

# RS 258 INTRODUCTION TO ISLAM FALL SEMESTER, 2006

**Prof. John Kaltner, Religious Studies  
Clough 413 - 843-3407**

**Office Hours: T & TH 3-4:30; F 2-3; other times by appointment**

## **Course Description**

This class is an examination of some of the major historical, theological, philosophical, and cultural elements of the Islamic tradition. The material is organized around six aspects of Islam that should be familiar to all non-Muslims wishing to have a basic understanding of the faith.

## **Required Texts**

Asma Gull Hasan, *Why I am a Muslim: An American Odyssey* (London: Element, 2004).  
John Kaltner, *Islam: What Non-Muslims Should Know* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003).  
Tarif Khalidi, *The Muslim Jesus: Sayings and Stories in Islamic Literature* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001).  
Irshad Manji, *The Trouble with Islam Today: A Muslim's Call for Reform in Her Faith* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2003).  
Tayeb Salih, *The Wedding of Zein* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1999).

## **Course Requirements**

### **1) Attendance and participation**

The course will be in a seminar format. All students are expected to complete all readings for the day they are assigned and come to class prepared to discuss them. More than four unexcused absences will adversely affect one's grade. **Attendance and participation will account for 20% of your final grade.**

### **2) Writing assignments**

There will be four writing assignments during the semester. Details on these assignments will be discussed in class. **Each writing assignments will be worth 15%, with the total accounting for 60% of your final grade.**

### **3) Exams**

There will be a final exam that will be taken during finals week. **The final exam will account for 20% of your final grade.**

## **Grading**

The final grade will be determined based on the following scale:

A (93-100), A- (90-92), B+ (87-89), B (83-86), B- (80-82), C+ (77-79), C (73-76), C- (70-72), D+ (67-69), D (63-66), D- (60-62), F (below 60)

## **Schedule of Readings and Assignments**

August 24                      Introduction: Perceptions of Islam

August 29 Life in a Muslim Village  
**Read:** Salih, *The Wedding of Zein*

August 31 **1) Islam is a Diverse and Complex Faith**  
Film: "My Son the Fanatic"

September 5 Film review due (discussion)  
**Read:** J. Shaheen, "Hollywood's Muslim Arabs" (handout)

September 7  
**Read:** Kaltner, chapter 1  
P. Crone, "The Rise of Islam in the World"  
[http://arabworld.nitle.org/texts.php?module\\_id=2&reading\\_id=305](http://arabworld.nitle.org/texts.php?module_id=2&reading_id=305)

September 12 Shi`a Islam  
**Read:** Overview of Shi`ism  
<http://philtar.ucsm.ac.uk/encyclopedia/islam/shia/shia.html>  
**View:** "The Origins of Sunni and Shiite Islam" (2 parts – total time 25 minutes)  
[http://arabworld.nitle.org/audiovisual.php?module\\_id=2](http://arabworld.nitle.org/audiovisual.php?module_id=2)

September 14 Sufism  
**Read:** D. Waines, "The Way of the Sufi"  
[http://arabworld.nitle.org/texts.php?module\\_id=2&reading\\_id=29](http://arabworld.nitle.org/texts.php?module_id=2&reading_id=29)  
Check out some of the music by Richard Thompson, a British Sufi musician:  
<http://www.richardthompson-music.com>

## 2) Islam is a Religion of Orthopraxy

September 19  
**Read:** Kaltner, chapter 2  
"The Science of Hadith"  
<http://cwis.usc.edu/dept/MSA/fundamentals/hadithsunnah/scienceofhadith/brief1/>

September 21 The Pillars of Faith  
**Read:** Creed  
<http://www.usc.edu/dept/MSA/fundamentals/pillars/shahadah/shahadahprereq.html>  
Prayer <http://www.islam-usa.com/pray1.html>  
Fasting [http://www.usc.edu/dept/MSA/fundamentals/pillars/fasting/tajuddin/fast\\_1.html](http://www.usc.edu/dept/MSA/fundamentals/pillars/fasting/tajuddin/fast_1.html)  
Pilgrimage <http://www.pbs.org/muhammad/virtualhajj.shtml>  
Almsgiving  
[http://www.usc.edu/dept/MSA/fundamentals/pillars/fasting/tajuddin/fast\\_79.html#HEADING140](http://www.usc.edu/dept/MSA/fundamentals/pillars/fasting/tajuddin/fast_79.html#HEADING140)

September 26 Hadith Assignment (TBA)  
**Read:** Hadith Database <http://www.usc.edu/dept/MSA/reference/searchhadith.html>

### 3) Muslims Respect Judaism and Christianity

September 28  
**Read:** Kaltner, chapter 3

October 3 Muslim Views of Jews and Christians  
**Read:** A. S. Asani, "On Pluralism, Intolerance, and the Qur'an"  
<http://www.akdn.org/akfisp/HTML/aliarticle.html>

October 5 Jesus in Islam  
**Read:** Khalidi, pp. 1-45

October 10 The Muslim Gospel  
**Read:** Khalidi, pp.46-218  
Writing assignment due (TBA)

### 4) There is no Institutional Hierarchy in Islam

October 12  
**Read:** Kaltner, chapter 4  
"Islamic Statements against Terrorism" <http://www.unc.edu/~kurzman/terror.htm>

October 17 Fall Break—No Class

October 19 Film: "Osama"

October 24 Discussion of Film

October 26 Women in Islam  
**Read:** F. Mernissi, "Women in Muslim History"  
[http://arabworld.nitle.org/texts.php?module\\_id=8&reading\\_id=306&sequence=1](http://arabworld.nitle.org/texts.php?module_id=8&reading_id=306&sequence=1)

### 5) There is no Clear Separation between Religion and Politics in Islam

October 31  
**Read:** Kaltner, chapter 5

November 2 Islam and Social Activism  
**Read:** Th. Emil Homerin, "Zionism, Imperialism, and Nationalism: Political Islam"  
Muslim Brotherhood Web Site  
<http://www.ikhwanweb.com/Home.asp?zPage=Systems&System=PressR&Lang=E>

November 7            Islam and Violence  
**Read:** “ Hamas Covenant” <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/mideast/hamas.htm>

November 9            Film: “Paradise Now”

### **6) Jihad Does Not Mean “Holy War”**

November 14  
**Read:** Kaltner, chapter 6  
A. Sachedina, “Where Was God on September 11?”  
<http://www.uga.edu/islam/sachedina.html>

November 16            A Positive View of Islam in the Modern World  
**Read:** Hasan, *Why I am a Muslim: An American Odyssey*

November 21            Thanksgiving Break—No Class

November 23            Thanksgiving Break—No Class

November 28            A Critical View of Islam in the Modern World  
**Read:** Manji, *The Trouble with Islam Today: A Muslim’s Call for Reform in Her Faith*

November 30            Paper on Hasan and Manji books due (discussion)

December 5            Evaluation