Course description: Islam’s legacy in pre-colonial South Asia has never been more in question than it is today. Modern nationalisms in the region have altered, in some cases beyond recognition, the memories of Islam’s millennial legacy in India. This course aims
to equip you to authoritatively answer four sets of salient contemporary questions concerning this legacy: what were the beginnings of Muslim political power in India? What did it mean to convert to Islam before English colonialism? What can we accurately say about Muslim social relations with India’s non-Muslim majority during the nearly thousand years of Muslim presence in pre-colonial India? And, given the abiding popular association of South Asian Islam with certain genres of poetry (e.g. ghazal), painting (e.g. miniature) and architecture (e.g. mosque), what have been Islam’s aesthetic legacies in the region?

Class rules

1. Please come to class on time and leave only when the class ends.

2. We will take a 15-minute break at 4 PM, so please try to minimize the class time you spend outside class (e.g. on water or bathroom breaks).

3. You are welcome to bring and use your laptops responsibly but please avoid using your mobile phones in class.

Grading scheme: attendance (10%), participation (15%), oral presentation (5%), midterm essay (30%) and final essay (40%).

Explanation of the grading scheme

Attendance is worth 10% of your final grade. Because each class is 3 hours in duration, presence in class is very important, as you will miss too
large a discussion if you miss one class. It is imperative that you have a doctor’s note to avoid losing marks due to absences.

**Participation is worth 15% of your final grade.** That is, an absence will count for 0%; passive learning for 5%; being active in class discussion, showing evidence of knowing the readings but participating only sporadically will count for 8%; being consistently active in class discussion, showing evidence of knowing the readings but not showing evidence of trying to interpret or analyse them (i.e. only citing facts from the readings) will count for 10%; being consistently active in class discussion, showing evidence of knowing the readings and of trying to interpret or analyse them will count for 15%.

Please remember that all questions based on the reading assignments, no matter how basic, are welcome.

**Oral presentations are worth 5% of your final grade.** That is, while I will lecture for varying portions of every class, you must make an informal or freely structured presentation of 7 to 10 minutes at the beginning of every class on the readings of the week or fortnight. You will be expected in these presentations, *not to summarize the week’s readings, but to raise questions with regard to it.* I will give you many practical examples of how you could do this.

**The mid term paper will account for 30% of your final grade.** It is due to me by email as a MS Word attachment by or on February 28th.

**The final essay will account for 40% of your final grade.** It is due to me
by email as a MS Word attachment by or on April 10th.

The rules for both midterm and final essays are identical: 1. Your essay should be a minimum of 5 double spaced pages long. 2. It should bear a title that captures your argument. 3. It should consist of an argument or interpretation of a passage or text chosen from the syllabus, not a summary. 4. Finally, your essay should be free of typos and grammatical errors.

I am happy to help you formulate an essay topic, furnish you with models of such student essays from past iterations of this course, choose a passage or text on which to base your argument, as well as point you to the appropriate secondary readings if necessary.

Texts to be purchased: while the instructor will provide you with PDFs of most of the texts on this syllabus, you will need to buy from McGill Bookstore: 1. Finbarr Barry Flood, Objects of Translation: Material Culture and Medieval “Hindu-Muslim” Encounter 2. Asher & Talbot, India Before Europe 3. John F. Richards, The Mughal Empire 4. Richard M. Eaton and Phillip B. Wagoner, Power, Memory, Architecture: Contested Sites on India’s Deccan Plateau, 1300–1600.
Weekly schedule

The beginnings of Muslim power in South Asia

**Class 1 (Jan 7):** Introductions, an explanation of the syllabus and choosing your texts for class presentations. As this is the first class, it will end earlier than at 5.25 after I have lectured for around an hour.

**Class 2 (Jan 14):**  
A) Altaf Husain Hali, *Musaddas*. We will discuss the translators’ introduction as well as all of the main text.  
B) Asher & Talbot, Chapters 1, 2 and 3 from *India Before Europe*.  
C) Blain Auer, selections from *Symbols of Authority in Medieval Islam: History, Religion and Muslim Legitimacy in the Delhi Sultanate*.  
D) Sunil Kumar, “ Assertions of Authority: A Study of the Discursive Statements of Two Sultans of Delhi”.

**Class 3 (Jan 21):**  
A) Amir Khusrow, selected ghazals and selections from *In the Bazaar of Love: the Selected Poetry of Amir Khusrau*; trans. Sharma & Losensky.  

**Class 4 (Jan 28):**  
A) Marilyn Waldman, “Towards a Mode of Criticism for Premodern Islamicate Historical Narratives”.  
C) Sunil Kumar, “An Inconvenient Heritage: The Central Asian Background of the Delhi Sultans”

Class 6 (Feb 11): Barry Flood, *Objects of Translation: Material Culture and Medieval “Hindu-Muslim” Encounter*. We will discuss the entire book.

**Conversion to Islam**


STUDY BREAK: 4-8 MARCH

Muslim relations with non-Muslims

Class 9 (March 11): A) Selections from Linda Hess, *The Bijak of Kabir*. B) A documentary screening on the modern musical lives of Kabir. **This class will be guest-taught by Professor Hamsa Stainton of Religious Studies.**


Painting and music

Class 13 (April 8): A) Gregory Minissale, “Reading Anti-Illusionism” and “Reading Pictorial Order” from *Images of Thought: Visuality in Islamic India: 1550-1750*. We will also examine some famous Mughal drawings and paintings with Minissale’s ideas in mind. B) Katherine Schofield, “Learning to Taste the Emotions: the Mughal *Rasika*”.

1) *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.*

This right applies to all written work that is to be graded, from one-word answers to dissertations.

2) *Academic Integrity statement [approved by Senate on 29 January 2003]:*

*McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see [www.mcgill.ca/students/srr](http://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr) for more information).*

*L’université McGill attache une haute importance à l’honnêteté académique. Il incombe par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l’on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon le Code de conduite de l’étudiant et des procédures disciplinaires (pour de plus amples renseignements, veuillez consulter le site [www.mcgill.ca/students/srr](http://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr)).*

*N.B. Failure by an instructor to include a statement about academic integrity on a course outline shall not constitute an excuse by a student for violating the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures [Senate, 29 January 2003].*