PSC 281 – ISLAM AND POLITICS
Furman University
Spring 2014

Instructor: A.Kadir Yildirim
Meeting Days and Times: Tuesdays and Thursdays 11:30-12:45
Meeting Location: Johns 101
Office Location: Johns 111N
Office Hours: Tuesdays and Wednesdays 9:00-10:30am, or by appointment
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COURSE DESCRIPTION AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

In an age where Islam has become virtually synonymous with violence and antagonism toward freedom, this course will venture to explore the “rich and diverse particularity” of Islamic political life. This course offers a unique perspective into Islam’s political doctrine as well as to the practice of this doctrine in the Muslim world throughout the history, which does not always align with the doctrine. Hence, the fundamental goal of this course is to present the diversity in Islam as it relates to politics. Among the topics to be covered in this course are the idea and principles of government in Islam, political Islam as a recent ideology, Islam and democracy, jihad and violence, Islamic state and shariah, and gender relations. By the end of this course, students should expect to obtain a more diverse picture of Islam, and the political life in Islam. This introduction should enable students to better understand political issues revolving around Islam and the contemporary Muslim world.

TEXTBOOKS:
The textbooks are available for purchase at Furman Bookstore. However, you may purchase them online at various booksellers such as Amazon.com or Barnes and Noble, including used copies. There are large portions of reading from all four books, and I encourage you to purchase all books. All other readings are available electronically on Moodle (http://courses.furman.edu).


COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES:

Vigorous classroom participation will be essential to making this course a success, as will timely completion of the readings. Always bring the readings to class. We will make frequent references to them.
**Attendance and Participation:** Attendance and in-class participation are important elements of learning in class. Students are expected to participate in and contribute to class discussions. The subject matter of this course may be particularly complex for some students; in order to facilitate the learning process, I encourage every student to ask questions where clarification is needed. It is my responsibility to introduce key concepts and subjects in a comprehensible manner; whenever I fail to do so, I encourage the students to remind me. At the same time, it is the students’ responsibility to come to class having read the required reading material. Prior exposition to the subject matter will greatly enhance chances of learning, and contribute to an interactive classroom atmosphere. Student participation in the classroom will positively affect your participation grade. In order to move beyond superficial commentaries that can be found in the media on a regular basis, I expect the students to avoid stereotypical comments and remarks. Students are free to take any positions they see reasonable, yet proper reasoning and empirical evidence should accompany arguments. Two free absences; students will lose 2 points (out of 100 points) for each unexcused missed class thereafter. An excused absence is defined as one accompanied by a doctor’s note or due to a university sponsored event.

**Reaction Papers:** For each class, students are expected to submit a question for discussion in class. The questions will be due on the day of class by 9:30 am. The basic idea behind these questions is not submitting basic/informational questions, but rather raising an important question or discussion point for the class. What students find interesting and puzzling will be part of what we will cover each class.

**Exams:** There will be two midterm exams and one final exam in this course. The exams will be a mixture of short answers and essay questions. Detailed information will be provided prior to each exam.

**Late Submission and Make-up Exam Policy:** Failing to submit your question on time will cause loss of ½ point for that submission. Failure to submit the question will result in 1 point loss. It is the student’s responsibility to turn in the assignment on the due date and time. Make-up exams are highly discouraged as they will be more difficult than on-time exams. Make-up exams will be given only for medical reasons, and I will need proper official documentation to this effect.

**Student Conduct:** As adults I expect every student to act responsibly in the classroom. Even though it is your choice to ignore what is happening in the classroom, I will not tolerate any behavior disrupting other students’ in-class learning. Consistent disruptive behavior will be reflected as a negative participation on your final grade. Examples of disruptive behavior include reading of not-course-related material (i.e. newspaper or magazine), eating, using cell phones, or leaving them on.

**Grading:**

- Participation: 15%
- Reaction papers: 15%
- Midterm Exam I: 20%
- Midterm Exam II: 20%
- Final Exam: 25%

**Academic Conduct:**

Academic conduct at Furman University is governed by the Academic Policies Committee according to the academic integrity policy (121.5). The term “academic misconduct” includes all forms of violation of academic integrity policy illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. The student engaging in academic misconduct will fail this class. See overview of Academic Integrity Policy for more information: [http://www2.furman.edu/sites/integrity](http://www2.furman.edu/sites/integrity).
It is essential that the arguments in your written work be your own, that quotations be properly attributed and placed within quotation marks, and that you specifically acknowledge sources whose arguments you are drawing on even if you do not quote them directly. Quoting or paraphrasing without attribution constitutes plagiarism. If you have questions or you are in doubt, I am happy to answer your questions on issues pertaining to academic honesty. I will examine research papers and exams for possible abuses of this policy; to this end, I use www.turnitin.com.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:

Students with disabilities will be appropriately accommodated, and should inform the instructor as soon as possible of their needs. The Office of Disability Services is located in the Earle Infirmary, Room 002. Website: http://www2.furman.edu/sites/disability.

COURSE SCHEDULE:

Introduction

We begin with the lay of the land…Who are the main actors? Who are the Muslims? Are there different kinds of Muslims? Who is the silent majority? Who is the fanatic minority? What is Islamophobia? Who are the Islamophobes? Which factors shape Islam’s perception in the West? Why?

January 14
- Introductions….Course Overview….

January 16

VIDEO – ISLAM: EMPIRE OF FAITH – JANUARY 16 @ 6:30 PM

January 21

January 23

Government, Opposition, and Sovereignty in Islam
What is Authoritarianism? Who holds the authority in Islam? Why is the conflict between Ali and Khawarij critical to understanding contemporary discussions of sovereignty/authority in Islam? Who interprets the Qur’an? Who is authorized to say what the Qur’an meant? What is the Constitution of Medina? What does Abou El Fadl mean by “irrepressible pluralism”? What is the Salafiya movement?

January 28

January 30

Political Islam
What is political Islam? Does it differ from Islam? When did it emerge? Why? How did religious and political factors shape its rise? What does the variation in the conceptualization of the role of Islam in self-proclaimed Islamic states imply for the authoritativeness of Islamism? Does political Islam hold the seeds of its own destruction?

February 4

February 6

February 11

February 13
Islam and Democracy

Is Islam incompatible with democracy? Why? Why not? What are some concepts from Islamic political terminology that could suggest compatibility? God’s sovereignty vs. people’s sovereignty? Does Islam protect political pluralism? What do Muslims think about democracy? Is there an inherent conflict between democracy and Sharia for Muslims? What is a Muslim democracy? What are the conditions that give rise to it?

February 18

February 20

Midterm I – February 25

February 27

March 4

Issues I – Gender

What is the Qur’anic perspective of women? Are men inherently superior to women in Islam? Why or why not? Why does Abou El Fadl focus on traditions (hadith) and not Qur’anic verses in making his case? Why do Muslim women cover/veil? Do Muslim women embrace Western values in terms of gender relations? Why or why not? What is the key difference in terms of the trajectories of Afghanistan and Iran? Are Muslim women in need of “saving”?

March 6
March 18

March 20

March 25

Issues II – Violence and Jihad
Does Islam Promote Violence? What is Jihad? What are the different definitions of Jihad? Why is force/violence condoned by different authors? What are their motives? There appears to be a constant dichotomous view of the world: Either proponent of the Islam or opposed/hostile to it…is there a third way?

March 27

Midterm II – April 1

April 3
April 8

April 15

**Issues III – Islamic State and Sharia**

What is Sharia? What is fiqh and how does it differ from Sharia? How does Islamic law work? What are madhabs? Who are the ulama? What were the political conditions that allowed Sharia to be sustainable before the modern times? How did colonization affect these conditions? Today, why do Muslims want Sharia? Is Sharia misogynistic? What is “Islamic State”?

April 17

April 22

April 24

April 29

**FINAL EXAM – MAY 2, 2014 (12:00-2:30 PM) – JOHNS HALL 101**