

**Course Description:**

The Course is designed to familiarize students with the Islamic tradition, to encourage them to independently engage that tradition and to ascertain its relevance to the modern individual and society. Students are expected to directly engage the authors of the texts, determine what each author is trying to convey and raise questions on author’s arguments. There will be no attempt to impose a single viewpoint or methodology and students are encouraged to bring their perspectives and experiences to bear on the course.

**Course Objectives:**

This short survey course has clearly defined aims. Conversely, this means that it has its limitations too. Its overriding aim is to introduce the student to the academic study of Islam—Islam here denoting both a religious system, grounded upon certain normative revealed sources, as well as a civilization unfolding over time as a complex network of cultures shaped by historical contingencies. The course remains totally indifferent to the personal beliefs of the students, to any sectarian identity they espouse, and any doctrinal point of view they hold. We shall begin by a fundamental methodological question: How does one study a given religious system? What are the scholarly tools and conceptual frameworks for exploring a civilization radiating from a religious core? What are the limitations of the academic study of Islam? In what way is it different from the account and conception of the believer or, in case of cultures of the actor?

In summary, the goals of the course are:

1. To understand the Islamic tradition on its own terms.
2. To encourage students to make their own unbiased analysis of that tradition independent of confines and paradigms of existing contemporary discourses on Islam.
3. To briefly discuss some of the issues and challenges confronting Islam in today’s world.

**Course Outline:**

**Module 1:** **The Hadith of Gibraeel (Islam, Imaan and Ihsaan)**

Literal and contextual definitions of Islam, Imaan and Ihsaan. Study Islam as code of life. Student should be able to see the three dimensions in Islam and what they entail.

**Core Readings:**

1. The Vision of Islam by Sachiko Murata and William C Chittick

**Module 2:** **Understanding the Islamic Scholarly Tradition**

How the sources of knowledge and legal tradition of Islamic jurisprudence was developed over time. A view of how difference in principles lead to difference of opinion. The process of interpretating the words of Quran and Hadith and deriving multiple meanings. The requirements to do so and its implication. Students should be able identify the tradition of interpretation and the existence of different legal schools and how they collectively form part of Islamic tradition and add value to deeply understand Quran and Sunnah.

**Core Readings:**

1. Islamic Law and Purification of the Heart (Sharia & Tariqa) by Muhammad
2. Zakariya Kandhelwi, Chapter 3-6 (pg. 47-71)
3. Shariah Law by Hashim Kamali: The Shi'ite Schools (pg.87-95)
4. Shariah Law by Hashim Kamali: The Definitive and the Speculative (pg. 12-23)

**Supplementary Readings:**

1. The Differences of Imams by Muhammad Zakariya Kandhelwi (pg. 19-75)

**Module 3: Understanding Quran: Introduction and Interpretation**

Quran is the most misunderstood part of Islam. We try to see what is the Quran precisely and what are its origin, purpose, form, reception, preservation; how it is the direct basis of Islamic spiritual life, ethics, knowledge, sciences, language, outlook, social interaction, art and culture. Students should be able to appreciate that legitimately interpreting the Quran takes a lot of work and a lot of knowledge.

**Core Readings:**

1. A thinking person's guide to Islam by Ghazi Bin Muhammad: Chapter 6, what is the Quran? (pg. 57-84)

**Module 4: Navigating Hadith**

Introduction to Hadith and the methods adopted by early Muslims to preserve Hadith. Students should appreciate the integrity of the process of hadith preservation and its legal standing.

**Core Readings:**

1. A Textbook of Hadith Studies by Muhammad Hashim Kamali, The Sunnah (pg. 45-50
2. Revelation: The story of Muhammad(pbuh) by Meraj Mohiuddin (pg. 28-29)
3. Al Fiqh Al Akbar by Imam Abu Hanifa, The Prophe Muhammad and the Companions (pg. 127-133)
4. Hadith Literature by Muhammad Zubayr Siddiqui, The Event of Hadith (pg. 1-13)

**Module 5: Freewill and Fate**

The paradox that humans have the ability to choose and act vs everything being pre-ordained for them and how to move forward given the limited knowledge we have. Students are expected to understand the requirements Allah has laid on us in terms of decision making.

**Core Readings:**

1. Al-Qadaa and Al-Qadar by Mohammed Metwalli Al-Sharawii, Chapter 1-2 (pg. 1-26)

**Module 6: Actions, Intentions & Prayer**

The significance of intentions in Islam. Students should be able to identify how interaction of intentions with actions can lead to a ‘desirable vs undesirable’ outcomes.

The significance and methods to improve the quality of Salat. Students should be able to grasp what step they can take to become a praying Muslim.

**Core Readings:**

1. Commentary on Actions/Intentions Hadith from Sahih-Al Bukhari (pg. 2-5)
2. Inner Dimensions of Worship by Imam Al Ghazali, Chapter 1 (pg. 5-24)

**Module 7: Fiqh Ul Mua'malaat: Understanding Riba**

Understanding the basic prohibitions in economic transaction and alternative approach as guided in Quran and Sunnah. Students should be able to identify the prohibitions in general commercial transaction.

**Core Readings:**

1. The Historic Judgement on Interest by Justic Maulana Muhammad Taqi Usmani (pg. 15-30)

**Module 8: Islam, gender and women rights**

Issue related to gender equality, distribution of inheritance, testimony, and gender interaction. Students should be able to appreciate the Islamic understanding on these matters.

**Core Readings:**

1. Woman in Islam by Gamal A. Badawi (pg. 131-144)
2. Themes of Islamic Civilization by John Alden Williams, Women scholars of Hadith (pg.117-123)

**Supplementary Reading:**

1. Rethinking Muslim women and the veil by Katherine Bullock

**Grading (tentative)**

Attendance 5%

Assignments and Quizzes (N-3 policy applies) 25%

Mid Term Exam 30%

Final Exam 40%