

RELI 358
Islamic Thought

Fall 2023

MW 12:00-1:15

East 122

Prof. Maria Dakake

Office: Horizon Hall 3127 **Office Hours:** M 1:30-2:30/W 10:00-11:00 **Email:** mdakakem@gmu.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course will examine Islamic views on some fundamental issues in Islamic religious thought, with a principal focus on the debate over the relationship between revelation, tradition, and human intelligence and reason; and the related question of human moral responsibility and ethics. The course will begin with an examination of intellectual approaches to these issues historically within the Islamic tradition, including those of classical theological and philosophical thinkers, and then explore the relevance and evolution of these ideas among Islamic intellectuals of the modern period facing new ethical questions and challenges.

COURSE OBJECTIVES: By the end of this course, students should have an appreciation for the variety of intellectual approaches taken by Muslim thinkers in addressing essential religious issues. The course will address two issues from different perspectives: 1) the relationship of reason, tradition, and revelation; and 2) the issue of ethics, and human moral responsibility. Both are sources of profound debate in the Islamic community, and are linked to several pressing contemporary issues, including Islamic approaches to modern science, environmental ethics, human rights, and gender justice. Students will learn to read and analyze primary texts, to compare and critique the arguments of different Muslim intellectuals, and to present their own analyses of the material in written form, through short essays and other written assignments throughout the course.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

This course has several learning objectives: 1) to develop students' intercultural competencies; 2) to advance understanding of how the patterns and processes of globalization make visible the interconnections and differences among and within contemporary global societies; and 3) to explore individual and collective responsibilities within a global society through analytical, practical, or creative responses to problems or issues.

This course aims to accomplish these objectives through its exploration of the Islamic intellectual and ethical traditions. The first part of the course will examine the relationship between religious belief and the human quest for knowledge, or between revelation and human reason, in the Islamic tradition. In the second part of the course we will examine how Muslim thinkers apply both reason and revelation as sources to address traditional ethical issues within their own communities and to confront modern and global ethical challenges. We will consider how traditional approaches to various issues are enriched and complicated by Muslims' increasing engagement with the non-Muslim communities and cultures through the processes of globalization.

CLASS PROCEDURES: This class is scheduled to meet in person on Monday and Wednesday, from 12:00-1:15. The class will consist of both lecture and discussion of the assigned reading material. All students are expected to have completed the reading assignments for each class period and be prepared to discuss the material in class. Grades will be based upon 1) two 1500-word essays; 2) midterm exam;

3) a take-home final exam, and 4) participation in class discussion and assigned discussion board posts on the Blackboard site for this course. The instructor will post weekly questions relating to the assigned reading on the Blackboard discussion board; to count toward one's participation grade, responses to these questions need to be posted prior to when the reading will be discussed in class.

GRADE EVALUATION:

Essays: 15% each (combined 30%)

Midterm examination: 20%

Final examination: 30%

Participation: 20%

REQUIRED READING:

1. Wael Hallaq, *The Impossible State: Islam, Politics and Modernity's Moral Predicament*, Columbia University Press, 2012.
2. PDF Articles, book chapters, and other readings on Blackboard.

CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE

Students are expected to attend all classes. Students in this course will be graded on the quality and quantity of their contributions to class discussion. Since students can only participate when present, multiple, unexcused absences will inevitably lower their participation grade. All oral assignments and occasional changes to the syllabus or readings will be announced in class. Students who do miss a class session are responsible for contacting another student or the instructor to be informed of any assignments or announcements made in class.

Respect for the instructor, the course, and one's fellow students requires that you arrive on time to class and do not leave early without informing the instructor of the reason in advance. The material we will cover will lend itself to debate and differences of opinion. Students should feel free to disagree with the authors of the assigned readings, the instructor, or other students, and should be prepared to consider the opinions of others who disagree with them, as long as all comments are made with respect for the views of others.

CLASS AND UNIVERSITY POLICIES AND RESOURCES

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

GMU is an Honor Code university; please see the University Catalog for a full description of the code and the honor committee process. The principle of academic integrity is taken very seriously and violations are treated gravely. What does academic integrity mean in this course? Essentially this: when you are responsible for a task, you will perform that task. When you rely on someone else's work in an aspect of the performance of that task, you will give full credit in the proper, accepted form.

Any student caught cheating on an examination, or plagiarizing material in their essays from other authors (in print or on the Web) or other students will be referred to the Honor Committee without exception.

GMU EMAIL ACCOUNTS

Students must use their Mason email accounts—either the existing “MEMO” system or a new “MASONLIVE” account to receive important University information, including messages related to this class. See <http://masonlive.gmu.edu> for more information.

OFFICE OF DISABILITY SERVICES

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at 993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the ODS. <http://ods.gmu.edu>

OTHER USEFUL CAMPUS RESOURCES:

WRITING CENTER: A114 Robinson Hall; (703) 993-1200; <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu>

UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES “Ask a Librarian”<http://library.gmu.edu/mudge/IM/IMRef.html>

COUNSELING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES (CAPS): (703) 993-2380;

<http://caps.gmu.edu>

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

The University Catalog, <http://catalog.gmu.edu>, is the central resource for university policies affecting student, faculty, and staff conduct in university academic affairs. Other policies are available at <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/>. All members of the university community are responsible for knowing and following established policies.

COURSE OUTLINE

- Aug 21, 23** **Introduction to course themes and procedures**
The concept of reason in Western and Islamic Thought
Walbridge, *God and Logic in Islam: The Caliphate of Reason* pp. 1-27.
- Aug 28, 30** **Importance of Knowledge in the Qur'an, Hadith, and Islamic Theology**
Winter, *Classical Islamic Theology*: Introduction; ch. 1 (Qur'an and Hadith by Abdel-Haleem), 2 (The Early Creed by Blankinship).
Qur'an and Hadith selections. [PDF]
- Sept 4** **LABOR DAY (no class)**
- Sept 6, 11** **Reason, Revelation, and Ethics in Islamic Philosophy**
Adamson, [*Philosophy in the Islamic World: A Short Introduction*](#), ch. 1-2, 5-6.
- Sep 13, 18** **Ghazali and his journey**
Ghazali, *Deliverance from Error*.
- Sep 20** **Ghazali and his critics**
Catarina Belo, [*"Averroes \(d. 1198\), The Decisive Treatise,"*](#) pp. 278-295.
- Sep 25, 27** **Ibn Taymiyya ***Essay 1 DUE*****
Anjum, *Politics, Law, and Community in Islam: The Taymiyyan Movement*, ch. 4, 5.
- Oct 2, 4** **Shi'ite Conceptions of Religious Authority**
Subhani, *Doctrines of Shi'ism*, pp. 99-120.
al-Jamil, "Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn al-Mutahhar al-Hilli".
Nasir al-Din Tusi, *Contemplation and Action*, selections.
- Oct 10** **MIDTERM [via blackboard / open book]**
Oct 11 **Islam and Science: Classical and Modern Views**
Dallal, "Science and Religion" and "In the Shadow of Modernity" in *Islam, Science, and the Challenge of History*.
- Oct 16, 18** **Morality, Ethics, and Human Responsibility in Islam**
Hourani, *Reason and Tradition in Islamic Ethics*, pp. 15-48
Renard, "Theories of Moral Capacity and Responsibility"
Cook, *Forbidding Wrong in Islam* (selections)
- Oct 23, 25** **Islamic Critiques of, and Responses to, Modernism**
Abou El Fadl, *The Great Theft*, pp. 75-110
Nasr, *The Heart of Islam* (selections)

- Oct 30, Nov 1** **Islam and the Modern State**
Hallaq, *The Impossible State*, ch. 1-3, 6-7.
The Iranian Constitution: General Principles
- Nov 6, 8** **Islamic Approaches to the Environmental Crisis. ***Essay 2 DUE*****
Anna Gade, “Tradition and Sentiment in Indonesian Environmental Islam”
and “Islamic Law and the Environment in Indonesia.”
Ibrahim Ozdemir, “Toward an Understanding of Environmental Ethics from a
Qur’anic Perspective” in R. Foltz, F. Denny, and A. Baharuddin, *Islam
and Ecology*.
- Nov 13, 15** **Modern Islamic Approaches to Gender Justice**
Amina Wadud, *Qur’an and Woman*, ch. 1, 2
Ayesha Chaudhry, “Asserting Authority, Enriching Tradition” in *Domestic
Violence and the Islamic Tradition*, ch. 4.
- Nov 20** **NO CLASS – Video Assignment: [“The Light in Her Eyes”](#)**
Nov 22 **(no class – Thanksgiving recess)**
- Nov 27, 29** **Islamic Responses to and Critiques of Globalization**
Akram, “The Muslim World and Globalization: Modernity and the Roots of
Conflict”, pp. 255-279.
UN Declaration of Human Rights
Cairo Declaration of Human Rights

*****TAKE-HOME FINAL EXAM DUE VIA EMAIL BY FRIDAY, DEC 8*****