

ISLAM SYLLABUS FOR FALL 2016

First Session: Thursday, September 15, 2016

1. Class members and coordinators will introduce ourselves. Why are we interested in the topic? What are our experiences with Islam and Muslims? If you've been reading up on the subject, you may want to bring books to discuss and, perhaps, lend to others in the class.

2. Sign-up sheets will be circulated for presentations in Sessions Three through Ten.

3. We may have time to review the recommended book, Karen Armstrong's *Islam, a Short History*. In advance of our first class we'll email class members the book's 12-question discussion guide. This discussion guide is found at the end of some editions, but not all.

Second Session: Thursday, September 22, 2016

1. The life and lasting imprint of Muhammad. The Quran: What's special about Arabic?

2. The five pillars of Islam. Divisions during the early years of Islam (Sunni, Shia, Sufi)

Third Session: Thursday, September 29, 2016

1. Islam's empires; military expansion up to the Crusades (632 – 1200). The continuing effects of the Crusades (jihad and "just wars")

2. The Golden Age of Islam. Islam's preservation of classical learning. Spanish reconquest.

Fourth Session: Thursday, October 6, 2016

1. Ottoman Empire, rise and dissolution (1453 – 1924)

2. European colonialism, World War I

Fifth Session: Thursday, October 13, 2016

1. Modern diversity within Islam: Traditionalists vs Fundamentalists, Modernists vs. Westernizers.

2. Sharia Law. How does it vary from one region to another?

Sixth Session: Thursday, October 20, 2016

1. British and American petro-colonialism. Wahabism. Muslim nations since WW II. Treatment of women (How accurate is writer Ayaan Hirsi Ali?).

2. Guest speaker: Nick Boke, Providence educator who continues to work much of the year in Syria.

Seventh Session: Thursday, October 27, 2016

1. Ayatollah fatwa in 1989 to kill writer Salman Rushdie for heresy in his book, *The Satanic Verses*. Show BBC video on the subject.

2. Osama bin Laden fatwa. Sept 11, 2001.

Eighth Session: Thursday, November 3, 2016

1. Guest speaker: Kashif Chaudhry MD, Cranston. He is a member of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community in Sharon, MA. Currently completing a cardiac electrophysiology fellowship at Lahey Medical Center. He has served as chair of the Muslim Writers Guild

of America and published in the New York Times and other newspapers. Interests include human rights, and the fight for universal freedom of conscience.

2. Muslim interpretations of the “Arab spring.” Also ISIS, Syria, jihad.

Ninth Session: Thursday, November 10, 2016

Class visit to mosque, Masjid Al Islam, North Smithfield, and meeting with the mufti there for question and answer session.

Tenth Session: Thursday, November 17, 2016

1. Muslims in the U.S., featuring TED talk by Dalia Mogahed: *What Do You Think When You Look at Me?*
2. Summing up. What have we learned?

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