COURSE DESCRIPTION

Islam is one of the world's largest religious traditions as attested to by the fact that one in every five persons in the world is a Muslim. While in the general Western psyche Islam is viewed as an essentially “Arab” or “Middle Eastern” phenomenon, the reality is that more than half of all Muslims live in Asia. Furthermore, while many Westerners consider Islam to be a monolithic and militant religion, the fact remains that Islam comes in myriad forms and is geographically spread in close to 70 countries across many cultures, languages, nationalities, races and regions.

The aim of this course is to survey the diverse and protean role Islam plays in Asian public life by analyzing the variegated cultural, political, religious and social milieu that it has encountered in such countries as Afghanistan, India, Indonesia, Malaysia and Pakistan. We will attempt to address the following set of central questions: What are some of the themes and motifs as well as historical, religious and philosophical matrices that are salient to Islam as a system of belief? In what ways has the discourse of “Islamic identity” undergone a metamorphosis from the pre-modern to the modern times? How did Islam promulgate in Asia? In what ways has Islam influenced the domestic, foreign and geopolitical realities of Asian countries? How have women fared under Islamic law? What are some of the factors that aid or hamper the development of militant Islam in Asia?

To answer these questions, the course will emphasis the sociopolitical history of Asian Islam. In addition, we will make extensive use of multimedia presentations to further familiarize you with the region and the religion that are the focus of this course.

COURSE PHILOSOPHY

A Chinese proverb says, “teachers open the door, but you must enter by yourself.” A Western sage (Karl Jaspers) supplemented this maxim by maintaining, “university life is no less dependent on students than on professors. The best professors flounder helplessly at a school where the student body is unfit. Hence, it is all up to the young people who are supposedly entitled to study. They must show themselves worthy of this privilege to the best of their ability.”

This course has been organized on the premise that you are worthy of this privilege and that the teacher only opens the door. The success of this course depends entirely on your
continued and sustained participation. Therefore, I ask that you be agile participants and intervene as often as possible in class discussion. Please keep in mind that in this course you will be exposed to a wide range of alternative views some of which may force you to question, rethink (and if needed, abandon) your present "understanding” of historical events and problems. Who knows, by the end of the course you might feel that you have taken part in a serendipitous voyage of discovery!

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

**Attendance:** Since my presentations will complement rather than reiterate the assigned readings, it is expected that you attend *all* class meetings. You will be held responsible for all the material we cover in readings, lectures, and films. Attendance is also mandatory for all exams, and make-ups will be given only for bona fide emergencies (i.e., severe illness documented by a physician).

**Participation:** In addition to being physically present, I expect you to be mentally present as well! As such, you should complete all assigned readings *before* each class meeting, so that you are familiar with the concepts, facts, theories, and controversies with which we are dealing. Furthermore, you should try to engage in cyber discussion through the listserv I will set up for this course. You and I will use this listserv to (a) elaborate and respond to points and issues mentioned in class by class members; (b) engage in debates with one another; and (c) post interesting or informative e-mails about Islam in Asia.

**Quizzes:** To assess your understanding of the course material and ensure that you are keeping up with the readings, I will administer unannounced quizzes from time to time.

**Research/Reflection Papers:** You are expected to write two 8-10 pages typed and double-spaced retrospective essays in this course. The papers should show the “Four C” rule: clear, concise, coherent and creative. The first paper will address the following question: “How should one teach the topic of Islam and Politics in Asia to students studying in the United States?” For this paper, you are expected to research and think about what are the best venues, strategies and pedagogical styles that an instructor can use to encourage his or her students to understand this subject matter. This paper is due on October 25. As for the second paper assignment, you can either write a research and/or a “reflection/opinion” paper. In a research paper, students are expected to undertake an in-depth examination of an event, dilemma, or controversy concerning Asian Islam in which they are interested. In a reflection/opinion paper, students are expected to critically reflect on a topic of their choice whereby they engage in a dialogue with the materials raised in films, class lectures, and assigned readings. The choice of subject for the second paper, which will be due on December 8, should be first cleared in individual discussions with the instructor. Further guidelines on how to write the papers will be provided in class.

**Exams:** You will have an in-class midterm exam on October 18.
Please note that in this course we follow the Maxwell School's policy of academic integrity (http://www.maxwell.syr.edu/maxpages/faculty/merupert/Teaching/plag.htm). Those who engage in plagiarism will get an automatic F and will be referred to the university officials for further disciplinary actions.

Do not hesitate to drop by my office should you have problems with the course, or just want to talk. Students who may need special consideration because of any sort of disability should make an appointment to see the instructor in private. You should be advised that late papers would be substantially penalized (one letter grade for each day late) and no incomplete grade will be allowed.

**GRADING CRITERIA**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classroom &amp; Listserv contribution</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quizzes</td>
<td>Periodic</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mid-term Exam</td>
<td>October 18</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>1st paper</td>
<td>October 25</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2nd paper</td>
<td>December 8</td>
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**REQUIRED TEXTS** (available at Orange Student Bookstore and SU Bookstore)


Course Reader (#1125) available at Campus Copy Center located in Marshall Square Mall

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“...the ancient wisdom – which for some cultures is also an everyday truism – that knowledge without ethics is not so much bad ethics as inferior knowledge.”

-- Ashis Nandy

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CLASS ASSIGNMENTS

Aug. 30: **Introduction - The Nature and Structure of the Course**
- Syllabus review; questionnaire
- Video: *Quran Controversy at University of North Carolina*

Sept. 1: **Encountering Asia**
- Video: *Sentimental Imperialists* (VC 8043) (60 min.)

Sept. 6: **Understanding Islam (I)**
- Read “Quick Reference Glossary,” “Terminology,” in the Course Reader
- Video: “Islam: Empire of Faith” (VC 9646) (180 min.)
  **Recommended:**
  - [http://www.salon.com/books/feature/2002/01/08/alphabet/print.html](http://www.salon.com/books/feature/2002/01/08/alphabet/print.html) provides an alphabetical reminder of the contributions of Muslim World to global heritage

Sept. 8: **Understanding Islam (II)**
  **Recommended:**
  - Visit [http://www.uga.edu/islam/](http://www.uga.edu/islam/) and read as much as you can
  - Video: *I am a Sufi, I am a Muslim* (VC 7580) (52 min.)

Sept. 13: **Muslim India: 16th - 17th Centuries**
- Bose and Jalal, xi-xiv and chapters 1-5
- Video: Taj Mahal: The Story of Muslim India (SA40) (24 min)

**Recommended:**

Sept. 15: **From Decline to Colonialism: 18th - 19th Centuries**
- Bose and Jalal, chapters 6-10

Sept. 20: **Colonialism and Resistance in 20th Century India**
- Bose and Jalal, chapters 11-15
- Muhammad Iqbal, “Islam as a Moral and Political Ideal,” in *Modernist Islam 1840-1940*, pp. 304-313
- Video: Pandit Nehru (VC 7906) (22 min.)

Sept. 22: **Partition of India and Pakistan**
- Bose and Jalal, chapters 16-17
- Video: Stories My Country Told Me: With Eqbal Ahmad (VC 10140) (55 min)

**Recommended:**
- Video: Earth (VC 9674; 101 min.)

Sept. 27: **Post-Colonial South Asia**
- Bose and Jalal, chapters 18-20

Sept. 29: **Pakistan’s Maturation**
- Naipaul, pp. 245-302

**Recommended:**

Oct. 4: Sojourn in Pakistan
• Naipaul, pp. 303-357
• Rory McCarthy, “Professors fight to keep swift on syllabus as Pakistan’s Islamists target “vulgar” classics,” The Guardian (July 10, 2003), p. 15.

Recommended:

Oct. 6: Women in Pakistan
• Video: Who will Cast the First Stone? (VC6594) (59 min.) (1980)

Recommended:
• Shahla Haeri, No Shame For the Sun: Lives of Professional Pakistani Women (Syracuse University Press, 2002).
• License to Kill (VC 10151) (45 min.)

Oct. 11: Women and Development in India & Bangladesh
• Video: The Women’s Bank of Bangladesh (VC 7802) (51 min.)
• Video: Technology and Women in India

Recommended:
• Gail Minault, “Women, Legal Reform and Muslim Identity,” in Mushirul Hasan (ed.), Islam, Communities and the Nation (New Delhi: Manohar, 1998), pp. 139-158

Oct. 13: No Class (Yom Kippur)
Oct. 18: **Midterm**

Oct. 20: **“Seeing” Afghanistan (I)**
- Seierstad, pp. ix-66.
- Queen Soraya, “The Liberation of Afghan Women (1922)” in *The Middle East and Islamic World Reader*, pp. 122-125
- Video: *U.S.-Afghanistan Relations* (VC 10139) (42 min)

  **Recommended:**

Oct. 25: **“Seeing” Afghanistan (II)**
- Seierstad, pp. 67-130
- Video: *Kandahar* (VC 11845) (85 minutes)

  **Recommended:**
- Video: *Afghanistan: Exporting the Taliban Revolution* (VC 9239; 24 min.)

Oct. 27: **“Seeing” Afghanistan (III)**
- Seierstad, pp. 131-203
- Video: *Osama* (Video DVD 11249; 83 min.)

Nov. 1: **Discussing the Bookseller of Kabul**
- Seierstad, pp. 204-288

Nov. 3: **Islam in Central Asia (I)**
- Video: *Oil in Azerbaijan*

  **Recommended:**

Nov. 8: **Islam in Central Asia (II)**
• Ahmed Rashid, “Islam in Central Asia: Afghanistan and Pakistan”
• “Chaos in the Caucasus,” *The Economist* (October 9, 1999), pp. 23-26
• Video: *Islamic Resurgence and Holy War* (VC 9238) (52 min)

Nov. 10: **Malaysia (I)**
• Michael Peletz, “‘Ordinary Muslims’ and Muslim Resurgents in Contemporary Malaysia,” in Robert Hefner and Patricia Horvatich (eds.), *Islam in an Era of Nation-States* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997), pp. 231-273

Recommended:

Nov. 15: **Malaysia (II)**
• Naipaul, pp. 361-408

Nov. 17: **Malaysian Islam**
• Video: *Islam and Pluralism* (VC 10094) (30 min)

Nov. 22: **Indonesia**
• Clifford Geertz, *Islam Observed*, pp. v-55
• Video: *Indonesia* (VC 9448) (60 min.)

Nov. 24: No Class (Thanksgiving Holiday)

Nov. 29: **Indonesian Islam**
• Clifford Geertz, *Islam Observed*, pp. 56-117
Dec. 1: **Sojourn in Indonesia (I)**
- Naipaul, pp. 3-64

Dec. 6: **Sojourn in Indonesia (II)**
- Naipaul, pp. 65-129

**Recommended:**

Dec. 8: **Evaluations & Open Discussion about the Course**  
*(2nd paper is due)*
Hindu-Muslim Conflicts

- Video: *Kashmir: Valley of Despair* (SA112) (45 min.)
- Video: *Bombay: A Myth Shattered* (VC 7082) (25 min.)

Recommended:

- Videos: *In the Name of God* (VC 6573) (97 min.); *Father, Son and Holy War* (SA67); *Raam Ke Naam* (SA34); *War and Peace* (SA117) (170 min)