

**RELI 329**

**ISLAM IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD**

**SCHOOL OF ART HISTORY, CLASSICS & RELIGIOUS STUDIES**

**VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON**

**Trimester 1, 2009**

# RELI 329

## ISLAM IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD

- Course co-ordinator:** Dr Art Buehler  
 HU 116, tel: 463 7409  
[art.buehler@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:art.buehler@vuw.ac.nz)
- Where and when:** **Lectures:** MY 102  
**Tuesday 10:00 – 11:50**  
**Tutorials:** Will be from 12 pm to 12:50 pm after class.
- Course Dates:** Commencement: March 3<sup>rd</sup> 2009  
 Mid trimester break: April 13<sup>th</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup> 2009  
 End of teaching: June 5<sup>th</sup> 2009  
 University Examination Period: June 8<sup>th</sup> – July 1<sup>st</sup> 2009  
 Mid year break: July 2<sup>nd</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> 2009

The programme Administrator, Alikali Kalliabetsos, is in room HU 318 (ext 5299). **Notices regarding the course or any information on changes will be posted on the notice board outside the programme administrator's office.**

**Office Hours:** The main office is open Monday - Friday, 9.30am – 12 noon and 2:30 - 3.30pm. Dr Buehler usually has office hours on Monday 10-12 am; Friday 12-7 pm,; and by appointment. Appointments are highly recommended since these office hours can be interrupted by meetings and other events.

### *Course outline*

#### 1 The course and its Learning Objectives:

##### **By the end of the course you will:**

- Appreciate the complexity and diversity of Islam, both past and present and cross-culturally.
- Be familiar with the most commonly used terms in Islamic studies.
- Have a broad understanding of various perspectives within the Muslim world, particularly by some leading intellectuals.
- Be able to identify and utilize useful sources for the study of Islam.
- Be able to evaluate critically information about Islam by examining the contexts of those commenting on Islam.
- Be able to discuss competently (orally or in writing) several aspects of Islam which have been studied in some depth.

The lectures and tutorials with associated reading are intended to provide students with a general overview of the salient features of Islam.

## 2 **Assessment requirements**

**RELI 329 is internally assessed** by means of written assignments and a take-home exam, weighted as follows:

- **Essay one - 2000** words due **31 March at 5 pm** and is worth **25%** of the final grade. Late fee is 2% per day including weekends and holidays.
- **Essay two - 3000** words due **15 May at 5 pm** and is worth **30%** of the final grade. Late fee is 2% per day including weekends and holidays.
- **A final takehome test worth 30%** of the final grade due **on the last day of class, 2 June 2009**. These should be put in the same box near Hunter 318 as the essays above and signed off in the notebook. **No tests accepted after noon, 9 June**. Late fee is 2% per day including weekends and holidays.
- The final 15% of the grade will be on the basis of short quizzes given in class. There will be eleven quizzes, one each week except the first week. Some will count double. Out of these “fourteen” the top ten grades will be averaged.

## 3 The assessment of this course relates to the course objectives in the following ways:

**The quizzes** reward students who have read the material before the lecture and who are regular in class attendance. Lectures are interactive and assume prior exposure to the material through the readings. Such a preparation will facilitate students achieving course objectives.

**The essays** will encourage students to pursue their own interests in the subject through formulating their own research question(s) in an exploration of primary and secondary sources. In the essays, students will be exposed first-hand to the issues raised in scholarly analysis and will develop the knowledge and the skills necessary to critically evaluate scholarly studies of materials they have studied for themselves.

**The takehome test** allows students to demonstrate their grasp of the material covered in the course and their understanding of the themes addressed, and creates an opportunity to review and reflect on what they have learned in the course as a whole.

## 4 **This course is delivered through a combination of lectures and tutorials.**

The **lecture programme** introduces new material that incorporates and complements the reading assignment. Generally students will be provided with an outline of the lecture at the beginning of each lecture. This is to encourage thinking and interaction during the lecture instead of writing copious notes and tuning out. The lecture programme does not cover the entire course content; lectures are complementary to the students' reading and to tutorial discussions. Tutorials are an opportunity for discussion and fuller participation in their learning experience. Students are expected to attend each tutorial. In cases of justified absence, satisfactorily written assignments (750 words per tutorial) or other alternative projects related to the material (film reviews) will substitute for attendance.

The lecture programme does not cover the entire course content. Lectures are important, but they must be viewed as complementary to your own reading and to tutorial discussions.

- 5 **The mandatory requirements** for this course are 1) the submission of two essays and the final takehome test and 2) attendance at 80% of the lectures and 100% of the tutorials. Attendance will be recorded by quizzes for lectures and by signature at tutorials.
- 6 **Required texts:**  
There is a course reader available at the Victoria Book Store. In addition *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* is available in the Victoria Book Store.
- 7 **Taping of lectures:** All students in the School of Art History, Classics and Religious Studies are welcome to use audio-tapes to record lectures. If you want to do this, please see your lecturer, tutor or the relevant programme administrator and complete a disclaimer form which advises of copy right and other relevant issues.
- 8 **Work-load: (recommendation of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences):**  
For 300-level 24 points one trimester courses, the working party on workloads and assessments recommends 16 hours per week. An average student should spend 13 hours per week for preparation, reading and writing in addition to attendance at lectures and tutorials.
- [300 – level                      1 trimester                      24 points                      16 hours]

- 9 **General University Statutes and Policies**  
Students should familiarise themselves with the University's policies and statutes, particularly the Assessment Statute, the Personal Courses of Study Statute, the Statute on Student Conduct and any statutes relating to the particular qualifications being studied; see the Victoria University Calendar or go to the Academic Policy and Student Policy sections on:

<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/policy>

This website also provides information for students in a number of areas including Academic Grievances, Student and Staff conduct, Meeting the needs of students with impairments, and student support/VUWSA student advocates.

## 10 Academic integrity and plagiarism

Academic integrity means that university staff and students, in their teaching and learning are expected to treat others honestly, fairly and with respect at all times. It is not acceptable to mistreat academic, intellectual or creative work that has been done by other people by representing it as your own original work.

Academic integrity is important because it is the core value on which the University's learning, teaching and research activities are based. Victoria University's reputation for academic integrity adds value to your qualification.

The University defines plagiarism as presenting someone else's work as if it were your own, whether you mean to or not. "someone else's work" means anything that is not your own idea. Even if it is presented in your own style, you must acknowledge your sources fully and appropriately. This includes:

- Material from books, journals or staff
- The work of other students or staff
- Information from the Internet
- Software programs and other electronic material
- Designs and ideas
- The organization or structuring of any such material

Find out more about plagiarism, and how to avoid it, on the University's website:

<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/plagiarism.aspx>

11 **Use of Turnitin:** Student work provided for assessment in this course may *be* checked for academic integrity by the electronic search engine <<http://www.turnitin.com>>. Turnitin is an online plagiarism prevention tool which identifies material that may have been copied from other sources including the Internet, books, journals, periodicals or the work of other students. Turnitin is used to assist academic staff in detecting misreferencing, misquotation, and the inclusion of unattributed material, which may be forms of cheating or plagiarism. *At the discretion of the School, handwritten work may be copy typed by the School and subject to checking by Turnitin.* You are strongly advised to check with your tutor or the course coordinator if you are uncertain about how to use and cite material from other sources. Turnitin will retain a copy of submitted materials on behalf of the University for detection of future plagiarism, but access to the full text of submissions will not be made available to any other party.

## 12 Manaaki Pihipihinga Maori and Pacific Mentoring programme (FHSS & FCA)

Academic Mentoring for Maori and Pacific students studying at all levels in the above Faculties. Weekly sessions for an hour with a mentor to go over assignments & any questions from tutorials or lectures. Registered students can use the facilities study rooms & computer suite, at any time, at Kelburn & Pipitea. There is a mature student and Post grad network. If you would like to register as a mentor or mentee please contact or pop in & see the coordinator, Melissa Dunlop, Programme Coordinator, 109 D, 463 6015, Email: [Maori-Pacific-Mentoring@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:Maori-Pacific-Mentoring@vuw.ac.nz), 14 KP: back courtyard

13 **Supplementary Materials:** A website of materials related to RELI 329 is being maintained in Blackboard. You can find it by visiting <http://blackboard@vuw.ac.nz>.

14 **Evaluation:** This course will be evaluated by UTDC.

## Lecture Programme

**Lecture Programme and required readings:** The required readings are essential background for the lectures/tutorials and should be completed **before each lecture**. Additional readings might be added during the semester. Tutorials further discuss the readings.

**3 March Introduction to the Course:**

**Overview, Colonialism, Imperialism, and Nationalism**

**10 March Fundamentalism/Religious Nationalism: Oppositional Reactions to  
Modernity**

**17 March Wahhabism: Classic Islamic Religious Nationalism**

**24 March Afghanistan: The Taliban**

**31 March Film: *The Kite Runner***

**7 April Iran and the Iranian Revolution + "Iran: Adrift in a Sea of Blood"**

---

### **Mid Trimester break (13<sup>th</sup> April – 26<sup>th</sup> April 2009)**

**MID-TERM BREAK-REQUIRED READING:** *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf*  
[GTS] [this makes up for three classes with no reading]

---

**28 April Mosque Visit in Wellington [3 questions on GTF]**

**5 May Sufism in the Modern World**

**12 May Women in Islam – four guest speakers (first hour) and the art of Shirin Neshat the second hour.**

**ESSAY 2 DUE 15 May**

**19 May The Special Case of Turkey and Fethullah Gülen**

**26 May Islam and Democracy**

**2 June Film TBA**

## Tutorial Programme

Week beginning

3 March

*No tutorials*

10 March Tutorial on fundamentalism

*Question to consider:* What is the GWT and how does it relate to the Agrarian Age and the High Tech Era? How do the rise of nationalism and the reaction of fundamentalists relate to these developments?

17 March

No tutorials

24 March Tutorial on the Taliban

*Question to consider:* Given the previous class on Wahhabism, discuss what Wahhabi principles the Taliban exaggerated even further (actually Pashto tribal customs) to create a hyper-Wahhabi state in Afghanistan.

31 March Tutorial on *The Kite Runner*

7 April

*No tutorials*

Mid Trimester break (13<sup>th</sup> April – 26<sup>th</sup> April 2009)

27 April

*No tutorials*

5 May Tutorial on sufism

*Question to consider:* What is the appeal of sufism and why is still so important in the modern world?

12 May Tutorial on Muslim women

*Question to consider:* Considering what you have read *about* Muslim women, how does this harmonize (or not) with actual first-person accounts of women's experience?

19 May

*No tutorials*

26 May

*No tutorials*

2 June Tutorial to discuss film

## Logistics of Essays

- 1 Essays must be placed in the locked essay box located near the programme administrator's window (HU 318) and students must date and sign the essay register when submitting an essay. No responsibility will be taken for work pushed under doors, or for which there is no record. Students should keep a copy of all their work until it is returned.

The first essay is to be submitted by 31 March 2009

The second essay to be submitted by 15 May 2009

Please put your name on the **BACK** of the last page of the assignment only

- 2 Penalties for late essays / assignments:
  - 2 percent per 24 hours will be deducted for late essays up to a maximum of 14 days, after that essays may could towards course requirements but will receive 0%;
  - essays submitted more than two weeks late will not be accepted for assessment unless prior written arrangement has been made with the course coordinator;
  - Essays submitted late due to medical reasons must be given to the programme administrator accompanied by a doctor's or other appropriate certification.

## DOING Essays

In devising an essay topic remember that an essay should answer a clearly defined question and develop an argument. An essay must offer a consistent interpretation of a specific issue, sustained by appropriate evidence, and it must be presented in accordance with the departmental guidelines. Please put your name on the **BACK** of the last page of the essay.

### SOURCES –

#### HERE IS THE SCOOP:

There is a massive *Encyclopaedia of Islam* published by E.J. Brill BP40 E56 [with an electronic version for keyword searching] and another *The Oxford encyclopedia of the modern Islamic world*.

Before even beginning to search on the web go to the best site for reliable information on Islam: [www.uqa.edu/islam](http://www.uqa.edu/islam) **These are the sources to have in your bibliography before any other websources.**

### On Wikipedia –

Wikipedia's founder, Jimmy Wales, says he wants to get the message out to college students that they shouldn't use it for class projects or serious research.

Mr. Wales says that he gets about ten e-mail messages a week from students who complain that Wikipedia has gotten them into academic hot water. "They say, 'Please help me. I got an F on my paper because I cited Wikipedia'" and the information turned out to be wrong, he says. But he said he has no sympathy for their plight, noting that he thinks to himself: "For God sake, you're in college; don't cite the encyclopedia."

The sources cited in Wikipedia, however, can be of use – so you can use it as a bibliographic source to lead you to other sources, which you can then critically examine.



**A Selected Bibliography of books pertaining to Islam available on Reserve in Victoria Library is posted on Blackboard.**

## Essay one

[no cover sheets; name written only on back of last page]

This is a two-part project and you need to do both parts. See the reading list in this course outline for books at VUW library on reserve for you to use as a start. There will also be many articles by these individuals on Library databases and the web. Start with those primary sources and then go to the web and access the web pages of these individuals.

### Part 1

From the list below you will write a 750-word exposé on one person who presents Islam and/or Muslims negatively. Include a very brief biography and intellectual history [maximum 250 words] and show clearly, with short quotes, **how** this person goes about their anti-Islam/Muslim agenda. Detail their presuppositions and arguments.

**The cast to choose from:** Fouad Ajami, Bernard Lewis, Ayaan Hirsi, Robert Kramer, Fareed Zakaria, Daniel Pipes, , Thomas Friedmann, Francis Fukuyama, Patricia Crone, Ibn Warraq (pseudonym).

### Part 2

From the list below you will write a 1250-word critical analysis on one 20<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup>- century Muslim thinker. Again, include a brief biography and intellectual history [375 words maximum], outline how they deal with modernity, Islam, tradition etc., and then critically argue why or why not you think their ideas are appropriate for the problems facing the Muslim world today.

**The cast to choose from:** Jamal al-din Afghani, Muhammad Iqbal, Rashid Rida, Ali Shariati, Ayatullah Khomeini, Muhammad Khatami, Nasr Abu Zayd, Muhammad Arkoun, Fatima Mernissi, Abdulkarim Soroush, Fazlur Rahman, Chandra Muzaffar, Tariq Ramadan, Khalid Abou El Fadl, Shirin Ebadi.

## Essay 2

[no cover sheets; name written only on back of last page]

1. This essay has a good deal of latitude; you can address anything that touches on the contemporary Islamic world except democracy and human rights [because you will get a chance to do that on the final exam]. Self-chosen topics must be cleared with the lecturer. By 1 May you should have a topic, a possible thesis, and sufficient sources. Please email all of this to me to confirm or better yet, give it to me in class on paper. **Not doing this in a timely manner will result in a five-point reduction in the essay grade.** Then please start writing.

The thesis should be clear, provocative if possible, and followed by a synopsis of your argument – ideally all on the first page. Take a stand.

Please make sure your essay is polished – at least two rewrites are necessary. Have your flatmate or friend give you feedback. This is how one improves writing. Rushing at the last minute is counterproductive.

**Some possible topics:**

- 1) The Iranian revolution is peculiar to Iran and 12er Shiism and therefore cannot be duplicated in a Sunni Islamic country.
- 2) Although Turkey officially has a secular government, much of the current tensions in Turkey today stem from the fact that the Turkish people are rather religious.
- 3) Political Islam is/is not a solution for the problems facing Islamic societies today (pick a specific country).
- 4) American efforts in Afghanistan since 9/11 have/have not improved the lot of the Afghan people; the solution is \_\_\_\_\_.
- 5) The Wahhabis have/have not been quite successful in their influencing the course of contemporary Islam (pick a country).
- 6) Sufism (be very specific what kind of Sufism) is a better long-range solution for the ills of Muslim societies than political action.
- 7) If there were only one aspect one could change in Islamic societies to effect the most long-lasting adaptation to the modern world, it would be: economic, education, politics, religion, or \_\_\_\_\_ (pick one).
- 8) Pick an Islamic country that we have not discussed in class and a particular issue – discuss it analytically using the categories of imperialism, colonialism, nationalism, and fundamentalism as appropriate.
- 9) Pick a reformist (not terrorist) Islamist group like the Tablighi Jamaat, Jamaat Islami, Ahmadiyya, Wahhabiyya giving a brief background, their modus operandi, goals, relative success, and your critical analysis of their activities.

**Take-home Exam:** There are two questions and you answer both of them. Please hand in BOTH parts stapled together WITH page numbers. 1.5 spacing if you use MSWORD. NO cover sheets. Please put your name on the BACK of the last page of the exam.

**Part 1** You have been suddenly appointed as an advisor to the NZ Ministry of Foreign Affairs. They basically think that the Islamic world is a threat to the West, which means it is a threat to New Zealand. Number your answer 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3 please. [1000-1250 words total for Part 1].

- 1) To win their confidence you explain the nature of fundamentalism, nationalism, and imperialism in the context of the Islamic world and cite examples from Iran, Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, and Turkey to show the roots of conflict within the Islamic world.
- 2) Using the following Muslim intellectuals (some may not be applicable but use as many as possible), Gülen, Mernissi, Sourush, Shariati, and Abou El Fadl, show them how there are Muslims who seek to reform Islam to make it more harmonious with the modern world.
- 3) Argue whether you think the Islamic world is or is not a threat to the West as you conclude your report.

Under no circumstances are you to use other sources than what we have used in class.

**Part 2** With the success of your previous report, you are now writing as a UN consultant on the topic, “Is there any hope for democracy and human rights in the Islamic world?” Here you will share your knowledge of discussions concerning democracy and human rights. Formulate a thesis and an argument. In your argument consider the following in this order: Begin with your overall thesis and argument [200-250 words] and then label 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3 discussing the next three points. [1000-1250 words total for Part 2]

1. Is the development of a “progressive Islam” in the world related to increasingly democratic societies. Why or why not? Utilize as many of the five intellectuals listed in Part One as possible.
2. Explain how the role of Muslim women in the modern world influences the development of democracy. You will need to explain the differences of cultural assumptions here. It is important to use lecture notes from the class on women and the mosque visit. No out-of-class sources.
3. To what extent does the relationship between Wahhabism, fundamentalism, and nationalism influence democratic movements? Give examples from Saudi Arabia, Iran, Afghanistan, and Turkey that we had in class. No outside sources please.

**This makes 2000-2500 words total for the exam.**

Please do not duplicate information in between the two questions. Your answers should be very well crafted –beyond the level of your tutorial assignments. You have had 3 months to ponder these questions.