

**LOYOLA MARYMOUNT UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF THEOLOGICAL STUDIES
COURSE OUTLINE SUMMER I 2021 ONLINE CLASS**

“...the historiography of the Islamic-Christian encounter will be moved to a new level when we have learned to see it as the intertwining destiny of human beings whose relation to God has for now fourteen centuries taken these two classes of forms.

*The religious history of the world is the history of *us*. Some of us have been Muslims, some Christians. Our common history has been what it has been, in significant part because of this fact. Yet it is a common history for all that; and cannot be properly understood otherwise.*

And if that be true of the past fourteen centuries, how much more so of the coming fourteen.” —Wilfred Cantwell Smith, 1977

THST 3281: Islam in America

Zoom Meeting Room: Available on course Brightspace Page

Section 01: Mondays and Wednesdays, 12:15 to 4:00 pm (PDT)

Synchronous meetings on Zoom, Mondays and Wednesdays, 12:15 to 2 pm (PDT)

Section 02: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 12:15 to 4:00 pm (PDT)

Synchronous meetings on Zoom, Tuesdays and Thursdays, 12:15 to 2 pm (PDT)

Core: Integrations Faith and Reason; Writing flag; Oral Skills flag

Professor: Amir Hussain, PhD

Office: University Hall, Room 3722

Phone: (310) 338-5987

Email: amir.hussain@lmu.edu

Web Page: <http://faculty.lmu.edu/amirhussain/>

Zoom Office Hours: Mondays through Thursdays, 2:00 pm to 2:30 pm (PDT); and by appointment

Course Description:

This course provides an introduction to Islam, and a detailed understanding of Islam in the American context. It examines the history of American Islam that goes back at least to the transatlantic slave trade, and discusses how American Muslims have helped in the construction of “America”.

Since the terrorist attacks of 9/11, there has been more coverage about Islam than ever before in the American news media. Unfortunately, most of this coverage is biased at best and inaccurate at worst. The prevailing message seems to be that a) Islam is a new religion in America and that b) Islam is incompatible with American values. We will begin by reading a

book that describes how the media constructs reality. In this way, the course will also be an introduction to media literacy.

Having discussed media constructions of Muslim lives, we will then start our study of Islam with some basic background information. This will include the life of the Prophet Muhammad, the Qur'an, and Islamic religious practices. With this introduction to set the context, we will then move to the discussion of Islam as an American religion.

The bulk of the course will deal with Islam as an American religious phenomenon. We will look at the history of indigenous (mostly African American) Muslims, and compare that with the immigrant experience of the 19th and early 20th centuries. When we discuss the 20th century and the present reality of American Muslims in the 21st century, we will focus on Muslim contributions to America and American culture – especially art, politics, architecture, sports, pop culture, and music.

This course is a reading, discussion and writing intensive course. There is a short first written assignment to assess student work, then a major multi-stage written research project that will require students to revise drafts and consciously work to improve their writing. Oral skills will be stressed (and assessed) in synchronous class discussion, where students will be required to critically engage the texts, the professor, and most importantly each other in reasonable discussion. There will also be a formal research presentation where students will present the research from their written paper.

Student Learning Outcomes:

The course will discuss how American Muslims have lived out their religion in a society in which they are: 1) a minority community, 2) have internal differences in terms of degree of observance, sectarianism (Sunni and Shi'a), ethnicity (25% are African American, 35% are South Asian, 33% are Middle Eastern), political affiliation, socio-economic status, etc., and 3) have to deal with issues of western modernity (e.g., same-sex marriage). As a result, students will learn about the internal diversity among American Muslim communities. They will contrast immigrant and indigenous American Muslim experiences, and will learn about the history of Muslims in America.

Students will:

- 1) demonstrate through their research paper and discussion posts that they will think both empathetically and critically about Islam and Muslims in America;
- 2) demonstrate through their reflections and oral presentations knowledge of the histories and cultures of American Muslims;
- 3) show that they have the ability to interpret texts and other cultural phenomena (such as rituals, myths, architecture, songs, films) that have religious presuppositions or implications; and

4) through class participation, oral presentations and written assignments have improved their verbal and written skills.

Statement on the University Mission in Relation to Theological Studies:

Courses in the Department of Theological Studies serve the University Mission to encourage learning, educate the whole person, serve faith and promote justice.

Theological Studies courses encourage learning within the intellectual and cultural heritage of the Catholic tradition. They value imagination and intellect, seeking an integration of different kinds of knowledge, and promote ecumenical and interreligious discourse. They seek to educate the whole person and serve faith by an academic exploration of the possibilities, challenges, and ambiguities of faith, in dialogue with the contemporary world. By their structure and content, they strive to promote justice by encouraging students to engage their theological understanding in a broken world.

Theological Studies courses require students to think, speak, write, and reflect critically about the largest questions of human existence. To do this, students are required also to “acquire the arts of precise and elegant expression, a sound and critical grasp of ideas, a familiarity with the modern world’s ways of knowing itself, a personal understanding of this nation’s history and multicultural heritage, and an appreciation of other cultures and societies around the globe.” (University Bulletin)

Theological Studies courses invite students to become more reflective and responsible persons in their own intellectual, ethical, and spiritual development.

Required Texts:

Edward E. Curtis IV, editor, *The Practice of Islam in America* (New York: NYU Press, 2017). Available as an e-book from Hannon Library.

Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business* revised edition (New York: Penguin, 2005). Available as an e-book from Hannon Library

Amir Hussain, *Muslims and the Making of America* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2016).

Supplementary readings and videos posted on Brightspace.

Evaluation:

It is important for each student to know at the outset that this course requires daily reading and viewing, written assignments and oral presentations. Moreover, regular synchronous class attendance and participation are required. Clear, grammatically correct composition and standard spelling are expected on all written assignments.

Information on the book review, the research paper (which will be on a topic of the student's choice, in consultation with the professor), and the oral presentation (which will be on the student's research paper) will be provided separately during the course. Active class participation will positively affect the student's final grade. More than one unexcused absence during the synchronous class meeting will negatively affect the student's grade. Please note that I **do not** round up grades to a higher grade. The University's grading policy, including the plus/minus system, will be used. The University's policy on Academic Honesty (discussed below) will be followed in this course.

Grades will be determined as follows:

- 10% A review of 5 pages on the Postman book, due May 21
- 40% A research paper of about 12 to 15 pages, due June 24
 - Outline and bibliography due May 28 (5%)
 - First draft due June 11 (15%)
 - Finished Research Paper due June 24 (20%)
- 5% Research paper initial short presentation on June 4
- 10% Research paper final presentation on June 21
- 10% 5 posts (each worth 2%) to the discussion boards on Brightspace
 - Discussion on Errol Morris due May 20
 - Discussion on *American Muslims: Fact vs. Fiction* video due May 27
 - Discussion on Omar ibn Said collection due on June 3
 - Discussion on *What's My Name: Muhammad Ali* videos due June 10
 - Discussion on *By the Dawn's Early Light: Chris Jackson's Journey to Islam* due on June 17
- 15% 3 reflection papers of about 2 pages each (each worth 5%)
 - Reflection on "The God of Abraham" due May 28
 - Reflection on *Prince Among Slaves* video due June 4
 - Reflection on the class as a whole due June 25
- 10% Class participation (which is more than simple attendance)

Statement on Academic Excellence in Theological Studies:

In keeping with the larger context of LMU's mission, academic excellence is grounded in critical thinking, moral reflection, and articulate expression (both in written and oral form). Such critical thinking, reflection, and expression are rooted in the discipline of academic work. Critical thought and reflection, as well as the ability to articulate one's beliefs clearly and thoughtfully, are the result of disciplined work, which constitutes the necessary condition for academic achievement.

The Department of Theological Studies maintains high expectations for academic excellence. Students in Theological Studies courses are expected to be engaged listeners and careful readers as well as to write and speak cogently about substantive theological matters. They are expected to understand and analyze pertinent primary texts, scholarly literature, and non-textual sources (such as rituals and the arts), and to assimilate lectures on complex topics. Moreover, students are expected to generate their own questions about the material under consideration, questions appropriate to the sub-field that they are studying and which reflect a firm grasp of the basic course content and methodological approach.

Courses in Theological Studies may require approximately 150 pages of reading a week and 40 pages of writing over the course of the semester. Moreover, class attendance, preparation, and participation are not optional, but essential. Faculty are not required to prepare detailed "study guides" that repeat or summarize class and lecture content, nor are they required to prepare students for quizzes or exams beyond the content of the course lectures. Grading standards are high for all courses in Theological Studies.

Special Accommodations:

Students with special needs who require reasonable modifications, special assistance, or accommodations in this course should promptly direct their request to the Disability Support Services (DSS) Office. Any student who currently has a documented disability (ADHD, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Learning, Physical, or Psychiatric) needing academic accommodations should contact the DSS Office (Daum Hall 2nd floor, 310-338-4216) as early in the semester as possible. All discussions will remain confidential. Please visit www.lmu.edu/dss for additional information.

Academic Honesty:

Academic dishonesty will be treated as an extremely serious matter, with serious consequences that can range from receiving no credit for assignments/tests to expulsion. It is never permissible to turn in any work that has been copied from another student or copied from a source (including Internet) without properly acknowledging the source. It is your responsibility to make sure that your work meets the standard of academic honesty set forth in the "LMU Academic Honesty Policy" (see <http://bulletin.lmu.edu/>).

Tentative Nature of the Syllabus:

If necessary, this syllabus and its contents are subject to revision; students are responsible for any changes or modifications distributed in class or posted on the professor's web site.

Take his rigorous linguistic precision, famous among students, publishers, and secretaries alike. We kids knew it, too—from lessons and games that taught the placement of 'only', the use of 'please', the difference between 'which' and 'that'. In fact one of my very earliest memories—I can't have been more than 3 or 4—was of playing hide-and-seek, in the basement, with my siblings. I was crammed behind the furnace, but my brother spied a movement. "It's me!", I squealed—in 3-year old delight. Came the deep voice, down the stairs: "It's I".

—Brian Cantwell Smith on his father, 2000

Schedule of Classes:

- May 17 – 20: “Too much heaven on their minds”. Introductions. Who are we, what are we doing in this course and why? Media and the construction of Muslim Lives. Public discourse and the American media. READING: Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death*; Other readings posted on Brightspace. **Discussion on Errol Morris due May 20. Book Review on Postman due May 21.**
- May 24 – 27: Who are Muslims? Images of Islam in Contemporary America. READING: *Muslims and the Making of America*, Acknowledgements, Introduction, Chapter 1; *The Practice of Islam in America*, Acknowledgements, Introduction, Chapters 1, 2, and 3; Other readings posted on Brightspace. **Discussion on *American Muslims: Fact vs. Fiction* video due May 27. Research paper outline and preliminary bibliography due on May 28. Reflection on “The God of Abraham” Due May 28.**
- June 1 – 3: Coming to America: the Transatlantic Slave Trade. READING: *Muslims and the Making of America*, Chapter 2; *The Practice of Islam in America*, Chapters 4, 5, and 6; Other readings posted on Brightspace. **Discussion on Omar ibn Said collection due on June 3. First short presentation on research paper due June 4. Reflection on *Prince Among Slaves* video due June 4.**

- June 7 – 10: 20th Century Islam in the United States: Elijah Muhammad, Malcolm X, Louis Farrakhan and the Nation of Islam. READING: *Muslims and the Making of America*, Chapter 3; *The Practice of Islam in America*, Chapters 7, 8, and 9; Other readings posted on Brightspace. **Discussion on *What's My Name: Muhammad Ali* videos due June 10. First draft of research paper due on June 11.**
- June 14 – 17: Islam as a North American religious phenomenon: Indigenous and Immigrant Muslims. READING: *Muslims and the Making of America*, Chapter 4, Conclusion; *The Practice of Islam in America*, Chapters 10, 11, and 12; Other readings posted on Brightspace. **Discussion on *By the Dawn's Early Light: Chris Jackson's Journey to Islam* due on June 17.**
- June 21 – 24: Islam as a North American religious phenomenon: Indigenous and Immigrant Muslims. **Oral presentation on research paper due June 21. Final research paper due on June 24. Reflection on the class as a whole due June 25.**

Responsibilities and Respect:

In this course, as in this life, we all have responsibilities toward each other. I have found that my most successful classes are those in which we respect each other, and understand our mutual responsibilities. With that in mind, I offer my understanding of these responsibilities with the following assumptions. We will discuss them in the first week of class, and I hope that you will consult them throughout the course. Tina Pippin has articulated the following “manifesto” with her students, and it is with their words that I would like to begin:

we have the responsibility for sharing in and contributing to the learning process;
we have the right to voice an opinion that is based on a self-chosen value system;
we have the right to dissent or differ from the professor and from others in class;
we have the right to personal dignity not to be infringed by the conduct of the professor;
we have the responsibility for evaluating and suggesting positive directions for the class at informal evaluations throughout the course and at the end of the formal evaluation in order to make the learning process more efficient and valuable;
we have a right to a curriculum that is inclusive of race, class, gender, and sexuality.

Assumptions I Make About You

1. You have made a conscious, informed choice to be a member of this class. This means that you have read the syllabus, and know the workload required. Be aware that on average, you should spend 3 hours on your own (reading, studying, making notes, working on assignments, etc.) for every hour that you are in class.

2. You will give the basic respect that is due to me and the other students in this class.
3. You will observe basic classroom decorum. In this class that means (but is not limited to!) the following: 1) You will turn off (or set to “silent” mode) watch alarms and cellular phones. You will not text in class. 2) If you come in late, leave early, or need to leave during the class, you will do so with a minimum of disruption. To do this, open the door slowly, and close it slowly behind you. Don’t make a lot of noise packing or unpacking your things. If you are coming in late, it’s a good idea to take off your coat and open your book bag/knapsack in the hallway. 3) You may eat or drink in the class, providing that you don’t disrupt the class (no “noisy” foods, and please clean up after yourself). 4) You won’t start to put away your things until the class is over. 5) You will not interrupt when someone else is speaking.
4. You will do all of the required reading. This means that you will often have to read something more than once in order to fully understand it (remember the 3:1 ratio in the first assumption). You will attend class regularly and on time.
5. You will be responsible for all of the material that we cover in class. If you miss a class, you will contact another student to find out what you missed.
6. If you have a question, any question, you will ask it. You may ask during class, during my office hours, by telephone, or email.
7. You will turn in your assignments on time. If you are unsure of the requirements for an assignment, or when it is due, you will ask me.
8. You will improve your writing skills throughout this class. You will ask me for help, and also contact the Academic Resource Center if you need to at (310) 338-2847.
9. You will share your personality, knowledge, skills and special expertise with the rest of us throughout this semester.

Assumptions You Can Make About Me

1. I will give you the respect that I ask you to give me and the other members of this class.
2. I will begin and end the class on time. I will try to follow the schedule of lectures/lecture outlines as closely as possible.
3. I will be available to help you, but you must let me know that you need help. I will be available during my scheduled office hours (and can often schedule appointments at other times), and will return phone calls and emails promptly. Please contact me when you first have a problem. If you wait until it is too late, then it is too late!

4. If you do not turn in an assignment, I will not ask you for it. I will assume that you are content with a grade of zero for that assignment.

5. I will grade fairly and responsibly, returning your assignments to you in a timely manner. I do not grade on a curve, and will grade each assignment on its own merit. Through the “grading standards” outline (given below), I will let you know how I grade. I am willing to explain my grade to you, but if you request a grade change, you must be willing to explain to me (using the same outline) why you deserve another grade.

6. I will follow and enforce the university policy on academic dishonesty, particularly with regards to cheating and plagiarism.

7. I will be receptive to and encourage constructive comments about my teaching.

8. I will do my best to help you, but I cannot learn the material for you.

Grading Standards: Please note that I **do not** round up grades to a higher grade.

I use the plus/minus system, so be aware that these ranges themselves contain a range of work.

“A” Work Superior Strong evidence of original thinking; good organization, capacity to analyse and synthesize; superior grasp of subject matter with sound critical evaluations; evidence of extensive knowledge base.

For written assignments: 1) Responds fully to the assignment; 2) Expresses its purpose clearly and persuasively; 3) Is directed toward and meets the needs of a defined audience; 4) Begins and ends effectively; 5) Provides adequate supporting arguments, evidence, examples and details; 6) Is well-organized and unified; 7) Uses appropriate, direct and inclusive language; 8) Correctly acknowledges and documents sources; 9) Is free from errors in grammar, punctuation, word choice, spelling and format; and 10) Maintains a level of excellence throughout, and shows originality and creativity in realizing 1) through 7).

“B” Work Good Evidence of grasp of subject matter, some evidence of critical capacity and analytic ability; reasonable understanding of relevant issues; evidence of familiarity with the literature.

For written assignments: Realizes 1) through 9) well, but not fully and completely. Demonstrates overall ability but shows little apparent originality or creativity.

“C” Work Satisfactory Student who is profiting from his/her university experience; understanding of the subject matter; ability to develop solutions to simple problems in the material.

For written assignments: Realizes 1) through 9) adequately and demonstrates overall competence. Contains a few minor errors or flaws. A “C” assignment may show great creativity and originality, but those qualities don’t make up for poor or careless writing. A “C” assignment usually looks and reads like a penultimate draft.

“D” Work Poor Some evidence of familiarity with subject matter and some evidence that critical and analytic skills have been developed.

For written assignments: Fails to realize elements of 1) through 9). Contains several serious errors or flaws, or many minor ones. A “D” assignment often looks and reads like a first draft.

“F” Work Failure Evidence of familiarity with only some subject matter; presence of some critical and analytic skills.

or Little evidence of even superficial understanding of subject matter; weakness in critical and analytic skills; with limited or irrelevant use of literature.

For written assignments: Fails to realize several elements of 1) through 9). Contains many serious errors or flaws, and many minor ones as well. An assignment that violates the university’s policy on academic dishonesty (e.g. cheating or plagiarism) will at minimum receive a failing grade.

“Rather, his example —what he lived, taught, recommended, and inspired— was to stay firmly grounded in one’s own tradition (not dogmatically, but honestly, openly), and, from there, to reach across to those in other traditions —to speak to them, to love them, to celebrate life’s personal plurality. To be bettered, not lessened, by differences”.
—Brian Cantwell Smith on his father, 2000
