

**LOYOLA MARYMOUNT UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF THEOLOGICAL STUDIES
FIRST YEAR SEMINAR: ISLAM AND THE BUILDING OF AMERICA
COURSE OUTLINE SPRING 2025**

“ . . .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

FFYS 1000: Islam and the Building of America

Classroom: Doolan Hall 219

Section 04, CRN 70386 Tuesdays and Thursdays 9:55 am to 11:35 am

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Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2:00 to 3:00 pm

Course Description:

Over the past 25 years my research has examined 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). This course turns that research question on its head, and asks not how America has transformed the practices of American Muslims, but how American Muslims have transformed 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 an examination the life of the Prophet Muhammad, the Qur'an and Hadith, as well as Islamic religious practices and Shariah law. 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 transatlantic slave trade as well as the European colonial presence (English, French, and especially Spanish) as the dual contexts in which Islam was first introduced to America. 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, 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 communication will be stressed (and assessed) in class discussion, where students will be required to critically engage the texts, the professors, and most importantly each other in reasonable discussion. There will also be a formal seminar presentation where students will present the research for their written assignment.

*I remember that time you told me
You said, "Love is touching souls"
Surely you touched mine
'Cause part of you pours out of me
In these lines from time to time
—Joni Mitchell, "A Case of You"*

Student Learning Outcomes:

FYS learning outcomes:

At the end of this course, students will 1) understand and appreciate the intellectual rigor and academic excellence that defines an LMU education; 2) engage critically and reflectively in scholarly discourse; 3) Learn to read critically and carefully; 4) exercise critical thinking in oral discussion and writing; 5) be able to evaluate sources for quality (e.g., by learning to differentiate between scholarly and popular sources); and 5) acquire research skills including use of the

library catalogue and electronic databases to retrieve books or articles, whether in print or online.
Course learning outcomes:

At the end of this course students will 1) demonstrate that they will think both empathetically and critically about Islam and Muslims; 2) demonstrate knowledge of the history of Islam in America; 3) demonstrate that they have the ability to interpret texts and other cultural phenomena (such as rituals, myths, architecture) that have religious presuppositions or implications; 4) demonstrate that they will think both empathetically and critically about conflicting religious claims; and 5) through class participation and written assignments have improved their verbal and written skills.

Writing Workshops:

Writing workshops are a guided opportunity to develop your works in progress for the course. In workshops, you will learn drafting and revision techniques that will help with the clarity, readability, and overall meaning of your compositions. Remember that working on your writing means working on your thinking. Jaedyn is looking forward to helping you deepen, refine, and expand your creative and scholarly voices this semester.

The Role of the Writing Instructor:

The Writing Instructor will organize writing workshops, hold individual conferences, and work with students on written assignments for the class. The writing instructor will provide written feedback on students' assignments. Students are welcome to seek feedback on drafts of the other written assignments for the course from the Writing Instructor. It is advisable to turn in these drafts early to allow adequate time for review and revision processes.

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.

“We must, in other words, reject the falsehoods of nations in our work, and reveal, with the exquisite Ibn ‘Arabi, the virtues of what he more simply calls love. “My heart can take on any form,” he tells us, and then he simply names those temples at which he prays, the temples that inhabit him: the gazelle’s meadow, the monks’ cloister, the Torah, the Ka’ba. These are the temples whose priests we need to be, if we are to understand what any of this history is about, and it is only in them that there can be any future understanding of the complex “identity” of Europe in the Middle Ages. And almost undoubtedly in its present and future as well.”

— *María Rosa Menocal, 1997*

4-CREDIT HOUR POLICY

At LMU, **one credit hour** is defined as a minimum of 3 hours of work by an average student per week for a 15-week semester. That means that a 4-unit class must average a minimum of 12 hours of work a week and a **minimum total of 180 hours of work for the semester (inclusive of class contact time)**. Typically this will mean one hour of classroom instruction and two hours of out of class student work each week for each unit of a course. This course meets twice a week for one hour and forty minutes for each class, and **expects a minimum of 12 hours per week on class-related assignments.**

Required Texts:

Margot Northey, Bradford A. Anderson, and Joel N. Lohr, *Making Sense in Religious Studies* third edition (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2019).

Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business* revised edition (New York: Penguin, 2005).

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

Lecture Outlines (including supplementary readings), provided by the professor.

Evaluation:

It is important for each student to know at the outset that this course requires daily reading, written assignments and a seminar presentation. Moreover, regular 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 professors), and the seminar 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 two unexcused absences during the semester 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:

- 15% A review of not more than 5 pages on the Postman book, due Feb. 13

- 60% A research paper of not more than 15 pages, due April 29
 - Outline and preliminary bibliography due Feb. 18 (10%)
 - First draft due March 11 (assessed by Jaedyn)
 - Second draft and complete bibliography due April 3 (20%)
 - Finished research paper due April 29 (30%)

- 5% Seminar Presentation from April 22 to May 6

- 10% Information literacy modules from the library

- 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:

- Jan. 14 – 16: “Too much heaven on their minds”. Introductions. Who are we, what are we doing in this course and why? READING: *Muslims and the Making of America*, Acknowledgements, Introduction. **Library Module 1 (Starting Your Assignment) on Jan. 16. For the Jan. 16 class, we will meet in the Hannon Library, Room 118. Please bring your laptop with you, as you’ll do the first library module there, as well as meet with Darlene Aguilar, the Instructional Design Librarian at LMU.**
- Jan. 21 – 23: Continued: Who are we, what are we doing in this course and why? “Here we are now, entertain us”: Public discourse and the American media. READING: Postman book.
- Jan. 28 – 30: “Here we are now, entertain us”: Public discourse and the American media. READING: Postman book. **Library Module 2 (Types of Information) on Jan. 30.**
- Feb. 4 – 6: For Feb. 4 class, work with Jaedyn on research and writing instruction, library resources, studying tips, and how to analyse texts. Who are Muslims? Who was Muhammad and why is he important?
- Feb. 11 – 13: What is the Qur’an? For Feb. 11 class, work with Jaedyn on how to begin a research paper. **Book Review on Postman Due Feb. 13. Library Module 3 (Finding Books) on Feb. 13.**
- Feb. 18 – 20: What is Muslim life? **Research Paper Outline and Preliminary Bibliography Due on Feb. 18. Library Module 4 (Finding Articles) on Feb. 20.**
- Feb. 25 – 27: Muslim women’s lives. For. Feb. 27 class, work with Jaedyn on your writing.
- March 4 – 6: No Classes Due to Spring Break
- March 11 – 13: Coming to America: The Transatlantic Slave Trade. 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 1. **First Draft of Research Paper Due March 11.**
- March 18 – 20: Islam as a North American religious phenomenon: Indigenous and Immigrant Muslims. READING: For March 18 class, work with Jaedyn on writing.

- March 25 – 27: Issues for Islam as a North American religious phenomenon. READING: *Muslims and the Making of America*, Chapters 2, 3, and 4. For March 25 class, work with Jaedyn on writing and the second draft of your paper.
- April 1 – 3: For April 1 class, work with Jaedyn on writing and the second draft of your paper. Muslim contributions to America. READING: *Muslims and the Making of America*, Chapters 2, 3, and 4, Conclusion. **Second Draft and Complete Bibliography for Research Paper Due April 3.**
- April 8 – 10: Continued: Muslim contributions to America. For April 10 class, working with Jaedyn on final revisions to the research paper. Working with Jaedyn on translating your research paper into an oral presentation.
- Friday, April 11: Last Day to Withdraw or Apply for Credit / No Credit Grading.
- April 15: No formal class, but Jaedyn is available for individual meetings.
- Thursday, April 17: No class due to the Easter Holiday.
- April 22 – 24: Seminar presentations.
- April 29 – May 6: Seminar presentations. **Research Paper Due April 29.**

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, Jaedyn, 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 and our writing instructor Jaedyn 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 (as an example, “you’re ugly and your mother dresses you funny” is NOT a constructive comment. . .).
8. I will do my best to help you, but I cannot learn the material for you.

Grading Standards:

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

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

“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
