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

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*

1) Islam is a Diverse and Complex Faith

August 31  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

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)

September 14  Sufism
Read: D. Waines, “The Way of the Sufi”
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
Pilgrimage http://www.pbs.org/muhammad/virtualhajj.shtml
Almsgiving
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
[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”

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

October 31
Read: Kaltner, chapter 5

November 2 Islam and Social Activism
Muslim Brotherhood Web Site
November 7  Islam and Violence
**Read:** “Hamas Covenant” [http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/mideast/hamas.htm](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](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