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RELS 295.01: The Religion of Islam

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The Religion of Islam

RELS 295
Spring, 2002
TTh 2:10-3:30
LA 201
3 credits

Paul A. Dietrich
Office: LA 145
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Hours: TTh 3:30-4:30
& by appointment

An introduction to selected aspects of the Islamic tradition with reference to specific historical contexts in Islamic civilization. Special emphasis will be given to the role of the Qur'an in the formation of Islam, the relationship of religion, law and politics, the interaction between philosophy and dogma, the spiritual and literary significance of Sufism, and the legal and intellectual origins of Islamic fundamentalism.

Required Readings

Sells, Michael, Approaching the Qur'an
The Koran, N.J. Dawood, trans.
Fakhry, Majid, Islamic Theology, Philosophy and Mysticism
Schimmel, Annemarie, Mystical Dimensions of Islam
Ibn al 'Arabi, The Bezels of Wisdom
Selected books and articles on reserve and ERES, Mansfield Library

Course Syllabus

		Readings
I. <i>The Making of Islam: Foundations of the "Straight Path"</i>		
1/29	Introduction. The "House of Islam" (<i>Dar al-Islam</i>)	
1/31	"There is no God but God and Muhammad is His Prophet"	materials
	Radical Monotheism and the <i>Rasuliyah</i> of Muhammad	on reserve
2/5,7	The Word of God: the Qur'an as Spoken Word	Sells; <u>The Koran</u>
2/12,14	Islamic Scripture: the Qur'an as Written Word	" "
2/19,21	"The Straight Path": Law, Religion and Society (<i>Shari'ah</i> and the Five Pillars of <i>Din</i>)	materials
		on reserve
2/26,28	War and Peace (<i>Salaam</i>): From Civil War (<i>Fitnah</i>) to Holy War (<i>Jihad</i>) during the Crusades Excursus: Sacred Art and Architecture in Islam	"
II. <i>Classical Islam: The Path of Reason and the Path of the Mystic</i>		
3/5,7,12	Reason and Revelation: From Speculative Theology (<i>Kalam</i>) to Illuminism and the Eclipse of Rationalism	Fakhry
3/14	Midterm Exam	
3/26,28	What is Sufism? Asceticism, Divine Love, Theosophy and	Schimmel 1,2

	the Sufi Orders	
4/2,4	The Path and the Perfect Man: Love and Annihilation; Stages and Stations; Sufi Anthropology, Psychology and Cosmology	Schimmel 3,4,5
4/9,11	The Great Master: Ibn al'Arabi and Theosophical Sufism	Schimmel 6
4/16,18,23	The Unity of Being and Quranic Hermeneutics in <u>The Bezels of Wisdom</u>	Ibn al 'Arabi <u>The Bezels</u>
4/25,30	Genres of Mystical Literature – Vernacular Mystical Poetry	Schimmel 7,8

III. Islam and the Modern West: Gunpowder Empires to “La Revanche de Dieu” (or Islamic Resurgence)

5/2,7	Medieval Theology and Modern Politics: The Theopolitical Origins of Militant Islamic Fundamentalism ; Islamic Political Thought From Ibn Hanbal and Ibn Taymiyyah to Ibn Abd al-Wahhab and Sayyid Qutb	materials on reserve
5/9,14	The Desecularization of World History: Jihad vs. McWorld; Neoliberalism, Globalization, Market Fundamentalism vs. Westoxification and Jihad	“

Course Requirements

1. Prompt completion of assigned readings and participation in class discussion of texts.
2. Brief essay (4-5 pages) on the role of the Qur'an in Islam due 2/28.
3. Midterm Exam, Thursday, 3/14.
4. Final Exam, Thursday, 5/16 or term paper on approved topic (7-10 pages) due at the beginning of finals week.

I have benefited over the years from conversations on Islam and Sufism with an outstanding group of teachers, students, colleagues and interlocutors including Coleman Barks, Joseph Epes Brown, Robert Burns S.J., David Burrell, William Chittick, James Hart, Mehrdad Kia, Muhsin Mahdi, Maria Rosa Menocal, Azim Nanji, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Fazlur Rahman, Annemarie Schimmel and Michael Sells.

This course is dedicated to the memory of Joseph Epes Brown who taught Islamics at UM for nearly twenty years.