Spring 2-1-2002

RELS 295.01: The Religion of Islam

Paul A. Dietrich

University of Montana - Missoula, paul.dietrich@umontana.edu

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The Religion of Islam

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

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

I. The Making of Islam: Foundations of the “Straight Path”


1/31  “There is no God but God and Muhammad is His Prophet”  
Radical Monotheism and the *Rasuliyah* of Muhammad  
Sells; *The Koran*  
Radical Monotheism and the *Rasuliyah* of Muhammad  
Sells; *The Koran*

2/5,7  The Word of God: the Qur’an as Spoken Word  
Sells; *The Koran*

2/12,14  Islamic Scripture: the Qur’an as Written Word  
Sells; *The Koran*

2/19,21  “The Straight Path”: Law, Religion and Society  
*Shari’ah* and the Five Pillars of *Din*  
Fakhry

2/26,28  War and Peace (*Salaam*): From Civil War (*Fitnah*)  
to Holy War (*jihad*) during the Crusades  
Excursus: Sacred Art and Architecture in Islam  
Fakhry

II. Classical Islam: The Path of Reason and the Path of the Mystic

3/5,7,12  Reason and Revelation: From Speculative Theology (*Kalam*)  
to Illuminationism and the Eclipse of Rationalism  
Fakhry

3/14  Midterm Exam

3/26,28  What is Sufism? Ascesis, Divine Love, Theosophy and  
Schimmel 1,2
Course Requirements

1. Prompt completion of assigned readings and participation in class discussion of texts.
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 interlocuters 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.