMMENDED FURTHER READING:**


(This article examines the role of architecture as calls for military jihad against the Crusader states in the Levant by Nur al-Din al-Zengi.)

**Week 7 (Oct. 4-10): The Ottoman Empire and Jihad**

This week we will look at the role of jihad in the formation and trajectory of one of the most successful and influential Islamic empires in history, that of the Ottomans.

**Readings:**


**PRIMARY SOURCE:**

Week 8 (Oct. 11-17): Jihad & Resistance in the Age of Colonialism, Part 1

This week we will transition from the medieval period and early modern period to the expansion of European colonialism in parts of the Muslim majority world from sub-Saharan Africa to the Balkans and the Middle East and North Africa between the seventeenth and twentieth century. The response of Muslim political and religious leaders and their writings about jihad and colonialism will be covered.

Readings:

(2) David Cook, Chapter 4: “Jihad During the Nineteenth Century: Renewal and Resistance,” from *Understanding Jihad* (University of California Press, 2005). [Blackboard & GMU Library online]


Week 9 (Oct. 18-24): Jihad & Resistance in the Age of Colonialism, Part 2

Readings:


Week 10 (Oct. 25-31): Conceptualizing Martyrdom in Religions
This week is the first of two weeks where we will discuss how to think about “martyrdom” as a social, religious, and political concept in Islam and other faith and intellectual traditions including modern nationalism. The idea of self-sacrifice for a “greater good” or goal and differing ideas about the legitimacy or illegitimacy of such acts will also be covered.

Readings:

(2) David Cook, Chapter 1: “Martyrs in Religions,” in Martyrdom in Islam (Cambridge University Press, 2007).


PRIMARY SOURCE:

Week 11 (Nov. 1-7): The ‘Martyr’ in Islam
This is the second of two weeks where we examine concepts of martyrdom and self-sacrifice in Islam and other faith and intellectual traditions in comparative historical perspective. This class meeting will focus on debates and discussions about different forms of martyrdom in Islamic thought throughout history.

Readings:


PRIMARY SOURCES:
(1) VIDEO CLIP: Imam Omar Suleiman interview, “What is Martyrdom in Islam?” [Blackboard]
(2) VIDEO CLIP: Al-Qaeda Central film clip on martyrdom mythology from The Wind of Paradise: Part I; featuring Abu Mus’ab al-Zarqawi (voice only); Usama bin Laden; Abdullah Azzam, & senior AQ leader Abu Yahya al-Libi. [Blackboard]

(3) VIDEO CLIP: Abu Yahya al-Libi, an Al-Qaeda leader, speaking about battlefield martyrdom and its elevated status (citing hadith). [Blackboard]

(4) VIDEO CLIP: Asim Umar, head of Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS), speaking about the rewards of martyrdom compared to worldly success. [Blackboard]


**Week 12 (Nov. 8-14): Contemporary ‘Jihadi’ Militancy, Part 1**

This week we will begin our study of contemporary Muslim militant organizations and their interpretations of jihad. In this introductory discussion we will cover some theoretical approaches to the study of political and religious violence in Islamic contexts.

**Readings:**


**PRIMARY SOURCES:**

(1) Video lecture (clip) of Abdullah Azzam (1980s) lecture about the legal requirements & obligation (fard) related to participation in military jihad.

(2) Selections from Abdullah Azzam’s writings on military jihad:
   - (A) Selections from The Defense of the Muslims’ Lands
   - (B) Selections from Join the Caravan
   [Both on Blackboard]
**Week 13 (Nov. 15-21): Classical vs. Global Jihad & the Rise of Al-Qaeda**

This week we will discuss the foundations of the contemporary transnational Sunni jihadi movement during the 1980s Afghan civil war in which local and transnational rebels fought the Afghan Communist government and its Soviet backers. The role of the Palestinian religious scholar ‘Abdullah ‘Azzam and his influence over the 1980s war and a young Usama bin Laden are covered and we will read key excerpts from two of his most important treatises, Join the Caravan and In Defense of Muslim Lands. We will end with the rise to prominence of Al-Qaeda in the 1990s and early 2000s.

**Readings:**


**PRIMARY SOURCE(S):**

1. VIDEO CLIP: Al-Qaeda Central film, Truth Has Come & Falsehood Has Perished #1

(Video title based on Qur’an 17:81: “And say: ‘Truth [Absolute Monotheism] has come and falsehood [polytheism] has perished/vanished. Surely, falsehood is ever bound to perish/vanish.”) [Blackboard]

2. Yusuf al-Uyayri (founding leader of Al-Qaeda in Saudi Arabia/AQAP), Selections from his essay “The Path to the Land of Battle” about the failure of most Muslims to participate in Al-Qaeda’s ‘jihad.’ [Blackboard]

**Week 14 (Nov. 22-28): The Iraq War (2003) & the Rise of Islamic State**

This week will discuss the impact of the 2003 invasion of Iraq and overthrow of the Ba’th Party regime of Saddam Hussein on transnational and local/regional Muslim militant groups and the outbreak of sectarian conflict in different parts of the Islamic world as part of broader political conflicts during periods of major societal upheaval.

**Readings:**


PRIMARY SOURCES:

(2) Islamic State video clip: Part of the Friday congregational prayer sermon of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi (July 2014) at Mosul’s Al-Nuri Mosque after the city’s capture.

(3) Islamic State magazine article: “Khilafah [Caliphate] Declared,” Dabiq, issue #1 (July 2014)


RECOMMENDED FURTHER READING:
(1) PRIMARY SOURCE: References to jihad in the “Letter to Baghdadi,” an open letter originally signed by over 100 Sunni Muslim religious scholars refuting Islamic State’s ideology (released in September 2014). [PDF on Blackboard; Available online at: http://www.lettertobaghdadi.com/].

Week 15 (Nov. 29-Dec. 5): Shi’ism, Sunnism, & Sectarianism: Takfir & Inter-Communal Violence as ‘Jihad’
We will close the course by examining contemporary militant discourses on the excommunication (takfir) of other Muslims and the role of sectarian violence as part of the self-declared ‘jihads’ of groups like Islamic State (ISIS/ISIL) and its Muslim opponents.

Readings:


PRIMARY SOURCE:
(1) Selections from: Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, The Greatest Jihad: Combat with the Self. [Blackboard]

RECOMMENDED FURTHER READING:

(This book chapter looks at local and geographical dynamics to sectarian violence – particularly anti-Shi’ite violence – by Pakistani Sunni militant groups, going beyond solely religion-focused explanations.)


(This article, focusing primarily on the modern period, surveys Twelver Shi’ite interpretations on jihad, looking at several key intellectuals including Ali Shari’ati, Ayatollah Murtaza Mutahhari, and Grand Ayatollah Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah.)


(This book chapter examines Al-Qaeda’s ambiguous positions towards Shi’ite Muslims. Unlike Islamic State/ISIS/ISIL, Al-Qaeda has historically taken a more measured – if still hostile – position on sectarian violence and specifically the targeting of Shi’ite Muslims.)


(This article surveys the legal opinions of several influential Lebanese Shi’ite religious scholars and jurists on defensive jihad in the context of the conflict between Lebanon and Israel.)

***FINAL EXAM DUE DECEMBER 12 by 5 p.m. EST***