THEO 355 'ISLĀM (الإسلام)

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FALL SEMESTER 2009
355-01 TR 10:00-11:15 a.m. (Alter 201)
355-02 TR 11:30-12:45 p.m. (Alter 201)
Office: 121 Hinkle Hall
Office Hours: by appointment

ONLINE COURSE WEBSITE
http://www.jonathantan.org/355/
Please bookmark and visit the online course website regularly for
announcements, weekly course outlines, readings, and assignments.

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION & OBJECTIVES

This course, which is offered as an elective in the *Gender & Diversity Studies Minor* and a 300-level elective within the Undergraduate Core Curriculum for Theology, introduces students to the history and development of Islam from its early beginnings to the present. As an historical and thematic introduction, it will focus on the texts, doctrines, beliefs, theology, ethics, law, religious and social institutions, worship and pastoral practices, as well as ritual and aesthetic expressions within the various traditions of Islam. In order to understand the continuing appeal and growth of Islam in today's world, we will consider the wider social, cultural, political, and economic dimensions of Islam in general, and themes of community, identity constructions, personal experiences, movements, as well as their socio-cultural reproductions in the contemporary world. Where appropriate, we will address regional variations of Islamic faith and practices in North America, the Middle East, South and Southeast Asia.

By the end of this course, students should acquire a background in Islamic history and tradition, be acquainted with the historical milestones of the Islamic civilization under the various caliphates, as well as gain a good understanding of the diversity and plurality within Islam, the forces that drive Islam to be the fastest growing religion in the world, the various Islamic political, social and activist movements across the theological divide, historical and emerging Islamic ethical and theological paradigms, the capacity of Islam to shape current events, Islam's relations with other world religions, cultures, social, economic, political, and global institutions, as well as the future of Islam in the twenty-first century.

II. COURSE PROCEDURES & REQUIREMENTS

1 **Organizational Structure and Procedures of Class Discussion**
    Unless otherwise indicated in the Weekly Schedule/Readings, all class sessions will be held in the discussion format according to the following procedures:

(i)   The instructor will begin each class session by introducing the background, context, principal ideas or issues, key issues, and/or important events for class discussion on that day.

(ii)   For the remainder of the class, the instructor will moderate a discussion and analysis of the materials and relevant issues among the students.

2.   **Attendance and Participation**

As the primary format of this course is discussion, it is imperative that students complete all reading assignments before class, as well as attend and participate at all class sessions. Students are expected to do all the required readings assigned for every class before coming to class on that day, and encouraged to read the readings marked "Additional Readings," which complement the required readings and provide additional discussion for those who are interested to explore further. A 1% point will be deducted for each class you miss without excuse. Excuses will be accepted only for grave emergency situations (e.g., major illness with proper written documentation, death in family) or university-approved activities off-campus (e.g., varsity sports) and only at the instructor's discretion. Every two late arrivals will count as an unexcused absence and a 1% point will be deducted accordingly. Please note that any student with six or more unexcused absences will receive a grade of F for this course.

3.   **Papers**

Please visit the Papers section of this syllabus for detailed instructions and important deadlines.

4.   **Tutoring/Learning Assistance**

Xavier University's Learning Assistance Center provides one-on-one and group tutoring, assistance with general study skills, e.g., reading, note taking, time management, organization, learning styles and test taking, as well as services to students with disabilities. For more information, please contact Stephanie Mosier by phone at 756-3214 or by e-mail at mosier@xavier.edu. Referral by the instructor is also available on request.

5.   **Prohibition against the Use of Electronic Devices**

Please turn off all cellphones, smartphones, pagers, laptops, notebook and netbook computers, tablet PCs, PDAs, and other electronic devices when class is in session. Laptops, netbooks, notebook computers, and tablet PCs may not be used in this class. A first-time offender will receive a one-time warning and the confiscation of the electronic device in question for the duration of the class. Thereafter, subsequent violations will result in the loss of all extra credit privileges for this course, as well as the reduction of the student's final grade for this course by 5% for each violation.

6.   **Academic Honesty**

According to the provisions on Academic Honesty in Xavier University's Undergraduate Academic Policies and Regulations:

The pursuit of truth demands high standards of personal honesty. Academic and professional life requires a trust based upon the integrity of the written and spoken word. Accordingly, violations of certain standards of ethical behavior will not be tolerated at Xavier University. These include ... cheating, plagiarism, unauthorized assistance in assignments and tests ...

All work submitted for academic evaluation must be the student's own. Certainly, the activities of other scholars will influence all students. However, the direct and unattributed use of another's efforts is prohibited as is the use of any work untruthfully submitted as one's own.

Please be warned that there is a zero tolerance policy on academic dishonesty in this course. The instructor expects all work that appears under the student's name to be that student's own, and will follow up on evidence that a student has contravened the university's regulations on academic honesty. If an incident of academic dishonesty is established, the student will automatically receive a grade of F for the entire course, in addition to a letter of warning from the Dean and details of the offense being noted down in the student's record file.

III. REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS

The following required textbooks are available for purchase at the university bookstore:

John L. Esposito, *Islam: The Straight Path*, Revised Third Edition (2005)

Reza Aslan, *No god but God: The Origins, Evolution, and Future of Islam* (2005)

Reza Aslan, *How to Win a Cosmic War* (2009)

Richard Bulliet, The Case for Islamo-Christian Civilization (2004)

IV. PAPERS

All students are required to write four (4) papers critically analyzing the four required books for this course. Each paper is worth 20% of your final grade (See Grading Computation for more information).

Paper 1: No god but God (Due Date: **6 Oct 2009**)
Paper 2: Islam: The Straight Path (Due Date: **5 Nov 2009**)
Paper 3: How to Win a Cosmic War (Due Date: **24 Nov 2009**)
Paper 4: The Case for Islamo-Christian Civilization (Due Date: **11 Dec 2009**)

Each paper should be a careful and critical analysis of assigned book and be around **6-8 pages** in length, double-spaced and typed in Microsoft Word, WordPerfect, or OpenOffice format. Your paper will be graded on the extent and quality of your discussion of the following 4 parts:

Part 1 (20%):
o introduce the author and the book;
o identify the author's underlying thesis, principal ideas, and key issues;
o summarize the author's approach, methods, and assumptions;
o summarize the facts/data that the author relies upon to support his/her thesis; and
o summarize the conclusion that the author reaches at the end of the book.
Please do not provide a chapter-by-chapter analysis of the book. You only need to identify and summarize the above requested information.

Part 2 (30%)
Identify the author's underlying thesis and discuss whether, in your opinion, the author has sufficiently proven the case for the author's thesis, examining how s/he analyzes the facts/data to justify her/his thesis, analyzing how the author frames her/his arguments, and evaluating the conclusions that s/he draws from those arguments.

Part 3 (30%)
Identify and discuss what you perceive to be the key strengths/weaknesses of this book, supporting your contentions with appropriate references to specific passages in the book. Please identify the specific page numbers for all the passages that you cite in this part.

Part 4 (20%)
o Explain what insights you have gained from reading this book;
o Discuss the questions that you still have on the topic that the author has not addressed;
o discuss whether you would recommend this book to anyone; and
o discuss whether you would retain this book in your personal library.

Please check the spelling and grammar of your papers before e-mailing them to **ProfessorJTan@gmail.com** within the deadline specified above. Please do not submit a printed copy of your paper or paste your paper in the main body of your e-mail.

All submissions that are **1-5 days late** will automatically received **a full letter grade reduction**.

Please be warned that the instructor **will *not* accept any paper that is more than five (5) days late**, and will accordingly assign **a zero for non-submission** of that paper.

V. GRADE COMPUTATION

Midterm Grade: Paper #1 **(50%)**
                              Attendance and in-class Discussion **(50%)**
                              <u>less:</u> absences/deductions (if any)

Final Grade: Paper #1 **(20%)**
                              Paper #2 **(20%)**

Paper #3 **(20%)**
Paper #4 **(20%)**
Attendance and in-class Discussion **(20%)**
<u>less:</u> absences/deductions (if any)

The following information is available online:

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS: **http://www.jonathantan.org/355/**

GRADING POLICY: **http://www.xavier.edu/theology/Grading-Policy.cfm**

CLASS SCHEDULE/READINGS: **http://www.jonathantan.org/355/**