

**HIST 387-001**  
**Islam and Sectarianism**

Fall 2021  
TR 1:30-2:45  
Krug Hall #7

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Islam has two branches, one of which is Shiism. How does it relate to the other Sunni branch of Islam? In exploring a variety of different sources from the seventh century to the present, this course will chart the evolution of Shiism from its origins in a struggle over leadership of the Muslim community to its development of distinct rituals, law, and communal identity. The course will also interrogate the phenomenon of sectarianism in Islam and explore whether and how these differences inform current Shii-Sunni relations. Course readings will consist of primary and secondary historical, religious, anthropological, legal, 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. In addition, students will be exposed to how the developments in Shii Islam reflect both differences and commonalities with other global trends and societies, and how they compare with our own society.

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 Shii Islam and Shii-Sunni relations.

This course satisfies the Mason Core requirement in Global Understanding. The goal of Mason Core's Global Understanding 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. For how this course meets this goal, see: <https://masoncore.gmu.edu/global-understanding-2/>

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:

Haider, N. *Shii Islam: An Introduction*. Cambridge, 2014.

Mottahedeh, R. *Mantle of the Prophet*, 2<sup>nd</sup> 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

# - Scanned readings available on Bb course site.

ADDITIONAL ISSUES:

Per university covid-related regulations, students must be masked at all times during class. 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: 8/30/2021

Last Day to Drop Classes: 9/7/2021

## Tentative Reading and Assignment Schedule:

- Week 1            Introduction
- T: Introduction to course  
R: <http://www.bbc.com/sport/football/41011511>  
#Berger, "Sociological Study of Sectarianism"  
<https://scholarship.rice.edu/bitstream/handle/1911/94091/CME-pub-Sectarianism-021317.pdf>
- Week 2            Islamic (?) Sectarianism
- T: The Past: #al-Shahrastani, excerpt from *Kitab al-milal wa'l-nihal* (Book of Sects and Creeds)  
R: The Present: al-Qaradawi on Shia: <https://youtu.be/AU4IC43AWc4>;  
<https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2015/01/iran-iraq-fatwa-sunni-shiite-insults.html>; <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2020/10/26/the-false-inclusivity-of-the-talibans-emirate>
- Week 3            The Beginnings
- T: Haider, Intro., pp. 1-4, Ch. 3, pp. 53-66  
R: # Ghadir Khumm in Kitab al-Irshad
- Week 4            Beliefs
- T: Haider, ch. 2.  
R: #Ibn Babawayh, "Belief Concerning Prophets and Apostles and Imams and Angels": "Ali's instructions to Malik al-Ashtar":  
<https://ballandalus.wordpress.com/2013/05/06/letter-of-mam-ali-ibn-abi-%E1%B9%ADalib-to-malik-al-ashtar-principles-of-just-governance-in-islam/>
- Week 5            The Zaydis
- T: Haider, pp. 85-90, 103-121.  
R: Haider, pp.169-181; <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-29319423>
- Week 6            The Ismailis
- T: Haider, Ch. 6  
R: #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); Dafary, "Sayyida Hurra: The Ismaili Queen of Yemen" (*Ismailis in Medieval Muslim Societies*, London, 2005, pp. 89-103); "The Sage and the Disciple"
- Week 7            Ismaili Modern
- T: Haider, Ch. 9  
R: #Sanders, P., "Bohra Architecture and the Restoration of Fatimid Culture", in *L'Egypte Fatimide*, Paris, 1999, pp. 151-174.  
**Review for Midterm and Research Paper Guide.**
- Week 8            Midterm
- T: **Fall break, No Class**  
R: **Midterm Exam**

- Week 9            Becoming Modern Iran
- T: #Halm, pp. 73-97; Film: Shah Abbas  
R: Haider, ch. 10
- Week 10          Life of a Sayyid
- T: Mottahedeh, *Mantle of the Prophet*  
R: *Mantle* cont.
- Week 11          Revolutionary Iran
- T: Satrapi, *Persepolis*  
R: #”Modern Theocracy”; Film: “Divorce Iranian Style”
- Week 13          Shiism Experienced
- T: #Hyder, S., “Visions and Re-visions of Kerbala,” in *Reliving Karbala*, Oxford, 2006, pp. 13-59.  
R: Nakash, Ch. 4; #Deeb, L., Ch. 1 in *The Enchanted Modern*, Princeton, 2010.  
***Rough Draft of Paper Due***
- Week 14          Shiism in the Arab World
- T: Nakash, Prologue, Ch. 2  
R: **Thanksgiving: No Class**  
***Final Exam Study Guide***
- Week 15          Epilogue
- T: Nakash, Ch. 3;  
[https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/90016469.pdf?casa\\_token=6k7cmUgJws8AAAAA:x0aM4Ij0kHHJrkthzTDIQFddUR4L\\_bUgp8BbOu6pl4KYNKtuACAzWVFPa-EGnKDn0xhiYw7puXzdaH4gf5KHRjA7SwepSV9CQYNUrJ-iHRMOS80aRfa](https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/90016469.pdf?casa_token=6k7cmUgJws8AAAAA:x0aM4Ij0kHHJrkthzTDIQFddUR4L_bUgp8BbOu6pl4KYNKtuACAzWVFPa-EGnKDn0xhiYw7puXzdaH4gf5KHRjA7SwepSV9CQYNUrJ-iHRMOS80aRfa)
- R: Haider, Conclusion **Chris Anzalone**  
***Review for Final Exam and Research Paper due***

**FINAL EXAM: Dec. 14, 1:30-4:15 (subject to changes by the Registrar, please check Patriotweb to confirm)**