

Islam in India

(ISLA 421)

Fall 2022

Instructor: Prashant Keshavmurthy

Classroom and class times: 313 Morrice Hall, Mondays & Wednesdays, 10:05 AM - 11:25 AM

Office and office hour: 311 Morrice Hall, Mondays 11:30-12:30.



Course description: Islamic and Islamicate legacies from the millennium of Muslim presence in South Asia before English colonialism have never been more imperilled than today. Modern nationalisms in the region have transformed and threatened public

memories of Islamicate legacies from pre-colonial India and have impeded public access to serious scholarship on them. This course aims to help you to authoritatively answer four questions relevant to these legacies today: 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 interactions with India's non-Muslim majority during the approximately 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, tomb, tomb garden), what have been Islamicate aesthetic legacies in the subcontinent?

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%).

Unjustified lateness in submitting written assignments will affect your final grade by 10% for each day of delay.

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 16th.

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 27th.

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 I will provide you with PDFs of most of the texts on this syllabus, you will need to buy from Paragraph Bookstore (opposite McGill's Roddick Gate): **1.** Asher & Talbot, *India Before Europe*. **2.** 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

Wednesday Aug 31: Introductions, an explanation of the syllabus and choosing your texts for class presentations.

Wednesday Sep 7: **1.** Asher & Talbot, Chapters 1, 2 and 3 from *India Before Europe*. **2.** Sunil Kumar, “Assertions of Authority: A Study of the Discursive Statements of Two Sultans of Delhi”.

Monday Sep 12: **1.** Amir Khusrow, selected ghazals (in my translation) and in selections from *In the Bazaar of Love: the Selected Poetry of Amir Khusrau*; trans. Sharma & Losensky. **2.** Sunil Kumar, “An Inconvenient Heritage: The Central Asian Background of the Delhi Sultans”

Wednesday Sep 14: Chapters 10, 11, 12 from H.A.R. Gibb's translation of Volume 3 of Ibn Battuta, *Travels in Asia and Africa: 1325-1354*.

Monday Sep 19: 1. Richard Davis, "Reconstructions of Somnatha".
2. Richard Eaton, "Temple desecration and Indo-Muslim States" 3. Sunil Kumar, "Qutb and Modern Memory".

Wednesday Sep 21: Introduction & chapters 1& 2 from Barry Flood, *Objects of Translation: Material Culture and Medieval "Hindu-Muslim" Encounter*.

Monday Sep 26: Chapters 3, 4 & Conclusion from Barry Flood, *Objects of Translation: Material Culture and Medieval "Hindu-Muslim" Encounter*.

Conversion to Islam

Wednesday Sep 28: The following essays from Raziuddin Aquil, ed., *Sufism and Society in Medieval India*: 1. Aquil, "Introduction"
2. Eaton, "Sufi Folk Literature and the Expansion of Indian Islam"
3. Ernst, "The Indian Environment and the Question of Conversion"

4. Digby, “The Sufi Shaikh as a Source of Authority in Medieval India” v. Friedman, “The Indian Environment”.

Monday Oct 3: 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.

Wednesday Oct 5: 1. Richard Eaton, “Who are the Bengal Muslims? Conversion and Islamization in Bengal”. 2. Ayesha Irani, “Mystical Love, Prophetic Compassion and Ethics: An Ascension Narrative in the Medieval Bengali Nabivamsha.”

Thursday (with a Monday schedule) Oct 13: 1. Richard Eaton, “Mughal Culture and its Diffusion”; 2. From Muzaffar Alam, *The Languages of Political Islam in India: India, 1200-1800*: “Shar’ia, Akhlaq and Governance’ and “Opposition and Re-affirmation”.

Muslim inteactions with non-Muslims

Monday Oct 17: Selections from Linda Hess, *The Bijak of Kabir*.

Wednesday Oct 19: 1. Selections from Thomas de Bruijn’s *Ruby in the Dust: Poetry and History in ‘Padmāvat’ by the South Asian*

Sufi Poet Muhammad Jāyasi; 2. Carl Ernst, “Situating Sufism and Yoga”.

Monday Oct 24: 1. Selections from Aditya Behl, *Love’s Subtle Magic: An Indian Islamic Literary Tradition, 1379-1545*. 2. Selection from Manjhan, *Madhumālati: an Indian Sufi Romance*; translated by Aditya Behl & Simon Weightman.

Wednesday Oct 26: 1. David Lorenzen, “Who Invented Hinduism?” 2. Phillip B. Wagoner, “The Multiple Worlds of Amin Khan: Crossing Persianate and Indic Cultural Boundaries in the Qutbshahi Kingdom”.

Monday Oct 31: Introduction & Chapter 3 (“Muḥibb Allāh Ilāhābādī and an Islamic Framework for Religious Diversity”) from Shankar Nair, *Translating Wisdom: Hindu-Muslim Intellectual Interactions in Early Modern South Asia*.

Wednesday Nov 2: Introduction & chapters 1, 2, 3 & 4 from Richard M. Eaton and Phillip B. Wagoner, *Power, Memory, Architecture: Contested Sites on India’s Deccan Plateau, 1300–1600*.

Monday Nov 7: 1. Chapters 6 & 7 from Richard M. Eaton and Phillip B. Wagoner, *Power, Memory, Architecture: Contested Sites on India's Deccan Plateau, 1300–1600*. 2. Tony K. Stewart, “In search of equivalence: conceiving the Muslim-Hindu encounter through translation theory.”

Aesthetic Legacies

Wednesday Nov 9: “Reading Anti-Illusionism” and “Reading Pictorial Order” from Gregory Minissale, *Images of Thought: Visuality in Islamic India: 1550-1750*).

Monday Nov 14: Selections from Ebba Koch, *The Complete Taj Mahal: and the Riverfront Gardens of Agra*.

Wednesday Nov 16: 1. From Sunil Sharma, *Mughal Arcadia: Persian Literature in an Indian Court*: “Introduction: *Lingua Persica*”, “Mughal Persian Literary Culture” & “The Mughal Discovery of India”. 2. Prashant Keshavmurthy, “Translating Rama as a Proto-Muhammadan Prophet: Masīh’s *Masnavi-yi Rām va Sitā*”.

Monday Nov 21: 1. Vasudha Narayanan, “Religious vocabulary and regional identity: a study of the Tamil *Cīṛāppurāṇam* ('Life of the Prophet)”. 2. A selection of Persian and Urdu ghazals in translation with YouTube recordings of some song versions.

Wednesday Nov 23: 1. Katherine Schofield, “Did Aurangzeb Ban Music? Considerations for the Historiography of His Reign” 2. Katherine Schofield, “Learning to Taste the Emotions: the Mughal Rasika”

Monday Nov 28: Selections from Babur, *The Bāburnāma; Memoirs of an Emperor*; translated by Wheeler Thackston.

Wednesday Nov 30: Selections from Jahangir, *The Jahāngirnāma: Memoirs of Jahāngir, Emperor of India*; translated by Wheeler Thackston.

Monday Dec 5: 1. Selections from Banārasidās, *Ardhakathānak: a Half Story*; translated by Rohini Chowdhury. 2. Jérôme Petit, “Banārasīdās Climbing the Jain Stages of Perfection”.

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 McGill Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures. (see www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/ for more information).

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