

ISLAM IN THE MODERN ERA
HIS-REL 267-01 (SPRING 2016)
GRINNELL COLLEGE

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Throughout our lives, we are members of myriad communities, some intensely local and others more distant and abstract. What is the nature of the attachments that draw us into these communities? Toward what ends (goals) do these communities exist? Who decides what these goals are and how best to reach them? What are our responsibilities to others in our communities? What are the bases of these responsibilities? We can just as easily ask these questions about communities distant from us in time and space—they are, in other words, the kinds of questions appropriate to humanistic inquiry. In this course, we will be asking them in specific relation to Muslim communities in Egypt and South Asia during the modern period. Of particular concern are the historical processes through which conceptions of community changed during this time, most especially regarding the idea of the common good or, in other words, the goals of collective life. After establishing a framework for our investigation, we will turn to a general account of how Muslim communities defined and maintained collective life prior to the modern era. We will then explore modern colonial histories in Egypt and South Asia, investigating reforms in many areas related to collective life, such as education and law, as well as the religious reform movements that emerged over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Together, these areas of inquiry will help us understand how Muslim communities in these contexts came to ask—and answer—the above questions in transformed ways during the modern period, especially concerning the place of religion in collective life.

COURSE TEXTS:

Samira Haj, *Reconfiguring Islamic Tradition*

Wael Hallaq, *An Introduction to Islamic Law*

Charles Tripp, *Islam and the Moral Economy*

Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam*

These texts form the backbone of our course, but throughout the semester we will also be working with articles or excerpts from books. Some of these readings are accessible via “Library Resources” on our Blackboard course site, in which case they will have an “R” next to them on the syllabus, or on the course site itself, in which case they will have “pweb” next to them.

in our course. In the end, your (individual and collective) engagement with the course will be a significant determinant of what kind of experience we have together.

Vocabulary Quiz: 5%

Weekly Journal: 10%

Each week, you will be responsible for writing approximately 250-300 words relating to course readings and discussion. For the first three weeks, your journal entries will be brief treatments of the readings built around the above “scholarly source” reading questions as well as a note about something from readings or discussion that was of particular interest to you, that helped you grab onto some of the larger ideas or themes we discuss. After this initial period, your weekly entries should include (pared down) treatments of sources (using readings questions as appropriate), a statement about how the reading relates to the idea of a tradition, which as you will see is a core theoretical framework for the course, and something from the readings or discussion that was of particular interest to you. I also encourage you to use the journal as a means of keeping track of your personal reflections on course material and discussion. I will not formally grade/comment on each of your journal entries (though I will be reading them), but the more time and effort you put into them the easier your reflection essays, which I describe below, will be. The “points of interest” from your journals will also figure centrally into your final essay, and any personal reflection you do will make the final reflection essay easier. You will be responsible for completing a total of thirteen journal entries. They should be complete by noon on Sunday. The journal is thus the foundation for a third learning goal

In the second half of the semester, you will each work with a group to plan and lead small-group activities for a class sessions around questions related to course material.

Final Essay: 15%

You will complete a five-to-seven-page, double-spaced, essay drawing together course materials and themes. Successful essays will use at least five of the points of interest you articulated in your weekly journals to illuminate what you consider to be the course "thesis."

Final Reflection: 5%

Reflecting the larger liberal arts and humanistic settings for the course, this final three-page assignment provides you with an opportunity for more personal reflection about how the course may or may not have affected the way you think about one or more of the core questions of the class. Specific reference to journal entries a plus.

Course Policies:

- Email policy part I: I am generally good about returning email in a reasonable amount of time. Please always reach out to your colleagues first with logistical questions about our course; you can do so via the email function on the course site. If no one can figure out the answer, then by all means get in touch. You can always ask in class, too, and you will find that I am quite accessible outside of class. I'd much rather meet you in person—and you can email to set up an appointment! [This policy does not apply to real emergencies.]
- Email policy part II: I encourage you to use email to share interesting news or course-related information you come across. This is actually a great way to help promote a collective learning experience.
- Unless I instruct otherwise, submit all written work to elfenbei.grinnell@gmail.com. Please be sure to submit all work as pdf. The subject heading of your submission should include "HIS-REL 267" and the name of the assignment. Assignments are always due by 5 p.m. on the due date.
- Know that I am pre-disposed to saying no to requests for extensions. I provide plenty of notice for each of the assignments—it is your responsibility to plan your time accordingly. That said, please do not be shy about approaching me for an extension if you have extenuating circumstances. It is essential to keep lines of communication open.
- If I suspect that you are using computers in class for anything other than note taking or document viewing, you will lose your computer privileges for the remainder of the semester. (If I suspect that you are texting in class I will ask that you leave your phone with me at the start of each class. Cell phones should be set on silent.)
- If you are involved in an extracurricular activity that will take you away from campus be sure to let me know beforehand. Regardless of the reason (except for dire family emergency, hospitalization), if I do not hear from you before you miss class I will assume you are simply skipping class.

RE-FORMING COMMUNITY, RE-FORMING ISLAM: LAW AND EDUCATION

February 18

- Zaman, The Ulama in Contemporary Islam, 1-37
- Group Work: Divorce in Colonial South Asia

February 23: SHORT ESSAY DUE

- Zaman, The Ulama in Contemporary Islam, 60-86

February 25

- Asad, "Thinking about Secularism and Law in Egypt" (R)
- Muhammad 'Abduh, "The Necessity of Religious Reform" (pweb)

March 1

- Starrett, Putting Islam to Work, 3-19 (R)

March 3

- Starrett, Putting Islam to Work, 23-61 (R)
- Archival Materials Relating to Educational Reform (pweb)

RE-FORMING COMMUNITY, RE-FORMING ISLAM: ECONOMICS

March 8: FIRST REFLECTION ESSAY DUE

- Tripp, Islam and the Moral Economy, 1-45

March 10

- Tripp, Islam and the Moral Economy, 46-76

March 15

- Individual Meetings

March 17

- Individual Meetings

March 18: Mid-Term Due by 5 p.m.

SOURCES OF RE-FORM

April 5

- Haj, Reconfiguring Islamic Tradition, 1-30 and 67-108

April 7

- Haj, Reconfiguring Islamic Traditions, 109-152

April 12

- Hallaq, An Introduction to Islamic Law, 115-139
- Haj, Reconfiguring Islamic Tradition, 153-187
- Archival Materials Relating to Legal Reform Re: Divorce (pweb)

NEW TRADITIONS? ECONOMICS AND MORAL ECONOMY

April 14

- Tripp, Islam and the Moral Economy, 77-102

April 19

- Tripp, Islam and the Moral Economy, 103-150

April 21

- Charles Tripp, Islam and the Moral Economy, 150-201
 - Focus your reading on 150-167, skim remainder
- Sayyid Qutb, Social Justice in Islam, pp. 37-49, 51-53 and 79-92 (pweb)

NEW TRADITIONS? COMMUNITY AND POLITICAL FORMATIONS

April 26

- Hallaq, An Introduction to Islamic Law, 140-162
- Zaman, The 'Ulama in Contemporary Islam, 87-110
- Mawdudi, Political Theory of Islam (pweb)

April 28

- Zaman, The 'Ulama in Contemporary Islam, 144-180 (181-192 recommended)

REFLECTIONS ON THE COMMON GOOD

May 3: SECOND REFLECTION