

**MEIS-UA 9691 - 001/ HIST-UA 9085 -
001/ RELST-UA 9085 - 001
What is Islam?**

NYU London

Instructor Information

- Dr. Philipp Wirtz
- Office hours & office location: by appointment on NYUL Bedford Square campus.

Course Information

- Class meeting days and times: **Monday 1-4 pm**
 - Room tbc

Course Overview and Goals

This course explores the origins of Islam and the development of its rituals and doctrines to the 21st century. It assumes no previous background in Islamic studies. Students will learn about topics such as the Quran and the Prophet, Islamic law, the encounter of East and West during the Crusades, and Islam in Britain. They will find out how Muslims in different regions have interpreted and lived their religion in past and present. Readings will include not only scholarly works but also material from primary sources, for example the Quran or other religious literature, biographies and chronicles. The course consists of a combination of lectures, seminar discussions and field trips.

Upon Completion of this Course, students will be able to:

- have knowledge of the history and basic tenets of Islam
- have developed independent perspectives based on the secondary literature and primary sources
- be aware of some of the important issues and debates arising in the study of Islam
- have an understanding of the diversity of how Islam has been practised and interpreted over time
- have developed skills in researching and writing essays and thinking critically about the subject

Course Requirements

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You do not have to have any previous knowledge about Islam or the Muslim world. Some basic understanding of broad developments and trends in world history (e.g. “What is the Roman Empire?” or “When did the Middle Ages end?”) would be helpful. This course is basically a history course taught by a historian, so you should be open to becoming familiar with some historical methods, even if this is not your main subject.

Grading of Assignments

The grade for this course will be determined according to these assessment components:

Assignments/ Activities	Description of Assignment	% of Final Grade	Due
Class participation	Attendance and level of participation	10%	n/a
Mid-term exam	60-minute text, covering weeks 1-6	20%	week 6
Paper 1	Primary source analysis, 1000 words	25%	week 8
Paper 2	Media analysis report, 1500 words	25%	week 12
End of term exam	90-minute test, covering weeks 7-13	20%	week 14

Failure to submit or fulfill any required course component results in failure of the class

Grades

Letter grades for the entire course will be assigned as follows:

Letter Grade	Percent	Description
A	Example: 93.5% and higher	[Enter expectations for A]
B	Example: 82.5% - 87.49%	[Enter expectations for B]
C	Example: 72.5% - 77.49%	[Enter expectations for C]
D	Example: 62.5% - 67.49	[Enter expectations for an D]
F	Example: 59.99% and lower	[Enter description of failing work]

Course Materials

Required Textbooks & Materials

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Brown, D., *A New Introduction to Islam*, 2nd ed., Oxford 2009 ISBN: 9781405158077.

Not required, but a useful and entertaining overview of the general historical framework: **Frankopan, P.**: *The Silk Roads: A New History of the World*. London 2016.

Further required readings, including primary source texts, will be made available via NYU Classes.

Optional Textbooks & Materials

(Books marked with an asterisk * are recommended general overviews)

- Abdel-Haleem, M. A. S.** (tr.), *The Qur'an: A New Translation*, Oxford 2004.
- Ahmed, Leila**: *A Quiet Revolution. The Veil's Resurgence, from the Middle East to America*, New Haven, CT 2011.
- Almond, I.**, *Two faiths, one banner: when Muslims marched with Christians across Europe's battlegrounds*, London/New York 2009.
- Ansari, H.**, *The 'Infidel' Within: Muslims in Britain Since 1800*, London 2000.
- Berkey, J.**, *The Formation of Islam: Religion and Society in the Near East, 600-1800*, Cambridge 2003.*
- Burton, J.**, *An Introduction to the Hadith*, Edinburgh 1994.*
- Cobb, P. M.**: *The Race for Paradise: An Islamic History of the Crusades*. Oxford 2014.
- Cook, M.**, *Muhammad*, Oxford 1983.*
- Cook, M.**, *The Koran: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford/New York 2000.*
- Ernst, C. W.**, *Rethinking Islam in the Contemporary World*, Chapel Hill 2003.
- Esposito, J.**, *Islam: The Straight Path*, Oxford 2005, 3rd edition.
- Fakhry, M. A.**, *A Short Introduction to Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Mysticism*, Oxford 1997.*
- Haddad, Y./J. I. Smith/K.M. Moore**, *Muslim Women in America: The Challenge of Islamic Identity Today*, New York 2006 ISBN 0195177835.
- Halm, H.**, *Shiism*, Edinburgh 2004, 2nd edition.*
- Holt, P. M.**, *The Crusader States and Their Neighbours, 1098-1291*, Harlow 2004.
- Kennedy, H.**, *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphs*, Harlow 2004, 2nd edition.
- Kennedy, H.**: *The Great Arab Conquests*. London 2008 (and later editions).*
- Kennedy, H.**: *The Caliphate: The History of an Idea*. London 2016. *
- Lapidus, Ira M.**, *Islamic Societies to the Nineteenth Century: A Global History*, Cambridge 2012 (and later editions).*
- Knysh, A.**: *Sufism: A New History of Islamic Mysticism*. Princeton NJ 2017.*
- Reynolds, G. S.**: *The Emergence of Islam: Classical Traditions in Contemporary Perspective*, Minneapolis 2012.
- Rippin A.**, *The Blackwell Companion to the Qur'an*, Oxford 2005.
- Rippin, A.**, **Muslims**: *Their Religious Beliefs and Practices*, London 2012, 4th edition.
- Roy, O.**, *Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Ummah*, London 2012, 2nd edition.
- Ruthven, M.**, *Islam. A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford 2012, 2nd edition.*
- Tyerman, C.**: *The Crusades: A Very Short Introduction* Oxford 2005.*

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Vikor, K. S., *Between God and the Sultan: A History of Islamic Law*, Oxford 2005.*
Waines, D., *An Introduction of Islam*, Cambridge 2003, 2nd edition.
Waardenburg, J., *Islam: Historical, Social and Political Perspectives*, Berlin-New York 2002.

“Light reading”:

Ansari, T.: *Destiny Disrupted: A History of the World through Islamic Eyes*. New York 2010.
Tyerman, C.: *How to Plan a Crusade*. London 2016

Reference works and websites:

The Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition, Leiden 1954-2003 and Third Edition (ongoing) [online via SOAS, NYU]. This is the standard encyclopedia for everything related to Islam.

Index Islamicus [online via SOAS, NYU]. This is the essential bibliographical database to find books and articles.

Oxford Bibliographies (Islamic Studies) For finding resources on the topic that you chose for your essay these annotated bibliographies very useful and include for instance entries on Dome of the Rock, Women in Islam, Theology, People of the Book, Islam in Europe/North America, jihad, Orientalism [online via SOAS, NYU]

International Medieval Bibliography [online via Senate House, NYU] – if you are searching for something comparative.

Oxford Islamic Studies Online has various resources related to the study of Islam, from its origin to the present day, including maps and images [online via NYU or SOAS library].

Encyclopaedia of the Qur’an, Leiden 2001-2005. [online via SOAS, NYU]

http://www.altafsir.com/quran_search_eng.asp?languageid=2 (Koran translations and other Koran-related resources)

<http://www.hadithcollection.com/index.php> (main hadith collections in translation)

<http://www.uga.edu/islam/> (Islam and Islamic Studies Resources)

<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/islam/islamsbook.html> (Internet Islamic History Sourcebook, primary sources)

For writing essays I recommend (especially for Freshmen):

Cullen, J., *Essaying the Past. How to Read, Write, and Think about History*, Malden (MA) 2012.

ISBN 978-1444351408.

Resources

- **Access your course materials:** [NYU Classes](http://nyu.edu/its/classes) (nyu.edu/its/classes)
- **Databases, journal articles, and more:** [Bobst Library](http://library.nyu.edu) (library.nyu.edu)
- **NYUL Library Collection:** [Senate House Library](http://catalogue.libraries.london.ac.uk) (catalogue.libraries.london.ac.uk)

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- Assistance with strengthening your writing: [NYU Writing Center](http://nyu.mywconline.com) (nyu.mywconline.com)
- Obtain 24/7 technology assistance: [IT Help Desk](http://nyu.edu/it/servicedesk) (nyu.edu/it/servicedesk)

Course Schedule

Note: There are usually some optional additional readings which are not on this list, but will be available on NYU Classes. The purpose of these is to provide some background for those who wish to delve deeper into a topic.

Session/Date	Topic	Reading	Assignment Due
Session 1:	Course intro	Brown, <i>Introduction</i> , 4-18 (ch. 1)	
Session 2: Sept 10	The emergence of Islam	Required reading: Brown, <i>Introduction</i> , 19-68, 105-128 (chs. 2-4, 7/8) Primary source: Two short source texts on the pre-Islamic Arabs (see texts for bibliographical details)	
Session 3:	Muhammad and the Quran	Required reading: Brown, <i>Introduction</i> , 69-87 (ch. 5) Primary source: 1) <i>Quran</i> , sura 12 (Yusuf/Josef) 2) <i>The Life of the Prophet: Ibn Ishaq/Ibn Hisham, The Life of Muhammad</i> (Guillaume, A., <i>The Life of Muhammad</i> , Oxford 1955, pp. 69-73, 82f., 104-107.	Research task: Search the internet for “Qur’an recitation” in general and the recitation of <i>surah</i> 12 in particular: What do the results of your search tell you about the past and present role of this practice?
Session 4:	Religious and political foundations	Required reading: 1) Brown, <i>Introduction</i> , 88-101 (ch. 6). 2) Primary source: : Search for a topic (or several topics) of your choice in the hadith database: http://www.hadithcollection.com/index.php and identify two hadiths that you would like to discuss in class. Please mark down the title of the work and the exact number of the respective hadith (e.g. Sahih Muslim Book 025, Hadith Number 5341) so that we can look them up in class.	
Session 5:	Unity and Diversity in early Islam: Sunnism and Shiism	Required reading: Brown, <i>Introduction</i> , 129-146 (ch. 9) Primary source: Loeffler, R., <i>Islam in Practice: Religious Beliefs in a Persian Village</i> , Albany, N.Y. 1988, pp. 1-29, 37-50, 91-117, 175-181, 225-27, 290-5	

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Session/Date	Topic	Reading	Assignment Due
Session 6:	Islamic Theology and Law	<p>Required reading: Brown, <i>Introduction</i>, 149-192 (ch. 10- 11).</p> <p>Primary source: <i>Koran</i> (translation M. A. S. Abdel Haleem), sura 16 (al-Nahl), verse 67; sura 4 (al-Nisa), verse 43; sura 2 (al-Baqara), verse 219; sura 5 (al-Ma’ida), verse 90/91</p>	<p>Mid-term test</p> <p>Research task: Search two or more of the following fatwa online sites for ‘alcohol’. Identify two fatwas that you would like to discuss in class. Be prepared to talk to the class about your chosen fatwa. This does not have to be a formal presentation!</p> <p>1 http://www.islamicity.com/qa/ (USA)</p> <p>2 http://islamonline.com/fatwa.html (part of al-Jazeera)</p> <p>3 http://www.islam-qa.com/en (Saudi-Arabia)</p>
Session 7:	East meets West: Decolonising the Crusades	<p>Required reading: Brown, <i>Introduction</i>, 219-233 (ch. 13)</p> <p>Primary source: 1) Usama Ibn Munqidh on his encounters with the “Franks”. 2) Pope Urban’s sermon at the council of Clermont.</p>	
Session 8:	Islamic Art: Field trip to the British Museum	<p>Required reading: Oleg Grabar: “What should one know about Islamic Art?” <i>Anthropology and Aesthetics</i> 43 (Spring, 2003), 5-11.</p>	Paper 1 due (Primary source analysis)
Session 9:	Islam and Europe	<p>Required reading: Césari, J, <i>When Islam and Democracy Meet: Muslims in Europe and in the United States</i>, Basingstoke 2004, 9-42. Primary source: 19th century caricatures on “westernisation” in the Ottoman Empire.</p>	Mo, Nov 5 - Sun, Nov 11: Fall Break
Session 10:	Women in Islam	<p>Required reading: TBC</p> <p>Round-table discussion with students from SOAS</p>	
Session 11:	Islamic revival and Islamism	<p>Required reading: Brown, <i>Introduction</i>, 234-298 (chs. 14-17)</p> <p>Primary source: 1) Sayyid Qutb, extracts from <i>Milestones and Social Justice</i>, edited by A. J. Bergesen, <i>The Sayyid Qutb Reader</i>, 2008, pp. 35-42 and 150-59. 2) The programme of the Muslim Brotherhood, 1936.</p>	
Session 12:	Field trip to the Regents Park Mosque	<p>Please read in preparation for this trip in the “Encyclopaedia of the Qur’ān” the entry ‘Mosque’ (SOAS library start page - > electronic resources -> A-Z databases - > Brill Reference or via NYU library)</p>	Paper 2 due (Media analysis report)

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Session/Date	Topic	Reading	Assignment Due
Session 14:	“What is Islam?” reconsidered	tbc	
Final Assessment:			

Co-Curricular Activities

- Required trips: Field trip to the Regents Park Mosque, field trip to the British Museum.
- Suggested trips: 1) Islamic collection in the Victoria and Albert Museum, 2) a large number of Islam-related talks and concerts take place next door at SOAS, for details regularly check: <https://www.soas.ac.uk/about/events/>
- Estimated travel costs: For Regents Park Mosque cost of two tube rides.

Classroom Etiquette

- Emergency toilet breaks can be taken during the class (if you gotta go you gotta go), but please try to minimize disruptions, in general try to synchronize your bathroom schedule with break times.
- Food & drink (except water), including gum, are not to be consumed in class.
- Please conduct all class discussions in a civilized manner. While free, animated discussion is a key element of scholarship, you will of course avoid every offensive, racist or discriminatory utterance against your fellow students. (See “Classroom Conduct” below).
- Mobile phones should be set on silent and should not be used in class except for emergencies. No mobile phones are allowed in use during the class at any time except during breaks or with permission of the lecturer.
- The use of laptops or tablets is up to the individual student’s discretion. However, please note that recent studies have shown that students who use laptops in class (even only to take notes), routinely score lower in their assignments. Links to these findings can be found in the “general resources” folder on NYU Classes.
- Please kindly dispose of rubbish in the bins provided.

NYUL Academic Policies

Attendance and Tardiness

- Key information on NYU London’s absence policy, how to report absences, and what kinds of absences can be excused can be found on our [website](http://www.nyu.edu/london/academics/attendance-policy.html) (<http://www.nyu.edu/london/academics/attendance-policy.html>)

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Assignments, Plagiarism, and Late Work

- You can find details on these topics and more on this section of our NYUL [website](https://www.nyu.edu/london/academics/academic-policies.html) (<https://www.nyu.edu/london/academics/academic-policies.html>) and on [the Policies and Procedures section of the NYU website](https://www.nyu.edu/academics/studying-abroad/upperclassmen-semester-academic-year-study-away/academic-resources/policies-and-procedures.html) for students studying away at global sites (<https://www.nyu.edu/academics/studying-abroad/upperclassmen-semester-academic-year-study-away/academic-resources/policies-and-procedures.html>).

Classroom Conduct

Academic communities exist to facilitate the process of acquiring and exchanging knowledge and understanding, to enhance the personal and intellectual development of its members, and to advance the interests of society. Essential to this mission is that all members of the University Community are safe and free to engage in a civil process of teaching and learning through their experiences both inside and outside the classroom. Accordingly, no student should engage in any form of behaviour that interferes with the academic or educational process, compromises the personal safety or well-being of another, or disrupts the administration of University programs or services. Please refer to the [NYU Disruptive Student Behavior Policy](#) for examples of disruptive behavior and guidelines for response and enforcement.

Disability Disclosure Statement

Academic accommodations are available for students with disabilities. Please contact the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities (212-998-4980 or mosescsd@nyu.edu) for further information. Students who are requesting academic accommodations are advised to reach out to the Moses Center as early as possible in the semester for assistance.

Instructor Bio

I studied the history, languages and cultures of Europe and the Middle East in Frankfurt am Main, Bamberg, Tehran and London. I am currently Lecturer in the History of the Modern Middle East in the Department of History at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London (commonly known as SOAS –pronounced as a word not an acronym...). My research interests are mainly within the history of the Ottoman Empire and its successor states. I teach several aspects of the history of the Middle East at SOAS, in the current academic year I am teaching two courses on modernity in the Middle East (at undergraduate and postgraduate level respectively) as well as part of a world history survey.