RELS 5300: The Study of Islam, Second Term, 2025-26

Professor: James D. Frankel (jamesfrankel@cuhk.edu.hk)
Lecture: Thursdays, 7:00-9:30 p.m., Room HYS, G04

I.   Course Description:

This course explores the development and evolution of Islamic faith and society from their pre-Islamic roots, to the life and career of the Prophet Muhammad (570-632), down to the present day. Toward the end of the semester, we will examine some contemporary issues. The approach of the class is multi-disciplinary: We will examine prominent aspects of Islamic culture from their different historical, social, and theological perspectives. The course is also designed to expose students to a balance of primary and secondary sources, thereby showing both "insider" (Muslim) and "outsider" (non-Muslim) perspectives on various themes. This course has no prerequisites and assumes no prior knowledge of the subject.

II.   Learning Outcomes:

1)   Understanding the history, scriptures, doctrines, and practices of Islam;
2)   Reading and analyzing primary source material from the Islamic tradition;
3)   Reading and analyzing scholarly texts in the academic study of Islam;
4)   Writing scholarly materials in genres appropriate to the field of the academic study of Islam, including research papers, exegetical essays, etc.;
5)   Cultivation of cultural sensitivity in light of globalization and local multiculturalism.

III.   Course Components

Teaching Modes	
Lectures on-site face-to-face	100%
Learning activities	**Percentage of time**
Lecture on-site face-to-face	42%
In-class discussion	Included in lecture time
In-class presentation	Included in lecture time
Self-study hours	58%
Assigned recommended reading	Included in self-study time
Term Paper Writing	Included in self-study time
Preparation for Presentation	Included in self-study time

Use of generative AI tools

Approach 3 - Use of some AI tools is allowed with explicit acknowledgement and proper citation. (Please refer to the Appendix.)

Feedback for evaluation

End-of-term university course evaluation will be conducted in class. Students' comments and feedback on the course through e-mails or personal meeting with the instructor are always welcomed.

Guideline on sharing lecture recordings

Attention is drawn to the following:

- The copyright of any lecture recordings shared in the course, whether they are produced by teachers, students, or peer note-takers, belongs to the University.
- Students should not share these recordings with others without obtaining prior written consent from the teacher(s).

IV.   Course Content:

Basic texts:

Ali, Ahmed. *Al-Qur'an: A Contemporary Translation*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001 (or a comparable English translation of the *Qur'an*).*

Goldziher, Ignaz. *Introduction to Islamic Theology and Law* (Modern Classics in Near Eastern Studies). (Paperback) Translated by Andras and Ruth Hamori. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981.

Sachiko Murata and William C. Chittick, *The Vision of Islam*. St. Paul, MN: Paragon House, 1994.

Other selected readings will be available on Blackboard.

*Find Ahmed Ali version at: https://quran.wwpa.com/. https://quran.com/ also has multiple translations (including Chinese) with the Arabic text and recitations.

Term Schedule:

1.   8/1   **Roots of Islam: Pre-Islamic Arabia (*Jāhiliyya*); Judeo-Christian connections; Neighboring civilizations.**

Readings:

Sachiko Murata and William C. Chittick, "Preface" in *The Vision of Islam* (St. Paul, MN: Paragon House, 1994), ix-xiii.

Peter J. Awn, "Faith and Practice" and Fazlur Rahman, "The Message and the Messenger," in *Islam: The Religious & Political Life of a World Community*, ed. Marjorie Kelly (New York: Praeger, 1984), 1-3, 28-32.

"Pre-Islamic Poetry," Trans. by Michael Sells.

2. 15/1 Muḥammad and the Early Muslim Community

Readings:

Sachiko Murata and William C. Chittick, "Introduction," in *The Vision of Islam*, xix-xxiv.

"Traditional Muslim Chronology of Muhammad's Life"

Fazlur Rahman, "Muhammad, The Prophet of God," in *Islam: The Religious & Political Life of a World Community*, 32-42.

"Excerpt From Dante's *Inferno* and a 17th c. French Traveler's Account"

3. 22/1 The Qurʾān

Readings:

Sachiko Murata and William C. Chittick, "Introduction," in *The Vision of Islam*, xiv-xix.

Sūras 1, 2, 4, 7, 9, 12, 18, 26, 75-114.

"The Message," in *Islam: The Religious & Political Life of a World Community*, 42-54.

4. 29/1 Ḥadīth and Sunna

Readings:

Sachiko Murata and William C. Chittick, "Introduction," and "The Koran and Sunna," in *The Vision of Islam*, xxv-xxxix, 28-30.

Roy P. Mottahedeh, "Qur'an and Sunna," in *Islam: The Religious & Political Life of a World Community*, 57-59.

"Selected *Ḥadīth*"

5. 5/2 *Islām*: Submission as Orthopraxy; The Five Pillars

Readings:

Sachiko Murata and William C. Chittick, "Part I: ISLAM," in *The Vision of Islam*, 3-27.

Peter J. Awn, "Philosophical Theology and the First Pillar of Islam" and "Islamic Praxis and the Four Remaining Pillars of Islam," in *Islam: The Religious & Political Life of a World Community*, 3-13.

6. 12/2 Islamic Law: *Sharīʿa* and *Fiqh*

Readings:

Ignaz Goldziher, "The Development of Law," in *Introduction to Islamic Theology and Law*, trans. Andras and Ruth Hamori (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981), 31-66.

7. 19/2 *LUNAR NEW YEAR VACATION (NO LECTURE)*

8. 26/2 Islamic Theology: *Kalām*

Readings:

Ignaz Goldziher, "The Growth and Development of Dogmatic Theology," in *Introduction to Islamic Theology and Law*, 67-114.

GROUP PRESENTATIONS BEGIN

9. 5/3 Islamic Sectarianism: The Sunni-Shīʿa Schism

Readings:

Ignaz Goldziher, "The Sects," in *Introduction to Islamic Theology and Law*, 167-229.

Peter J. Awn, "Diversity in the Umma: Shi'ism," in *Islam: The Religious & Political Life of a World Community*, 14-17.

10. 12/3 Islamic Sectarianism: The Sunni-Shīʿa Schism

Readings:

Ignaz Goldziher, "The Sects," in *Introduction to Islamic Theology and Law*, 167-229.

Peter J. Awn, "Diversity in the Umma: Shi'ism," in *Islam: The Religious & Political Life of a World Community*, 14-17.

11. 19/3 Islamic Mysticism: The Şūfī Tradition

Readings:

Sachiko Murata and William C. Chittick, "Theoretical Sufism," "Philosophy," "The Two Poles of Understanding," and "Sufism's Vision," in *The Vision of Islam*, 246-257, 262-264.

Peter J. Awn, "Sufism," in *Islam: The Religious & Political Life of a World Community*, 17-22.

"Sufi Ascetical Texts"

12. 26/3 Islamic Modernism and Revivalism/ Fundamentalism and Extremism in Islam

Readings:

Sachiko Murata and William C. Chittick, "Ch. 10 The Contemporary Situation," in *The Vision of Islam*, 329-335.

Voll, John O., Ch. 8: "Muslim Responses to Colonialism," in *Islam: The Religious & Political Life of a World Community*, 157-172.

"Modernist Islamic Texts"

Albertini, Tamara. "The Seductiveness of Certainty: The Destruction of Islam's Intellectual Legacy by the Fundamentalists," in *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 53, No. 4 (Oct. 2003), pp. 455-470.

Wood, Graeme. "What ISIS Really Wants," in *The Atlantic*, March, 2015 Issue.

13. 2/4   *(NO LECTURE)*

14. 9/4   Women and Gender in Islam

Readings:

Ch. 4, "Rights and Roles of Women: Some Controversies," in Amina Wadud, *Qurʾan and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999, pp. 62-93.

Video: "I do NOT believe that I am committing a sin by NOT wearing the scarf"

https://www.reddit.com/r/progressive_islam/comments/14oiec6/i_do_not_believe_that_i_am_committing_a_sin_by/?utm_source=share&utm_medium=web3x&utm_name=web3xcss&utm_term=1&utm_content=share_button

Video: "Grace and Professor on Hijab | Usuli Institute Excerpt | 27 March 2021"

https://youtu.be/gwpsMqNJb5w?si=-dx545t9pyjj7HF8&t=583

15. 16/4   Islam in China and Hong Kong

Readings:

Frankel, James D. *Islam in China*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2021, pp. 123-162.

V.   Course Requirements:

Grade Components:

1. 15% Class participation
2. 35% Group Presentation
3. 50% Term paper (3,000 words in English), due **24 April 2026, by 5:00 p.m.**

Class Participation:

"師傅領進門, 修行在個人."

The success of this course depends on the collaboration of professor and students. Students are also expected to participate in class discussions, with thoughtful questions and responses. Students are required to attend lectures and tutorials, unless

they have a justifiable reason (medical or some other emergency) for being absent. Absences will be counted against the final grade (good attendance will likewise be rewarded); students who miss more than 25% of the total number of class meetings cannot pass the course.

Group Presentations:

Beginning in the seventh week of the semester (**19/2**), after the lecture, groups of three students will make a 30-minute presentation each week on a subject assigned by the professor. The date, order and the subject of the presentations will be determined by random selection at the start of the semester. The presentation will include a summary and brief analysis of the topic and its significance in the larger context of Islam Presenters will ask leading questions to promote discussion of the subject among classmates. Each week, another group will respond formally to the presentation. The presentation may include PowerPoint, other audio-visual aids, and/or a written handout. Presentations will be assessed based on their clarity, contents and analysis.

Presentation Topics:
1. The Prophet and Umma
2. Qurʾān and Sunna
3. Sharīʿa and Fiqh
4. Shiʿa and Sunni
5. Jihād and Extremism
6. Gender Roles and Sexuality
7. Huihui and Qingzhen (回回與清真)

Paper Guidelines:

Each student must write a final paper at the end of the term, on a topic of his/her choosing, within Islamic studies. The topic may be historical or contemporary, and may focus on any aspect of Islam or Muslim society, such as theology, religious doctrine and practice, politics, society, etc.

Your essay should have a clear title, thesis (stated in the Introduction) and central argument. Papers may be based on the readings, lectures and discussions, and any appropriate outside research, with all sources cited appropriately (using either footnotes **or** MLA parenthetical citation). The paper is to be approximately 3,000 words in English, typed and double-spaced (Times New Roman, 12 pt. font). Grammar, punctuation, style, and content will be taken into account in the grading of the essay. Grammar, punctuation, style, and content will be factored in the grading of

the essay, so be sure to proofread carefully before submitting the paper.

Papers should be sent by e-mail to Prof. Frankel (jamesfrankel@cuhk.edu.hk), attached as a MS Word Doc with your name on the file. **24 April 2024, by 5:00 p.m.** Unless a deadline extension is granted with prior permission from the professor, late submissions will be penalized.

Papers must be submitted to VeriGuide (https://veriguide2.cse.cuhk.edu.hk/cuhk/). The system will issue a receipt, which should be signed and submitted with the assignment.

Academic Honesty:

The Chinese University of Hong Kong places very high importance on honesty in academic work submitted by students and adopts a policy of zero tolerance on cheating and plagiarism. Any related offence will lead to disciplinary action including termination of studies at the University.

See the University's policy:
https://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/Eng_htm_files_(2013-14)/index_page2.htm

Instructor's Contact Information:

Professor Frankel's office is located at KKB 228. Appointments are welcome and should be made via email at: jamesfrankel@cuhk.edu.hk

Approach 3 - Use only with explicit acknowledgement

In courses where students are allowed or expected to collaborate with or use AI tools for in-class learning activities or assignments, students should be reminded to make explicit acknowledgement of the use of these tools. Teachers may show students examples regarding how to acknowledge and make citations. Students should also be informed of the limitations and appropriate use of these tools.

Use of AI tools is allowed with explicit acknowledgement and proper citation

Students may use some AI tools in some class activities and assignments on the condition that they make explicit acknowledgement and proper citations of the input from AI tools.

Acknowledging support from AI tools
Students are required to acknowledge all functional uses of a generative AI tool and cite it when they paraphrase, quote, or incorporate into their own work any content (whether it is text, image, data, or other format) that was created by it.

    i.   An example of acknowledgement

'I acknowledge the use of (name of AI tool – e.g. ChatGPT (https://chat.openai.com/) to (specify the support, e.g. plan my essay, generate some ideas for the content, ask for examples of data collection instruments, get the dates of historical events, etc.).

    ii.   An example of citation
OpenAI. (2023). *ChatGPT* (Mar 20 version). https://chat.openai.com/chat

(Students are reminded that due to the rapid developments of generative AI tools, some citation formats may be updated regularly.)

    iii.   An example of including texts generated by an AI tool in their work

"The following text was generated by an AI tool / language model (ChatGPT):"
[Insert the text generated by ChatGPT here.]

    iv.   An example of including texts generated by an AI tool and the prompts that were used to elicit the text from the AI tool

"[The prompt], as generated by an AI language model (ChatGPT):"
[Insert the text generated by ChatGPT in response to the prompt.]

Students are reminded to learn and use the AI tools responsibly and ethically and be aware of the limitations.

Students are reminded to clarify with the course teacher and obtain permission if necessary when in doubt.