

Amideast Education Abroad Programs ANTH/RELG 315: Anthropology of Islam Syllabus

Credit Hours: 3 credit hours

Program Location: Rabat, Morocco

Term and Year:

Name of Instructor:

Course Hours:

Office Hours:

Contact Information:

Course Aims & Objectives

This course introduces students to anthropological approaches to the study of Islam. Through an engagement with anthropological works on belief, ritual, identity formation and public expression, students will learn how religion is understood, interpreted, and experienced across different sociocultural environments, and the ways it influences the formation of institutions, communities, identities, and socio-political order. The course thus aims to encourage students to gain grasp of the complex relationship between discursive traditions and the textures of everyday life, and thus appreciate the nuances of lived Islam beyond pre-determined and unidirectional conceptions.

Learning outcomes for the course

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

- Have insight into anthropological debates on the study of Islam.
- Become familiar with Islamic concepts and their intersection with the everyday life of Muslims.
- Have an understanding of the cultural, historical, and political variety of Muslim life.
- Engage critically with discussions on studying Islam and Muslims both theoretically and empirically.

Knowledge

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

- Concepts of Islam (faith, praxis, etc.) and their intersection with social and political systems.
- Different anthropological and cultural approaches to the study of Muslim societies.
- The history and development of religious ritual and behavior.
- Ethnographic case studies of religious beliefs and practices across Muslim communities.

Skills

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

- Demonstrate grasp of the complex and dynamic character of religion.
- Develop critical engagement with societal and cultural processes.
- Employ a multidisciplinary approach to social, political, economic, and religious issues.
- Develop the ability to engage with academic literature and debates in contemporary anthropology of Islam.

Attitudes

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

- Demonstrate self-awareness and appropriate interpersonal skills in cross-cultural settings.
- Appreciation for the varieties of religious belief, expression, experience, and practice.
- Recognize the situatedness of knowledge.
- Recognize the value of cultural diversity and local knowledges.

Diversity

Diversity in class is everything that makes both students and teachers different from each other. This includes many different factors: race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, ability, age, religious belief, or political conviction. All these factors work together to inform how students (and teachers, and everyone else) encounter the world. Therefore, one of the objectives of this class is to promote diversity by understanding each student brings unique experiences, strengths, and ideas to our classroom to enrich learning in our classroom.

Required Reading

See course schedule.

Recommended Readings

- Dale Eickelman. "Anthropology in Morocco since the 1960s: A Personal Odyssey". Hespéris-Tamuda, 55, 2 (2020), pp. 209-228.
- Daniel Martin Varisco. *Islam Obscured: The Rhetoric of Anthropological Representation*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005). pp. 1-20.
Talal Asad. "The Construction of Religion as an Anthropological Category." Pp. 27–54 in *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam*. (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993).
- Meriem El Haitami. "Religious diversity at the contours of Moroccan Islam". The Journal of North African Studies (2021), <https://doi.org/10.1080/13629387.2021.1978291>.
Talal Asad. "Toward a Genealogy of the Concept of Ritual." Pp. 55–84 in *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam*. (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993).
- Christine Jacobsen. "Troublesome Threesome: Feminism, Anthropology and Muslim Women's Piety". Feminist Review. 98 (2011). Pp. 65-82
- Emilio Spadola. *Calls of Islam*. (Bloomington, IN: University of Indiana Press 2014). Pp. 12-27
- Carl Ernst. *Sufism: An Introduction to the Mystical Tradition of Islam*. (Shambhala, 2016). Pp. 1-35.
- Vincent Cornell. "Fruit of the Tree of Knowledge: The Relationship between Faith and Practice in Islam", pp. 63-105 in *The Oxford History of Islam*, edited by John Esposito. (Oxford University Press, 1999).
- Nancy Ammerman. "Spiritual But Not Religious? Beyond Binary Choices in the Study of Religion". Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 52, 2 (2013), pp. 258-278.
- Talal Asad. *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003). Pp. 1-66.

Assessment Overview

Description	Weight	Due Date
Engagement	10%	Continuous
In-Class Presentations	10%	Varies by student
Reading Summaries	10%	Continuous
Midterm Exam	25%	
End of Term Paper	20%	Finalize Topic: First Draft: Final paper submission:
Final Exam	25%	

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 posted in the online course and on the Absence request site on the Student Portal.

Journal:

Students are encouraged to keep a journal during the semester. Particular attention should be given to experiences that are in relation with the assigned reading materials and class discussion. Students are encouraged to describe their daily interactions and share their feelings and impressions.

Presentations:

Each student is required to make an in-class presentation on one of the assigned readings. Presenters are to give a clear and concise summary of what is in the article/chapter. The presenter should state the author's theme or thesis and assess how they proved their point(s). Some highlights or the argument should be presented. The presenter should not read their findings to the class, but rather attempt to be spontaneous in handling the material. Good presentations should last between 20 and 25 minutes. The in-class presentation is worth 10% of the final grade for the course.

Midterm Exam:

There will be an in-class midterm exam on ... It will cover the material up to that point in the semester. The midterm exam is worth 25% of the final grade for the course.

Reading Summaries:

All students are required to do short two-page summaries of the readings either as a narrative or in bullet point format. These summaries will be very useful in preparation for the in-class midterm and final exams. The reading summaries are worth 10% of the final grade for the course.

Research Paper:

Each student is required to write a research paper of at least 4,500 words on a topic approved by the instructor that is relevant to the topics covered in the course. The paper is worth 20% of the final grade for the course. Students will need to submit a proposal for the topic of this research paper on ..., a first draft on ..., and a final draft on ...

Final Exam:

The type of exam is an in-class exam on ... and it is worth 25% of the final grade for the course.

Course Schedule

Week	Topic	Assignments	Exams, Trips, and Holidays
Week 1	Introduction to the Course	Start reading next week's readings. <i>Reading summaries due every week.</i>	
Week 2	What is Islam?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Shahab Ahmed. <i>What is Islam? The Importance of Being Islamic</i> (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), pp.5-109.	
Week 3	Classic Anthropology on Islam	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Clifford Geertz. <i>Islam Observed: Religious Development in Morocco and Indonesia</i> (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968). pp. v-22 and 90-117.Ernest Gellner. "Post-Traditional Forms in Islam: The Turf and Trade, and Votes and Peanuts". <i>Daedalus</i>, 102, 1 (1973), pp. 191-206.	
Week 4	The Anthropology of Islam and its Critique	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Talal Asad. "The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam". <i>Qui Parle</i>, 17, 2 (2009), pp. 1-30.Abdul Hamid el-Zein. "Beyond Ideology and Theology: The Search for the Anthropology of Islam". <i>Annual Review of Anthropology</i> 6 (1977), pp. 227-254.Richard Tapper. "Islamic Anthropology" and the "Anthropology of Islam." <i>Anthropological Quarterly</i>, 68, 3 (1995), pp.185-193.	

<p>Week 5</p>	<p>Lived Islam: Negotiating Muslimness</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farid Esack. "Progressive Islam – A Rose by Any Name? American Soft Power in the War for the Hearts and Minds of Muslims". ReOrient, 4, 1 (2018), pp. 78-106. • Ebrahim Moosa. "The Debts and Burdens of Critical Islam". Pp. 111-127 In Progressive Muslims: On Justice, Gender, and Pluralism, edited by Omid Safi. (Oneworld Publications,2003). • David Montgomery. "Namaz, Wishing Trees, and Vodka: The Diversity of Everyday Religious Life in Central Asia". pp. 355-370 In Everyday Life in Central Asia: Past and Present, edited by J. Sahadeo and R. Zanca. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007). • Jason Lim, Alexandra Fanghanel. "'Hijabs, Hoodies and Hotpants'; negotiating the 'Slut' in SlutWalk". Geoforum, 48, 3 (2013), pp. 207–215. 	
<p>Week 6</p>	<p>Muslims, Ritual, and the Religious Public Space</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John Bowen. "On Scriptural Essentialism and Ritual Variation: Muslim Sacrifice in Sumatra and Morocco." American Ethnologist, 19, 4 (1992), pp. 656-671 • Nadia Fadil, Mayanthi Fernando. "Rediscovering the "everyday" Muslim: Notes on an Anthropological Divide". HAU Journal of Ethnographic Theory, 5, 2 (2015), pp. 59–88 • Fatima Mernissi. "Women, Saints, and Sanctuaries". Signs, 3, 1 (1977), pp. 101-112. • Thomas Pierret. "Staging the Authority of the Ulama: The Celebration of the Mawlid in Urban Syria". Pp. 93-104 In Ethnographies of Islam: Ritual Performances and Everyday Practices, edited by Baudouin Dupret, Thomas Pierret, Paulo Pinto and Kathryn Spellman-Poots. (Edinburgh University Press, 2012). 	



Week 7	Gender and Islam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lila Abu-Lughod. "Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving?" <i>American Anthropologist</i>. 104, 3 (2002), pp. 783-790. • Saba Mahmood. <i>Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject</i>. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005). pp. 1-39 • Anthony Shay. "Choreographing Masculinity: Hypermasculine Dance Styles as Invented Tradition in Egypt, Iran and Uzbekistan". Pp. 287-308 In <i>When Men Dance: Choreographing Masculinity Across Borders</i>, edited by Jennifer Fisher and Anthony Shay. (Oxford University Press, 2009). • Claudia Liebelt, Pnina Werbner. "Gendering 'Everyday Islam': an introduction". <i>Contemporary Levant</i>. 3, 1 (2018). Pp. 2-9. 	
Week 8	Break		
Week 9	Medicine and Magic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vincent Crapanzano. <i>The Hamadsha: A Study in Moroccan Ethnopsychiatry</i>. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973). Pp. 133-168. • Mohammed Maarouf. <i>Jinn Eviction as Discourse of Power</i>. (Leiden: Brill, 2007). Pp. 159-178. • Ellen Amster. <i>Medicine and the Saints: Science, Islam and the Colonial Encounter in Morocco 1877-1956</i>. (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press). Pp. 209-219. 	



Week 10	Sufism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emilio Spadola. "Sufism and Moroccan Political Culture: From the Theatrics of Domination to Neoliberal Development". <i>Hesp�ris-Tamuda</i>, 55, 3 (2020), pp. 81-101. • Paulo Pinto. "Sufism, Moral Performance and the Public Sphere in Syria". <i>Revue du monde musulman et de la M�diterran�e</i> (2006), DOI:10.4000/remmm.3026. • Dietrich Von Denffer. "Baraka as Basic Concept of Muslim Popular Belief". <i>Islamic Studies</i>, 15, 3 (1976), pp. 167-186. • Khalid Bekkaoui, Ricardo Laremont. "Moroccan Youth Go Sufi". <i>The Journal of the Middle East and Africa</i>, 2, 1, pp. 31-46. 	
Week 11	New Spiritualities and Personal Piety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patrick Haenni and Rafael Voix. "God by all Means... Eclectic Faith and Sufi Resurgence among the Moroccan Bourgeoisie", pp. 241-256, in <i>Sufism and the 'Modern' in Islam</i>, edited by Howell, Van Bruinessen. (I.B.Tauris, 2007). • Carl Ernst. « Situating Sufism and Yoga », Third Series, 15, 1 (2005), pp. 15-43. 	
Week 12	Secularism and the State I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talal Asad. <i>Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity</i>. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003). Pp . 1-66. 	
Week 13	Secularism and the State II	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im. <i>Islam and the Secular State: Negotiating the Future of Shari'a</i>. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 2008). pp. 1-44. • John Bowen. "Does French Islam Have Borders? Dilemmas of Domestication in a Global Religious Field". <i>American Anthropologist</i>, 106, 1 (2004), pp. 43-55 • Nadia Fadil. "The anthropology of Islam in Europe: A double Epistemological Impasse". <i>Annual Review of Anthropology</i>, 48 (2019), pp. 117-132 	



Week 14		Review for exams, make up any missed readings/classwork	Final Research Paper due
Week 15	Final Exam		
Week 16	Reflection Week		

