

Islam in India

(ISLA 420)

Fall 2019

Instructor: Prashant Keshavmurthy

**Class room and class times: Arts B-60, Wed & Fri 11:35 AM -
12:55 PM**

Office and office hour: 311 Morrice Hall, Friday 2.00-3.00 PM



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. 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 we will mostly give each class to a distinct topic of discussion your presence in every class is important. 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 October 15th.

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 November 25th.

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. You are welcome to discuss alternative ideas for your essays with me 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

Sep 4: Introductions, an explanation of the syllabus and choosing your texts for class presentations.

Sep 6: A) Asher & Talbot, Chapters 1, 2 and 3 from *India Before Europe*. B) Sunil Kumar, “Assertions of Authority: A Study of the Discursive Statements of Two Sultans of Delhi”.

Sep 11: A) Amir Khusrow, selected ghazals and selections from *In the Bazaar of Love: the Selected Poetry of Amir Khusrau*; trans. Sharma & Losensky. B) Sunil Kumar, “An Inconvenient Heritage: The Central Asian Background of the Delhi Sultans”

Sep 13: Chapters 10, 11, 12 from H.A.R. Gibb’s translation of Volume 3 of Ibn Battuta, *Travels in Asia and Africa: 1325-1354*.

Sep 18: A) Richard Davis, “Reconstructions of Somnath”. B) Richard Eaton, “Temple desecration and Indo-Muslim States” C) Sunil Kumar, “Qutb and Modern Memory”.

Sep 20: Barry Flood, *Objects of Translation: Material Culture and Medieval “Hindu-Muslim” Encounter*, from the author’s introduction till page 151.

Sep 25: Barry Flood, *Objects of Translation: Material Culture and Medieval “Hindu-Muslim” Encounter*, from page 152 till the book’s end.

Conversion to Islam

Sep 27: The following essays from Raziuddin Aquil, ed., *Sufism and Society in Medieval India*: **i.** Aquil, “Introduction” **ii.** Eaton, “Sufi Folk Literature and the Expansion of Indian Islam” **iii.** Ernst, “The Indian Environment and the Question of Conversion” **iv.** Digby, “The Sufi Shaikh as a Source of Authority in Medieval India” **v.** Friedman, “The Indian Environment”.

Oct 2: Selections from Nizam al-Din Awliya, *Morals for the Heart: Conversations with Shaykh Nizam al-Din Awliya recorded by Amir Hasan Sijzi*; translated by Bruce Lawrence.

Oct 4: **A)** Richard Eaton, “Who are the Bengal Muslims? Conversion and Islamization in Bengal”. **B)** Ayesha Irani, “Mystical Love, Prophetic Compassion and Ethics: An Ascension Narrative in the Medieval Bengali Nabivamsha.”

Oct 9: **A)** Richard Eaton, “Mughal Culture and its Diffusion”; **B)** From Muzaffar Alam, *The Languages of Political Islam in India: India, 1200-1800*: “Shar’ia, Akhlaq and Governance’ and “Opposition and Re-affirmation”.

Muslim relations with non-Muslims

Oct 11: Selections from Linda Hess, *The Bijak of Kabir*.

Oct 16: A) Selections from Thomas de Bruijn's *Ruby in the Dust: Poetry and History in 'Padmāvat' by the South Asian Sufi Poet Muhammad Jāyasi*; B) Carl Ernst, "Situating Sufism and Yoga"

Oct 18: A) Selections from Aditya Behl, *Love's Subtle Magic: An Indian Islamic Literary Tradition, 1379-1545*. B) Selection from Manjhan, *Madhumālati: an Indian Sufi Romance*; translated by Aditya Behl & Simon Weightman.

Oct 23: A) Phillip B. Wagoner, "Sultan among Hindu Kings: Dress, Titles and the Islamicization of Hindu Culture at Vijaynagara" B) Phillip B. Wagoner, "The Multiple Worlds of Amin Khan: Crossing Persianate and Indic Cultural Boundaries in the Qutbshahi Kingdom".

Oct 25: A) John F. Richards, Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 & 6 from *The Mughal Empire*. B) Subrahmanyam & Alam, "The Making of a Munshi".

Oct 30: Richard M. Eaton and Phillip B. Wagoner, *Power, Memory, Architecture: Contested Sites on India's Deccan Plateau, 1300–1600*. Introduction & chapters 1 to 4.

Nov 1: Richard M. Eaton and Phillip B. Wagoner, *Power, Memory, Architecture: Contested Sites on India's Deccan Plateau, 1300–1600*. Introduction & chapters 5 to 8.

Aesthetic Legacies

Nov 6: Gregory Minissale, *Images of Thought: Visuality in Islamic India: 1550-1750*: “Reading Anti-Illusionism” and “Reading Pictorial Order”.

Nov 8: Selections from Ebba Koch, *The Complete Taj Mahal: and the Riverfront Gardens of Agra*.

Nov 13: **A)** From Sunil Sharma, *Mughal Arcadia: Persian Literature in an Indian Court*: “Introduction: *Lingua Persica*”, “Mughal Persian Literary Culture” & “The Mughal Discovery of India”. **B)** Prashant Keshavmurthy, “Translating Rama as a Proto-Muhammadan Prophet: Masīh’s *Masnavi-yi Rām va Sitā*”.

Nov 15: A selection of Persian and Urdu ghazals in translation.

Nov 20: **A)** Katherine Schofield, “Did Aurangzeb Ban Music? Considerations for the Historiography of His Reign” **B)** Katherine Schofield, “Learning to Taste the Emotions: the Mughal Rasika”

Nov 22: Selections from Babur, *The Bāburnāma; Memoirs of Babur, Prince and Emperor*; translated by Wheeler Thackston.

Nov 27: Selections from Jahangir, *The Jahāngirnāma: Memoirs of Jahāngir, Emperor of India*; translated by Wheeler Thackston.

Nov 29: Selections from Banārasidās, *Ardhakathānak: a Half Story*; translated by Rohini Chowdhury.

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 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).

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].