**Islam Today: The Middle East and Beyond**

**RELS0600**

Professor Nancy Khalek (Nancy\_Khalek@Brown.edu)

Office Hours: Wednesday 1-3pm, or by appointment

Office Number 205

Dept. of Religious Studies, 59 George Street

Current events and popular culture alike direct our attention to the centrality of discourse on the Islamic world. From the so-called Arab Spring, to political and religious extremism, to reality shows produced by Ryan Seacrest, there is little doubt that contemporary Islam is having an impact on modern culture in unprecedented ways. Islam is often said to be the fastest growing religion in the world, and is second to Christianity in all the countries of Western Europe. In this course, we will study contemporary Islam and Muslims in the Middle East (and beyond) from a variety of perspectives and theoretical points of view.

**TECHNICALITIESs:**

Attendance at all lectures and discussion sections is required, and absences from class should be cleared with the instructor or TA beforehand, when possible. **Any more than two unexcused absences per term may affect your participation grade in the course**. Grading is based on attendance and participation, weekly responses posted on Canvas, and short essays, which will be due throughout the semester. In addition, we will have final paper due at the end of reading period.

**REQUIREMENTS**: Class attendance and readings; weekly 250-word “Think Pieces” posted online through the course site on Canvas; two short essays during the term (3-4 pages each); participation in class discussion; final paper in the form of a longer paper (6-8 pages). We will be observing the university’s Reading Period in this class.

**READINGS:** This is an intermediate class, and we will be working through approximately a book per week. Some are more challenging than others, but lectures will help guide you through the readings, and discussion sections will provide opportunity for more detailed analyses and individual questions.

**THE 250-WORD THINK PIECE:** By 10pm the night before your discussion section, you will be required to post a one-paragraph (no more than 250 words) response to or question about the readings for the next day. You will be graded on the completion of these, not necessarily their content. That is, these are ***not*** meant to be structured essays or formal writings. They are meant to help launch conversation and help you clarify, challenge, problematize, or highlight issues in the readings. Each one should take no more than 15-30 minutes to compose.

**GRADING:**

Attendance and Participation (weekly think pieces and in discussion Sections): 30%

Short Essays: 40% (2 throughout the semester, topics TBA)

Final Paper: 30%

**BOOKS FOR PURCHASE: (Any readings listed below but not on this list will be available on Canvas)**

1. *A History of Islam in America: From the New World to the New World Order*

2. *Muslim Europe or Euro-Islam: Politics, Culture, and Citizenship in the Age of Globalization*

3. *Orientalism, A Reader*

4. *The Great Theft: Wrestling Islam from the Extremists*

5. *Modern Islamic Thought in a Radical Age: Religious Authority and Internal Criticism*

6. *Islam in Asia*

7. *Being Modern in Iran*

8. *The Politics of Piety*

9. *Questioning Secularism: Islam, Sovereignty, and the Rule of Law in Modern Egypt*

10. *The Impossible State: Islam, Politics, and Modernity's Moral Predicament*

11. *Islam and the Secular State: Negotiating the Future of Sharia*

**Class Schedule**

W 1/22 Class Delayed for Snow

F 1/24 Introduction to the Course: Tahrir Square and the Egyptian Secular/Islamist Dilemma

***Regional Perspectives***

**Islam in the Modern The Middle East: A Survey**

M 1/27 Crash course on the Basics: Islamic Religion and Practice, Then and Now

W 1/29 and F 3/1 Gilsenan, *Recognizing Islam: Religion and Society in the Modern Middle East*, Ch. 1-95

**Iran**

M 2/3 and W 2/5 AdelKhah *Being Modern in Iran*

M 2/10 Film: Divorce, Iranian Style (NK out of town)

W 2/12 Excerpts from *Islam and Gender in Iran,* Mir-Hosseini

2/15-18, University Closed for Long Weekend

**Egypt**

W 2/19, Mahmood, *The Politics of Piety*

**Asia**

M 2/24 and 2/26, *Islam in Asia,* Esposito

**Morocco**

M 3/3, Film (Sufism)

W 3/5, Amster, *Medicine and Saints*

**Islam in/and The United States**

M 3/10, *A History of Islam in America*

W 3/12, Megan McBride, *US-Middle East Foreign Policy after 1950*

**ESSAY ONE DUE 3/12**

***The “-isms”***

**Extremism? (Saudi Arabia and Wahhabism)**

M 3/17, *The Great Theft: Wrestling Islam from the Extremists*, K. A. El-Fadl

**Progressivism? (Gender Justice and Equality)**

W 3/19, *Progressive Muslims*, ed. O. Safi

M 3/24 Spring Recess

W 3/26 Spring Recess

**Orientalism**

M 3/31 and W 4/2 *Orientalism: A Reader*

**Secularism**

M 4/7 and W 4/9 *Islam and the Secular State*, Al-Naim

M 4/14, and W 4/16 *Questioning Secularism: Islam, Modernity, and the Rule of Law in Modern Egypt*, H. Agrama

**ESSAY TWO DUE 4/16**

M 4/21 and 4/23 *The Impossible State*, W. Hallaq

**Radicalism (“Religoius Violence”)**

M 4/28 and 4/30 *Modern Islamic Thought in a Radical Age*, Zaman

**Course Wrap-up: Looking Beyond the Middle East and the US**

M 5/5 *Muslim Europe or Euro-Islam*, eds. Sayyad and Castells

**FINAL ESSAY DUE 5/15**