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Course: **RL130: World Religion Series: Introduction to Islam**

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Course Description:

In Introduction to Islam, we will begin with a review of the culture and religion of pre-Islamic Arabia, will survey the life of Muhammad, and review the origins, development, and content of the Qur'an, including the teachings and practices of Islam. We will then examine the formative period of Islamic civilization, the time of the four rightly guided caliphs and the Omayyad and Abbasid dynasties. We will turn to Sunni/Shiite split over issues of succession and authority and discuss Sufism and its poetic tradition. Finally, we will turn to spread of Islam worldwide and contemporary Islam. With ongoing anti-Islamic sentiment throughout the world, there is no better time to improve our understanding of one of the world's most important and influential religions and to prepare for discussing it with Christian and Muslim friends and neighbors.

Learning Outcomes of Wilmette Institute courses relevant to this course:

Knowledge:

- Demonstrate knowledge and interdisciplinary insights gained from the course and service learning.

Abilities:

- Independently investigate to discern fact from conjecture.
- Engage in public discourse, consultation, service learning, and consciousness raising in interdisciplinary, interfaith, and intercultural contexts.

Application:

- Apply knowledge, principles, insights, and skills to one's life and community

Course Objectives:

- Develop an understanding of the origin, teachings, development, and spread of Islam through the ages
- Analyze the impact of the principles and teachings of Islam on the lives of contemporary Muslims
- Demonstrate your understanding through postings in the course and, for credit students, reflection papers and a final paper.

Course Expectations and Guidelines:

This course is divided into one-week sessions after the 4-day orientation and introduction (Unit 1). It ends with a 3-day review and summary (Unit 12). All units include readings, activities, and an online discussion among course participants. The course has been structured so that it requires an estimated 6 hours per week of reading and discussion (credit and noncredit students), and 4 hours for essay writing (credit students).

Noncredit students will draft a personal learning plan (PLP) during Unit 1 to define their learning goals for the course. We recommend goals that will develop your personal capabilities and relate the material to the community around you. They should be achievable in and around your other daily tasks. During Unit 11, noncredit students will complete a self-assessment reviewing the extent to which they met the goals they set for themselves. They will have two additional weeks to complete any late course work.

We recommend that noncredit students choose a project (for example, a paper, art project, or slide show) to maximize their learning and prepare something they can share with others outside the course.

In order for noncredit students to be eligible to receive a **Certificate of Completion**, they must participate in a majority of the discussions, as well as complete a majority of available unit activities and the end-of-course self-assessment.

Credit students do not need to draft a personal learning plan because the course requirements for their work is set. Every week, they will write an essay (2-4 pages) on a question supplied in the unit. In addition, learners seeking credit from their university will submit a plan for their final project (15-page research paper or equivalent) to the lead faculty during unit 13. They will complete the paper over the 2-week period at the end of the course.

Noncredit and credit learners are assigned a mentor, who will periodically review their progress in the course and be available to discuss things with them.

The following guidelines will help noncredit and credit learners gain maximum benefit from their participation in the course and will contribute toward a rich and rewarding experience through dialogue with others.

- Complete the readings and activities for each unit. Afterwards, your first posting in the discussion area should make reference to the readings and activities in such a way that your instructor can tell you read the material and engaged in the activities.
- Post at least 2 message replies in the discussion area for each unit/session. Your first discussion posts within each unit should address the discussion topic and demonstrate understanding of the course/unit concepts. Additional postings should provide substantive comments to other participants that are thoughtful, relevant, and help to extend the discussion (i.e., a comment like “oh, that’s interesting” is NOT substantive). Credit students can post their weekly essays to the discussion forum as their contribution to the discourse or send it directly to their mentor.
- Choose at least 2 different days each session when you will participate in the discussions. We suggest posting at least once within the first few days of the session, with your second post at least two days before the next session begins. By contributing more than one post on different days, you will help the group develop rich ongoing discussions.
- If you post on time (i.e., within the time period of each unit on the course schedule), others will be able to read and respond to your post.
- Note that if you do not want everyone to read your posting, you can always send it privately to your mentor instead.
- We recommend that learners keep a course journal to help them keep track of their ideas as they work through the course.

Course Schedule:

Unit 1	Introduction to the Course and to Moodle	June 11-14, 2020
<p>In this unit, you will review the unit topics and dates, learn how to use Moodle (our course management system), and set up your user profile. Noncredit students develop a personal learning plan and learn how to post and reply in the discussion forums. Learners seeking university credit through their own university or an external agency will consult with their mentor to make sure their work will meet the standards of credit.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Parsons, Monique. <i>An American Mosque: Blending 7th Century Revelations with Midwest Suburbia</i>.		
Unit 2	Pre-Islamic Arabia	June 15-21
<p>This unit reviews Arabia before the birth of Islam with its religion and culture pertaining to polytheism and monotheism (Judaism & Christianity), the historical significance of Mecca and Medina, and the status of women.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><i>Boundless World History: Pre-Islamic Arabia</i>. Four sections - The Nomadic Tribes of Arabia, Arabian Cities, Culture and Religion in Pre-Islamic Arabia, Women in Pre-Islamic ArabiaShahîd, Irfan. <i>Pre-Islamic Arabia</i> <p>Learning Objectives: Describe and summarize Arab culture, religion, and society before the advent of Muhammad.</p> <p>Evaluation: Complete a reflection essay.</p>		
Unit 3	The Life of Muhammad	June 22-28
<p>This unit reviews the life and mission of the Prophet of Islam as embedded in the culture of pre-Islamic Arabia and late Antiquity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Watt, W. Montgomery. <i>Muhammad: Cambridge History of Islam</i>.Lapidus, Ira. <i>Muhammad: Preaching, Community and State Formation</i><i>Muhammad: Legacy of a Prophet</i> from the Unity Productions Foundation (video)Hazelton, Lesley. <i>The doubt essential to faith</i> (video) <p>Learning Objectives: Summarize the most important aspects of the mission of Muhammad.</p> <p>Evaluation: Complete a reflection essay.</p>		
Unit 4	The Qur'ân and Basic Islamic Teachings	June 29-July 5
<p>This unit reviews the origin, development, and content of the Qur'ân, the scripture of the Islamic dispensation, and explores many of the basic teachings, including "the five pillars".</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Haleem, M. Qur'ân and hadith. In T. Winter (Ed.)Qur'ân recitation (video)Three videos by Daniel Pschaida (video) <p>Learning Objectives: Summarize the origin and content of the Qur'an. Describe the Five Pillars and compare them to teachings in other religious traditions. Summarize and review other basic Islamic teachings.</p> <p>Evaluation: Complete a reflection essay.</p>		
Unit 5	The Four Rightly Guided Caliphs	July 6-12
<p>This unit is about the first four caliphs (Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, and 'Ali, 632-661) and how they shaped the history of early Islam. We will also learn about the first Islamic dynasty of the Umayyads (661-750) and their role.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Vaglieri, L. <i>The Patriarchal and Umayyad caliphates</i>		

<p>Learning Objectives: Describe the development of the caliphate through 750. Summarize some of the developments in the Islamic community during this period.</p> <p>Evaluation: Complete a reflection essay.</p>		
Unit 6	The Abbásid Dynasty	July 13-19
<p>In this unit we will study the second Islamic dynasty, the Abbasids, as it stands for the so-called golden age of Islam from 750 to 1258, when the Mongols sacked Baghdad and the fortunes of Islam declined in its heartland.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Abbasid Caliphate</i> from Encyclopedia Iranica • <i>Abbasid Caliphate</i> from Wikipedia <p>Learning Objectives: Summarize the development of the Abbasid caliphate. Describe the cultural, scientific, and religious achievements of the period.</p> <p>Evaluation: Complete a reflection essay.</p>		
Unit 7	Shi'ah Islam	July 20-26
<p>As soon as Muhammad died, His followers began to split into two groups: those who believed He appointed His cousin and son-in-law, `Ali, as His successor; and those who rejected `Ali's leadership claim for various reasons and sought a temporal leader for the Islamic community. This unit covers the split, the views of the two groups, their differing conceptions of leadership, and their differences in theology and practice.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Momen, Moojan. Introduction to Shi'i Islam: Shi'i History (27 pages) • Momen, Moojan. Introduction to Shi'i Islam: Shi'i Thought, Theology, and Belief (21 pages) • Sunni-Shia Harmony from Religion & Ethics News Weekly (video) • Sunni-Shi'a Difference Discussed (video) <p>Learning Objectives: Review and analyze the Shi'i/Sunni split. Summarize the differences in theology and practice between the two groups.</p> <p>Evaluation: Complete the reflection essay.</p>		
Unit 8	Sufism	July 27-Aug 2
<p>Sufism arose early in Islam, certainly in the first Islamic century. At first it was regarded as heretical, even anti-social, for some Sufis insisted that their personal relationship with God did not necessarily have to include obligatory prayer and fasting. Sufism has always been regarded with skepticism and some Sufis have been persecuted or even killed for their beliefs (al-Hallaj may be the greatest example; his dying words as he was burned at the stake were ana'l-haqq, "I am the Truth!"). Poetry emerged as an early medium for expressing Sufi ideas. It shaped Arabic literature and especially the Persian language, where poetry remains one of the most important genres of expression, if not the highest genre in the culture. Sufism also gradually influenced Islamic theology, which at first developed out of Qur'án study, then acquired ideas from philosophy, which was shaped by Greek learning.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schimmel, Annemarie. Islam: An Introduction, Mystical Islam and Sufi Brotherhoods (18 pages, a good overview of what is given more detail in the following two readings) • Schimmel, Annemarie. Mystical Dimensions of Islam, What is Sufism • Schimmel, Annemarie. Mystical Dimensions of Islam, Historical Outlines of Classical Sufism • Rippin, Andrew. Sufi Devotions: Muslims Their religious beliefs and practices (14 pages) • Turning to the Quran: Reflections on Learning to Whirl (2 pages) <p>Learning Objectives: Summarize the nature and basic aspects of Sufism.</p> <p>Evaluation: Complete a reflection essay.</p>		
Unit 9	Islam from 1258-1798	Aug 3-9
<p>In this unit, we will focus on the Ottomans, whose empire extended over all the Arab Middle East, modern Turkey, much of the Balkans, and north Africa. We will also look at Islamic Spain, where Christians, Jews, and</p>		

Muslims lived together in a remarkably productive culture that had a powerful influence on the development of Christian Europe.

- The Ottoman Empire from Wikipedia
- Islamic Spain (Andalus) from Wikipedia
- Safavid Iran (long; optional reading) from Wikipedia
- Lessons from the Golden Era of Andalusia. Al Jazeera World (video)

Learning Objectives: Summarize the major developments in the Ottoman Empire and in al-Andalus (Islamic Spain).

Evaluation: Complete a reflection essay.

Unit 10	The Spread of Islam Worldwide	Aug 10-16
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Islam has spread around the entire world. In this unit we will explore Islam in the United States, Europe, China, and other places where it is a minority faith.

- Haddad, Yvonne. The Globalization of Islam (31 pages)
- Stockman, Robert. The History of Islam in America (video)

Learning Objectives: Summarize the development of Islam as a minority religion in the west and China and explore differences with Middle Eastern Islam.

Evaluation: Complete a reflection essay.

Unit 11	Contemporary Islam	Aug 17-23
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All the major world religions arose at times when the vast majority of people lived short lives within a day's walk of where they were born, had very few opportunities, rarely were able to learn to read and write, were exposed to few cultures and ideas other than their own, and usually pursued the same occupations as their mother or father. Since the mid nineteenth century, railroads, newspapers, easy migration, extensive education, the extension of life through public health efforts, increasing prosperity, and many other developments have radically changed the milieu in which religions operate. For Islam, the fact that these changes largely originated outside the Islamic cultural sphere and were partially imposed or traumatically introduced resulted in a very complex response to modernity.

Islam in the Modern World

- The World's Muslims: Unity and Diversity (20 pages)
- McCants, William. Islamic Scripture Is Not the Problem and Funding Muslim Reformers Is Not the Solution (6 pages)
- Reform in Turkish Islam (4 pages)
- Islamic, yet integrated from the Economist (4 pages)
- Letters to a Young Muslim: Raising a Son to Understand the Pull of Extremism (4 pages)
- Syed, Yvonne Y. A Century of Islam in America

Shariah Law

- Noah Feldman, Why Shariah? (16 pages)
- McCants, William. The Foxhole: William McCants on ISIS, the Koran, and the future of the caliphate

Women In Islam

- Jafar, Afshan. Muslim women are...? (3 pages)
- Thanks to this Afghan woman, 6,000 imams have taken gender-sensitivity training (6 pages)
- Makki, Hind. Where's My Space to Pray in This Mosque?
- Hazelton, Lesley. Seeing Muhammad - and each other – whole. TEDxRainier (video)

Learning Objectives: Review and analyze how Islam has experienced and reacted to the modern world.

Evaluation: Complete a reflection essay.

Unit 12	Summary and Integration	Aug 24-26
<p>In this unit, we discuss the course in general and the relationship of the various topics to each other. Noncredit students will review the learning goals they set during Unit 1 and will complete a learning self-assessment. Credit students will submit a plan for their final project (15-page research paper or equivalent) to the lead faculty.</p> <p>Learning Objective and Evaluation: Write a final reflection essay.</p>		
Unit 13	Grace Period and Course Project	Aug 27-Sept 10
<p>Noncredit students will use these two weeks to catch up with any work they were unable to complete. Credit students will complete a research/reflection paper (approximately 15 pages including references) on a topic related to the course.</p>		
Completion		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noncredit students will receive a certificate of completion from the Wilmette Institute after course expectations are met. • Credit students will receive a transcript of their grade, which will also be sent to the external accrediting institution within a month of completion of the course. 		

Essay Grading and Assessment Rubric:

Exemplary - A (90-100%)	Very Good - B (89-80%)	Satisfactory - C (79-70%)	Sufficient - D (69-60%)	Inadequate - F (less than 60%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates superior proficiency in the content knowledge and skills of the unit. • Essay has well developed organization and grammar. Historical background and ideas are enumerated, described, and related to context insightfully with thoughtful comments that are strongly supported by evidence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates advanced proficiency in the content knowledge and skills of the unit. • Essay has good organization and grammar. Historical background and ideas are addressed with depth, clear understanding, and substantial supporting evidence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates basic proficiency in the content knowledge and skills of the unit. • Essay has definite organization and acceptable grammar. Historical background and ideas are minimal with some supporting evidence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates partial proficiency in the content knowledge and skills of the unit. • Essay has some organization. Historical background and ideas are generalizations, with unclear or limited supporting evidence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not demonstrate adequate levels of proficiency in the content knowledge and skills of the unit. • Essay lacks organization and grammar is poor. Historical background and ideas are minimal. Generalizations are vague or confusing and lack supporting evidence.

Category	Exceeds Standard	Meets Standard	Nearly Meets Standard	Does Not Meet Standard	No Evidence	Score
Thesis Statement	Clearly and concisely states paper's purpose, which is engaging and thought provoking	Clearly states paper's purpose	States paper's purpose	Incomplete and/or unfocused	Absent, no evidence	
Introduction	Introduction is engaging, states main topic, and previews structure of the paper	Introduction states main topic and previews structure of the paper	Introduction states main topic but does not adequately preview structure of the paper	No clear introduction or main topic and structure of the paper is missing	Absent, no evidence	
Body	Each paragraph has thoughtful supporting detail sentences that develop main idea	Most paragraphs have sufficient supporting detail sentences that develop main idea	Many paragraphs lack supporting detail sentences	Many paragraphs fail to develop main idea	Not applicable	
Organization and Structural Development of the Idea	Writer demonstrates logical and subtle sequencing of ideas through well-developed paragraphs; transitions are used to enhance organization	Paragraph development present but not perfected	Logical organization; organization of ideas not fully developed	No evidence of structure or organization	Not applicable	
Conclusion	Conclusion is engaging and restates thesis	Conclusion restates thesis	Conclusion does not adequately restate thesis	Incomplete and/or unfocused	Absent	
Mechanics	No errors in punctuation, capitalization and spelling	Almost no errors in punctuation, capitalization and spelling	Many errors in punctuation, capitalization and spelling	Numerous and distracting errors in punctuation, capitalization and spelling	Not applicable	
Usage	No errors in sentence structure and word usage	Almost no errors in sentence structure and word usage	Many errors in sentence structure and word usage	Numerous and distracting errors in sentence structure and word usage	Not applicable	
Citations and Bibliography	All cited works, both text and visual, are done in a correct format with no errors (Chicago Manual of Style preferred); citation is done appropriately (i.e., information needing citation is cited)	Some cited works, both text and visual, are done in correct format, and not all information needed citation is cited; inconsistencies are evident	Few cited works, both text and visual, are done in correct format, and not all appropriate citations are provided	Absent	Not applicable	

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Lapidus, I. (2013). Muhammad: Preaching, Community and State Formation, Ch. 4 of *Islamic Societies to the Nineteenth Century*. Cambridge University Press.

Letters to a Young Muslim: Raising a Son to Understand the Pull of Extremism

Makki, H. Where's My Space to Pray in This Mosque?

McCants, W. (2015). Islamic Scripture Is Not the Problem and Funding Muslim Reformers Is Not the Solution

McCants, W. (2016). The Foxhole: William McCants on ISIS, the Koran, and the future of the caliphate

Momen, M. *Introduction to Shi'i Islam: Shi'i History*

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Sufism from BBC Religions

Syed, Y. (1997). A Century of Islam in America. Haddad Reprinted from *Hamdard Islamicus* Vo. XXI, No. 4

Thanks to this Afghan woman, 6,000 imams have taken gender-sensitivity training

The World's Muslims: Unity and Diversity (2012)

Turning to the Quran: Reflections on Learning to Whirl

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