

## RELG 380: Political Islam Syllabus

**Credit Hours:** 3 credit hours

**Contact Hours:** 45

**Course Duration:** 1 semester

**Location:** Amman, Jordan

### Course Description:

“Political Islam” is a term that has dominated public debate, particularly after momentous historical events, from the Iranian Revolution in 1979 to 9/11 to the ongoing Arab Spring. But what, exactly, is this phenomenon? Why did it arise? Who are its principal thinkers and from which segment of the population does it draw the bulk of its support? How does it organize itself? What are its national, global, social, economic and gendered demands? Indeed, to what extent can we refer to political Islam as a single movement – “it” – and, if we cannot, what binds diverse political Islamic groups together? That is, what sets them apart from other political parties in Muslim societies? This course will engage these questions by offering both a historical and thematic survey of political Islamic thought.

### Aims and Objectives:

The overarching goal of this course is to provide students with a historical and thematic survey of political Islamic thought, paying particular attention to the sociopolitical circumstances in which its pioneering thinkers and movements operated, how they articulated an understanding of Islam that could speak to the problems of their times and, perhaps most significantly, how they (re)interpreted Islamic texts, history and categories in order to legitimate their respective understandings of Islam.

### Learning outcomes for the course

By the completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Partake in informed, nuanced conversation on political Islam
- Think critically about the ways in which Islamism is represented in the West and what / whose interests are served by such representations
- Conceptualize research projects that can potentially contribute to our existing knowledge of political Islam

### Knowledge

This course is designed to assist students to acquire and demonstrate knowledge about:

- The ideologies of the pioneering figures of political Islamic thought
- The broader historical, social and political milieus in which these thinkers lived and how these differing circumstances shaped their ideological thinking
- The complex ways in which these thinkers drew upon and departed from each other

### Skills

This course is designed to assist students in acquiring or enhancing the following skills:

- Synthesizing content and discussions from the different classes, thereby developing comparative analytical skills
- Composing research essays in a focused and structured fashion, carefully channeling the data in order to evidence the essay's argument
- Delivering presentations articulately, systematically and concisely

### Attitudes

This course is designed to encourage development of the following attitudes:

- Appreciating the complexity of the relationship between religion and politics in Muslim-majority societies and in non-Western societies in general
- Acknowledging the seminal role that social reality plays in shaping ideas
- Understanding, in turn, that one's assumptions as a researcher are not neutral, but are also shaped by one's own history and lived realities

### Required Reading (*must be purchased before departing for Jordan*)

- Peter Mandaville, *Islam and Politics*, 2nd edition. London: Routledge, 2014.
- Roxanne L. Euben and Muhammad Q. Zaman. *Princeton Readings in Islamist Thought: Texts and Contexts from al-Banna to Bin Laden*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009.

### Assessment Overview

Description	Weight	Due Date
Engagement	20%	N/A
Research Problem & Question Assignment	10%	One day before Week 5
Essay	30%	One day before Week 10
Presentation	10%	Week 11 – Week 12
Final Exam	30%	Week 15

### Attendance and Engagement

Students are expected to attend all regularly scheduled classes and come prepared to participate fully in class activities. Students are further expected to be on time for all classes. Arriving late for class is disrespectful of both the instructor and fellow students. Please refer to the official Amideast Attendance policy for more information.

### Research Problem & Question Assignment

Students will submit a short paper (500 words max), clearly outlining their term essay's research problem and the primary question raised in light of that problem.

### Essay

The term essay is research-based and will be 3000 words max. Guidelines will be provided in class.

### Presentation

The presentations will be roughly 10 minutes each and will be based on the essay. Here, students will be expected to present – clearly and concisely – the problem, question, argument and significance of their essays to the rest of the class. Presentations will be followed by questions and comments from fellow students.

### Final Exam

The final exam will be closed-book and administered in class. It will comprise of short essay responses (totaling roughly 1000 words). The exam will cover all the readings and class content.

### Course Schedule

Week	Classwork	Homework	Exams, Trips, and Holidays
<b>Week</b>	<b><i>Orientation Week</i></b>		
<b>Week 1</b>	<b>Course Introduction and Overview</b>		
<b>Week 2</b>	<b>Islam: The Basic Vocabulary</b>	<i>Readings for the Week:</i>  Mandaville: the following pages from Chapter 2 ("Islam and Politics: History and Key Concepts"): Pg. 28-53, so until the beginning of the section, "The Gunpowder Empires and Europe's Rise"  Writing an Academic Paper I: Sample student essay	
<b>Week 3</b>	<b>Contested Frameworks: "Political Islam" or "Muslim Politics"?</b>	<i>Readings for the Week:</i>  Mandaville, Chapter 1 ("Introduction: Thinking about Islam and Politics in Global Perspective") and the following pages from Chapter 2 ("Islam and Politics: History and Key Concepts"): Pg. 53-63	<b>Northern Excursion</b>
<b>Week 4</b>	<b>Islam(ism) in the Eyes of Abu'l-A'la Mawdudi</b>	<i>Readings for the Week:</i>  Mandaville, only the following pages from Chapter 3 ("State Formation and the Making of Islamism"): Pg. 64-75 and Pg. 80-85 (Mawdudi section)  Euben and Zaman, Chapter 3 ("Sayyid Abu'l-A'la Mawdudi")	

		Writing an Academic Paper II: Sample student essay	
<b>Week 5</b>	<b>The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood I: Hasan al-Banna</b>	<p><i>Readings for the Week:</i></p> <p>Mandaville, only the following pages from Chapter 3 ("State Formation and the Making of Islamism"): Pg. 75-79 (Banna section) and Pg. 89-97 (until beginning of the Qutb section)</p> <p>Euben and Zaman, Chapter 2 ("Hasan al-Banna")</p>	<p><b>DEADLINE:</b></p> <p><b>"Research Problem and Question" assignment emailed to me by 11:59pm on a day before the class</b></p>
<b>Week 6</b>	<b>The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood II: Sayyid Qutb</b>	<p><i>Readings for the Week:</i></p> <p>Mandaville, only the following pages from Chapter 3 ("State Formation and the Making of Islamism"): Pg. 97-108, so until the end of Muslim Brotherhood section</p> <p>Euben and Zaman, Chapter 5 ("Sayyid Qutb")</p>	<b>Southern Excursion</b>
<b>Week 7</b>	<b>Islamism and Democracy: Yusuf al-Qaradawi</b>	<p><i>Readings for the Week:</i></p> <p>Mandaville, only the following pages from Chapter 4 ("Islam in the System: The Evolution of Islamism as Political Strategy"): Pg. 121-148</p> <p>Euben and Zaman, Chapter 9 ("Yusuf al-Qaradawi")</p>	
<b>Week 8</b>			<p><b>Spring Break</b></p> <p><b>NO CLASS</b></p>
<b>Week 9</b>	<b>The Politics of Global Jihad: Usama bin Laden</b>	<p><i>Readings for the Week:</i></p> <p>Euben and Zaman, Chapter 17 ("Taliban") and Chapter 18 ("Usama bin Laden")</p>	

<b>Week 10</b>	<b>Guest Lecture: "Women in Hamas"</b>	<i>Readings for the Week:</i> Euben and Zaman, Chapter 15 ("Hamas")	<b>DEADLINE:</b>  Essays emailed to me by 11:59pm on a day before class
<b>Week 11</b>	<b>Student Presentations I</b>		
<b>Week 12</b>	<b>Student Presentations II</b>		
<b>Week 13</b>			<b>Biblical Excursion</b>  <b>NO CLASS</b>
<b>Week 14</b>	<b>Whither Political Islam? The Arab Spring and Islamism</b>	<i>Readings for the Week:</i>  Mandaville, only Pg. 149-161 (end of Tunisia section) and Pg. 191-198  Abdullah al-Arian, Asef Bayat, Nathan Brown, Peter Mandaville, Jillian Schwedler and John Voll, "Roundtable on the Future of Islamism: A Starting Point" <i>Jadaliyya</i> (Nov 14, 2013)	
<b>Week 15</b>	<b>Final Exams</b>		
<b>Week 16</b>	<b>Reflection Week</b>		