

ISLAMIC CIVILIZATION



Image: a diagram for a water-powered elephant clock in Ibn al-Razāz al-Jazarī's (1206 C.E.) *The Book of Knowledge of Ingenious Mechanical Devices*.

Course name and number: Islamic Civilization, ISLA 200

Term: Fall 2015

Location: Macdonald Engineering Building, Room 276

Times: Mondays & Wednesdays, 1.05 PM – 2.25 PM

Professor: Prashant Keshavmurthy

McGill University, Institute of Islamic Studies

Office 311, Morrice Hall

Office hour: Monday 11.00 – 12.00 or by appointment

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“In accord with McGill University’s Charter of Students’ Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.” (approved by Senate on 21 January 2009 - see also the section in this document on Assignments and evaluation.)

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Texts for the course: If you do not already possess copies of the following texts you must purchase them from McGill Bookstore: 1. Daniel W. Brown, *A New Introduction to Islam* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2009). 2. Vernon O. Egger, *A History of the Muslim World to 1405* (Pearson Prentice Hall, 2004). 3. Andrew Rippin, Norman Calder, Jawid Mojaddedi, eds., *Classical Islam: A Sourcebook of Religious Literature* (Routledge, 2003). The rest of the texts will be made available to you as PDFs on myCourses.

Course aims and methods: This course aims to introduce you to the overarching questions that contemporary humanities scholarship on the pre-nineteenth century Islamic world has posed and broad answers to them while reflecting on why these questions – rather than others – have been salient. Among the questions it will answer are: what are the impediments to understanding pre-19th century Islamic civilization today? What kind of civilizational context did Islam first emerge in? As the youngest of the Abrahamic faiths, what did Islam and its politico-theological traditions inherit from the older faith traditions? What do we know about the prophet

Muhammad's life? What kind of text is the Qur'ān? What kind of governments were Islamic empires? What were Sunnism and Shi'ism? What was the Shari'a? What has been the legacy of Turkish peoples in the formation of Islamic civilization? What were philosophy, art, music and literature in Islamic societies before Europe and America came to dominate them?

This course aims to pose these questions and answer them in a manner that matches as far as possible the global scope and seven hundred year history of this civilization, and with texts specifically written for undergraduate survey classes. Accordingly, the course will unfold under thematic headings but also in a chronological manner leading you from the Late Ancient setting in which Islam first emerged as a faith, social organization and political vision in the seventh century of the Common Era to the early modern empires of the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries that then came to be dominated by European colonial powers.

The classes will roughly alternate between lectures that will go over and supplement the prescribed readings and conferences with the Teaching Assistants and the instructor in which you will have the opportunity to state your responses to the assigned tasks based on the readings for that week, your other opinions on and insights into the readings, and pose questions about them and about the lectures. The conferences will welcome your active participation.

Course rules: The aforementioned aims and methods assume that the course will be effective on the condition that you come to class and conferences *having read* the prescribed texts.

In addition to reading the assigned texts, you must come to the conferences having thought of answers or responses to the questions posed in the syllabus as "Tasks". These tasks are a way to help you think on your feet, as it were, when you find yourself confronted with such questions and assertions in everyday life.

Finally, please also use the tutorials to seek any clarifications you may want regarding the contents of the readings and the preceding Monday's lecture.

Method of evaluation: A) Quizzes: There will be 3 quizzes during the conferences on key terms that you will have encountered in prior readings. You will be expected to choose 8 key terms from a list of 10 and write an

approximately sentence-long identification for each. Your 2 best quiz scores will account for **10 %** of your final mark. **B) The mid-term exam: Part 1** of the mid-term exam will require you to choose 7 out of a list of 10 concepts, names or terms drawn from the reading assignments of the preceding weeks and write an approximately paragraph long identification, based on the relevant reading assignments, for each. This will account for **20%** of your final mark. **Part 2** of the mid-term exam will require you choose 4 out of a list of 6 questions and write an approximately page-long answer to each based on the reading assignments. 2 of these 4 will be given to you ahead of time so that you have the time to prepare answers to them. You will be expected to answer these 2, in particular, in grammatical English, coherently and with well-articulated ideas drawn from the relevant reading assignments. All the questions will assume only your knowledge of your reading assignments. This will account for **20 %** of your final mark. **C) The final exam** will require you to choose 7 out of a list of 10 concepts, names or terms drawn from the reading assignments *after* the mid-term exam and write an approximately paragraph long identification, based on the relevant reading assignments, for each. This will account for **40%** of your final mark. **D) Attendance and meaningful verbal participation in conferences** will count for **10%** of your final mark.

SCHEDULE

I: FRAMEWORK FOR THE STUDY OF ISLAMIC CIVILIZATION

Week 1, Class 1 (Friday, Sept. 4): Introduction of course content, aims, methods and rules.

Week 2, Class 2 (Wednesday, Sept. 9): Edward Said, “The Clash of Ignorance” at <http://www.thenation.com/article/clash-ignorance/>

Richard M. Eaton, “Islamic History as Global History”; Daniel W. Brown, *A New Introduction to Islam*, “Islam in Global Perspective”, 3 – 18.

II. LATE ANTIQUITY

Week 3, Class 3 (Monday, Sept. 14): Daniel W. Brown, *A New Introduction to Islam*, “Arabia”, 19 – 32 and “The Pre-Islamic Near East”, 33 – 48.

Week 3, Class 4 (Wednesday, Sept. 16): Conferences (**Task:** come with the name of a thing, idea or practice whose origins or diffusion through the world or both – though most people do not know it – are Islamic).

III. A PROPHET AND THE RISE OF ISLAM

Week 4, Class 5 (Monday, Sept. 21): Vernon O. Egger, *A History of the Muslim World to 1405*, “The Rise of Islam”, 20 – 31

Daniel W. Brown, *A New Introduction to Islam*, “The Life of Muhammad”, 49 – 68.

Week 4, Class 6 (Wednesday, Sept. 23): Conferences (**Task:** come having thought of how you would answer the question: “What did Muhammad owe his religious environment?”)

IV. THE QUR’ĀN, MUHAMMAD AND HIS TRADITIONS

Week 5, Class 7 (Monday, Sept. 28): Daniel W. Brown, *A New Introduction to Islam*, “The Qur’ān”, 69 – 87, “The Tradition Literature”, 88 – 101

Calder, Mojaddedi, Rippin eds. *Classical Islam: A Sourcebook of Religious Literature*, “The Qur’ān”, “The Life of Muhammad”.

Recommended: Jonathan AC Brown, “What are hadith?” at

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wq_l8QIDLjQ

Week 5, Class 8 (Wednesday, Sept. 30): Conferences (**QUIZ 1**)

V. ARAB IMPERIALISM

Week 6, Class 9 (Monday, Oct. 5): Vernon O. Egger, *A History of the Muslim World to 1405*, “Arab Imperialism”, 33 – 61

Patricia Crone, “Jihad: Idea and History”.

Week 6, Class 10 (Wednesday, Oct. 7): Conferences (**Task:** come having thought of how you would respond to the statement: “21st century Islamic militants are continuing the tradition of medieval jihad”.

VI. THE DEVELOPMENT OF SECTARIANISM

Week 7, Class 11 (Wednesday, Oct. 14, in Macdonald Engineering Building, Room 276): Vernon O. Egger, *A History of the Muslim World to 1405*, “The Development of Sectarianism”, 62 – 84.

Week 7, Class 12 (Monday, Oct. 19): Vernon O. Egger, *A History of the Muslim World to 1405*, “The Center Cannot Hold: Three Caliphates”, 85 – 112.

Week 8, Class 13 (Wednesday, Oct. 21): Conferences (**QUIZ 2**)

VII. ISLAMIC LEGAL CULTURE

Week 9, Class 14 (Monday, Oct. 26): GUEST LECTURE BY PROF. AHMED FEKRY IBRAHIM

Vernon O. Egger, *A History of the Muslim World to 1405*, “Synthesis and Creativity”, 114 – 138

Daniel W. Brown, *A New Introduction to Islam*, “Islamic Law”, 149 – 170.

Week 9, Class 15 (Wednesday, Oct. 28): Conferences (**Task:** come having thought of how you might answer the questions: “Was pre-nineteenth century Islamic legal culture pluralistic and flexible in the legal options it offered? What were the limits of such pluralism and flexibility? And what were the minimum necessary conditions for such pluralism and flexibility?”)

Week 10, Class 16 (Monday, Nov. 2): MIDTERM EXAM 1 (Macdonald Engineering Building, Room 276)

Week 10, Class 17 (Wednesday, Nov. 4): MIDTERM EXAM 2 (Macdonald Engineering Building, Room 276)

VIII. SUFISM

Week 11, Class 18 (Monday, Nov. 9): Daniel W. Brown, *A New Introduction to Islam*, “Sufism”, 193 – 216

Calder, Mojaddedi, Rippin eds. *Classical Islam: A Sourcebook of Religious Literature*, “Sufism”, 228 – 236, 243 – 261.

Watch: 1. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hF7VxvD_ZOw

2. Video 6 at <http://www.sarangi.net/growing-into-music-films-on-hindustani-music-rajasthani-music-and-qawwali>

3. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lp4vOePNRws>

Week 11, Class 19 (Wednesday, Nov. 11): Conferences (**Task:** come with at least two distinct one-sentence definitions of the term “Sufism”).

IX. FILLING THE VACUUM OF POWER, 950 – 1100

Week 12, Class 20 (Monday, Nov. 16): Vernon O. Egger, *A History of the Muslim World to 1405*, “Filling the Vacuum of Power, 950 – 1100”, 142 – 170.

Week 12, Class 21 (Wednesday, Nov. 18): Conferences (**Task:** come having thought of answers to the question: “Why would the most famous epic of Persian literature to be patronized by Muslim dynasties commemorate the kings of pre-Islamic Iran?”)

X. PHILOSOPHY

Week 13, Class 22 (Monday, Nov. 23): GUEST LECTURE BY PROF. ROBERT WISNOVSKY

Robert Wisnovsky, “Philosophy and Theology: Islam”, 698 – 706.

Majid Fakhry, “Philosophy and Theology: From the 8th Century C.E. to the Present” in John L. Esposito, ed., *The Oxford History of Islam* (Oxford University Press, 1999), 269 – 303.

Week 13, Class 23 (Wednesday, Nov. 25): Conferences (**Task:** come having thought of how you would answer the question: “According to Islamic philosophies and theologies, are we free or pre-destined in our actions?”)

XI. THE OTTOMAN, SAFAVID AND MUGHAL EMPIRES

Week 14, Class 24 (Monday, Nov. 30): Daniel W. Brown, *A New Introduction to Islam*, “Revival and Reform”, 234 – 247

Ira M. Lapidus, “Sultanates and Gunpowder Empires” in John L. Esposito, ed., *The Oxford History of Islam* (Oxford University Press, 1999), 347 – 393.

Week 14, Class 25 (Wednesday, Dec. 2): Conferences (**Task:** come having thought of how you would answer the question: “What features did the Ottoman, Safavid and Mughal Empires share?”).

XII. ART AND ARCHITECTURE

Week 15, Class 26 (Monday, Dec. 7): Sheila S. Blair and Jonathan M. Bloom, “Art and Architecture: Themes and Variations” in John L. Esposito, ed., *The Oxford History of Islam* (Oxford University Press, 1999), 215 – 267.

FINAL EXAM: BETWEEN DEC 9 – 22