

IS6410, “Muslim Faith and Feeling”

First Semester, September – December 2005

GH 102 – Tuesday and Thursday, 10:40am - 12:00 noon

Instructor: Mark N. Swanson

BH 100, 641-3227 (*office*), 917-7142 (*home*), mswanson@luthersem.edu

Office hours: TBA

A. Course objectives

1. That students acquire a general understanding of the structure of Islamic faith and practice that will be practically useful for those whose ministries will lead them into encounters with Muslims, and an adequate foundation for further study for those who intend to pursue further study in Islam and Muslim-Christian relations.
2. That students learn to approach the study of Islam in a way that is humble and respectful, intellectually rigorous, and alert to and unafraid of addressing difficult questions.
3. That students learn something about the vast variety of resources (print, video, internet) on Islam, and how to find and use them.
4. That students be introduced to the Qur’an (in English translation) and gain some skill in reading it.
5. That students learn something of the texture of Muslims’ lives, both through personal encounters and interviews, and through the reading of biographies, memoirs and scholarly studies.
6. That the entire enterprise be wrapped in prayer, and that the classroom atmosphere be such that a conversation between Christian and Islamic convictions and concerns is welcomed.

B. Textbooks

Required texts

Abdalati, Hammudah. *Islam in Focus*. Islamic International Book Center, 1993 [1975]. An interesting introduction by a Muslim with *lots* of detail about practical matters of life and worship.

Abou El Fadl, Khaled. *The Place of Tolerance in Islam*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2002. Professor Abou El Fadl is quickly becoming one of the leading “progressive Muslim” voices in North America. In this little volume he sparks off a fascinating debate with Muslim and Christian respondents.

Denny, Frederick Mathewson. *An Introduction to Islam*. 2nd edition. New York: Macmillan, 1994. Our principal textbook. An attractive and well written introduction by a fine

scholar. The annotated bibliography is especially valuable. It is, unfortunately, *very* expensive: we'll have a couple of copies on Reserve in the Library.

Watt, W. Montgomery. *Muhammad: Prophet and Statesman*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961. A useful introduction that takes a conservative but not uncritical stance toward the early Muslim biographical material.

Also required: an English translation of the Qur'ān's meaning. It would be good if everyone had a copy of Pickthall. I'm interested in testing Cleary.

Abdullah Yusuf Ali. *The Glorious Qur'ān*. Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, 1975 (and many reprints). Includes both the Arabic text and an amplified English translation. The footnotes are helpful, although sometimes idiosyncratic.

Arberry, A.J. *The Koran Interpreted*. New York: Touchstone, 1996 [1955]. A brilliant translation that captures something of the literary force of the Arabic. Unfortunately, the lack of verse numbers makes it difficult to use in a classroom setting.

Cleary, Thomas. *The Qur'an: A New Translation*. Starlatch Press: 2004. The translation reads very well and the layout is well suited to classroom work. Several Muslim organizations are happily selling it. I have not yet seen a thorough review.

Dawood, N.J. *The Koran*. (Various editions by Viking and Penguin.) The English translation reads extremely well. Excellent for someone who wants to get a quick idea of the Qur'ān's contents.

Pickthall, Marmaduke. *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran*. New York: Mentor, 1956 (and many reprints). A "standard" English translation, generally approved by Muslim authorities. Even though it does not read particularly well, it has been my first choice for classroom work.

Compare these and other translations for yourself!

Recommended introductions, on Reserve in the Library

Esposito, John L. *Islam, the Straight Path*. Revised 3rd edition. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005. [The previous editions are also helpful.] The second half of this book is an excellent introduction to political and ideological currents in the modern and contemporary world.

Miller, Roland E. *Muslim Friends: Their Faith and Feeling*. St. Louis: Concordia, 1995. A good introduction by the founder of the Islamic Studies Program at Luther Seminary.

Schimmel, Annemarie. *Islam: An Introduction*. Albany: SUNY, 1992. A short, beautifully written introduction. Schimmel knew the mystical and poetic aspects of Islam like no one else.

Other books on Reserve in the Library

Ahmed, Akbar. *Islam Today: A Short Introduction to the Muslim World*. London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2002 [1999]. A very readable survey. Akbar Ahmed is also the host of the *Living Islam* series of videocassettes, also on Reserve in the Library.

Guillaume, A. *The Life of Muhammad: A Translation of [Ibn] Ishaq's Sirat Rasul Allah*. Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1955. An English translation of the oldest Muslim biography of Muhammad. Full of fascinating material.

an-Nawawi, *Forty Hadith*. Translated by Ezzedin Ibrahim. Islamic Texts Society, 1997. A famous collection that many Muslims have memorized.

Padwick, Constance E. *Muslim Devotions: A Study of Prayer-Manuals in Common Use*. London: SPCK, 1961, and recently reprinted by Oneworld. How Muslims pray *beyond* the ritual prayer. A classic!

Peters, F.E. *Muhammad and the Origins of Islam*. Albany: SUNY, 1994. A recent and rich treatment from Islamic sources.

Sells, Michael A. *Approaching the Qur'an: The Early Revelations*. Ashland, OR: White Cloud Press, 1999. This is the book that a few years ago created a stir at the University of North Carolina.

Watt, W. Montgomery Watt. *Bell's Introduction to the Qur'an*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1970 (and reprinted). There is much that is very useful in this book, especially its appendices.

We'll add more books to this list as we go along, and will also start a "Reserve File" of important articles. Note that I have also placed a number of videos on Reserve, such as the six-video series "Living Islam" (hosted by Akbar Ahmed) and "Secret Mecca" (a fascinating look at the Pilgrimage to Mecca from the inside).

C. Assignments

1. Disciplined reading, and preparation for and participation in class.
2. I recommend that each student keep a special notebook for this class. Note down in it anything that especially strikes you – whether as beautiful, insightful, disturbing, or strange – in your readings or in our discussions, as well as questions that occur to you. Take note too of the reading that you do outside of the assignments, including discoveries in newspapers and magazines and on the internet. Claims and counter-claims about Islam are swirling about us. Let's take note, share with one another, and try to make sense of what we can.
3. Depending on students' schedules, we will try to arrange some events outside of class (receiving visitors, trips to a local mosque or mosques, etc.). Dr. Swanson will be traveling a couple of times during the semester, and intends to make up lost time in sessions in the evening (or over lunch?).

4. Five writing assignments:

- (a) **Due September 27.** Carefully read a surah of the Qur'ān that was revealed at Mecca. (except for surah 50, which I claim for teaching purposes.) Do you discern any structure in the surah? What are its themes? Write a short paper (3-4 pages) with your observations, and be prepared to share them in class.
- (b) **Due in early October** (at an informal session to be scheduled). Write a short paper (2-4 pages) in response to Khaled Abou El Fadl, *The Place of Tolerance in Islam*. What strikes you, as you read this volume? What have you learned? What questions are you left with? Be prepared to share your reactions/discoveries/questions.
- (c) **Due October 27.** Much discussion was stirred a couple of years ago by an article published in the *New York Times*, and subsequently in the *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, entitled "Scholars Are Quietly Offering New Theories of the Koran." Read the article and react to some aspect of it. You may want to investigate the work of a scholar mentioned in the article. Alternatively, you may react to some other newspaper story or magazine article which mentions the Qur'ān. The resulting paper should be about 5 pages long. Be prepared to share your discoveries in class.
- (d) **Due November 29.** Choose some practical issue of life that may be of concern to Muslims in the Twin Cities. Have a conversation on this issue with two or three Muslims. Write a short paper (2-3 pages) and be prepared to report on your findings in class.
- (e) The final paper (10-12 pages?) should be a study of a contemporary Muslim or one who has lived in the past half-century. (A possible alternative: a fictional character in a novel written by a Muslim.) To the extent that you can, give a sense of this person's life story and spiritual and intellectual development. On **December 13/15** students will be invited to make brief presentations on their papers in class. The polished paper is due in the instructor's mailbox on **December 20**.

D. Grading

- 30% class readiness and participation
- 10% for each of the four short papers/presentations
- 30% final paper/presentation

If you are not an M.Th. or Ph.D. student and if you want a letter grade, please remember to submit the appropriate grade request form (with the grade request line in the bottom right hand corner checked). I strongly encourage M.A. and M.Div. students who are intending to pursue doctoral work to take the course for a grade.

E. Provisional schedule

An asterisk * indicates that an assignment is due at this class.

Date	Lecture Topic	Required readings from Denny and Watt (others will be added later)
1: Sept. 6	Introduction to the course (rationale, syllabus, resources)	
2: 8	I. The Muḥammad of history and the Muḥammad of faith - Muḥammad's world	Denny (1-3), 4
13-15	(Dr. Swanson will be in the UK. Please get ahead by reading Denny 4-5, all of Watt. We'll schedule a make-up session.)	
3: 20	- Call stories; the earliest community	Denny 5; Watt 1-2
4: 22	- Meccan revelations (an introduction to the Qur'ān)	Watt 3-4
5:* 27	- Emigration and victory; contemporary appropriations	Watt 5-8
6: 29	- Neuralgic issues: interfaith relations, women, warfare	Watt 9
7: Oct. 4	- The spread of Islam; enduring issues (<i>ahl al-dhimmah</i> ; the "law of apostasy")	Denny 6
*Make-up session	To be scheduled for early October: discussion of <i>The Place of Tolerance in Islam</i> . Come with a reflection paper prepared.	
6	SEMINARY DAY OF SERVICE	
8: 11	II. Fundamental practices (<i>al-islām</i>) - The five Pillars	Denny 7
9: 13	- A sixth Pillar? <i>jihād</i>	
18	READING DAY	
10: 20	III. Fundamental beliefs (<i>al-īmān</i>) A. <i>al-tawhīd</i> (God's "unicity") - God	
11: 25	- Angels, <i>al-qadar</i> (God's "predetermination")	
12:* 27	B. <i>nubuwwa</i> ("prophethood") - Books: recent questions about the Qur'ān	Denny 8
13: Nov. 1	- Messengers: before Muḥammad, including Jesus	
14: 3	- Messengers: Muḥammad as teacher and model (<i>Ḥadīth</i>)	Denny 9
15: 8	C. <i>al-ma'ād</i> ("the Return"): Eschatology	
16: 10	IV. Elaborations of the basic structure - Creeds and theology (<i>kalām</i>)	Denny 10
17: 15	- Law (<i>sharī'ah</i>)	Denny 11

18:	17	- Mysticism (<i>taṣawwuf</i> = Sufism)	Denny 12-13
	22-24	THANKSGIVING BREAK	
19:*	Nov 29	V. Being a Muslim today - Student presentations: issues faced by Muslims today	Denny 14-15
20:	Dec. 1	- Recent Islamic history: grappling with modernity	Denny 16
21:	6	- The “Islamist” option: Islam as ideology of resistance	Denny 17
22:	8	- A faith for the (post-) modern world? (with emphasis on contemporary Islamic feminists)	
23:*	13	Presentation of student papers, leftover issues	
24:*	15	Presentation of student papers, leftover issues	
	20	FINAL PAPER DUE	