

ISLAM & LIBERALISM

Comparative Literature 1440G | Spring 2014 | Tue-Thu 10:30-11:50 | 101 Thayer St. (VSQ, 1st floor), 116B

Prof. Elias Muhanna
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Comparative Literature
Brown University
Marston Hall 208
20 Manning Walk

Office hours:
Mondays 3-5pm

Course description

The social and political upheavals collectively known as the Arab Spring have provoked a new installment in the centuries-old debate about the relationship of Islam to liberal thought. This course explores the philosophical and political genealogies of that debate through the lens of literature, film, television, graphic art, radio, social media, and the press. Knowledge of Arabic encouraged but not required.



Omar el-Nagdi, *Untitled* (150 x 150 cm, mixed media, 2008)

Assigned texts

The following books are on sale at the Brown Bookstore. All other readings will be made available on the course's Canvas site.

- Sadakat Kadri, *Heaven on Earth: A Journey Through Shari'a Law*
- Charles Kurzman, *Liberal Islam: A Sourcebook*
- Rifa'a Rafi' al-Tahtawi, *An Imam in Paris... 1826-31*
- John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*
- John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*
- John Dewey, *Liberalism and Social Action*

Languages

All readings are in English, but students with proficiency in Arabic are invited to read in the original. Please see me about arranging to locate original language texts.

Course Requirements

- 1. Class attendance and participation: 20%** – Consistent and engaged participation is essential in this class. You are invited to read the assigned texts carefully and critically, and to come to class with something to say about them. You are permitted two absences; every subsequent absence will negatively impact your final grade. Arriving ten minutes or more after the start of class will count as an absence.
- 2. Short essays: 20%** – There will be five short essays (750 words), each addressing a specific question prompted by the previous two weeks' readings. The essays must be submitted in hard copy in class.
- 3. Student presentation: 10%** – Each student will prepare a 15-minute presentation on a contemporary issue or cultural debate, which bears on the themes of the class. It is your responsibility to circulate in advance some (brief) materials providing a background to what you will be discussing. Please also consult with me before setting off. I recommend becoming regular readers of *Jadaliyya* and *Arabic Literature (in English)*, two excellent resources for this class.
- 4. Midterm exam: 20%** – To be held in class, the exam will consist of IDs of key figures, works, and concepts from the first half of the course, along with an essay or two.
- 5. Final paper: 30%** – The final paper (3000 words) is due on May 16 via email. Please meet with me to discuss your topic in advance.
- 6. Academic honesty:** Students are expected to abide by the tenets of Brown University's Academic Code. If you have any questions about issues of citation, collaboration, or the use of source materials, please do not hesitate to consult me or a teaching assistant.

Accommodations for students with disabilities: Please inform me if you have a disability or other condition that might require some modification of any of these course procedures. You may speak with me after class or during office hours. For more information, please contact Student and Employee Accessibility Services at 401-863-9588, or by email at SEAS@brown.edu.

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Course schedule

Thu. Jan. 23 • Course introduction

Weeks 1 & 2: Islam & Liberalism: Foundational Vocabularies

- Tue. Jan. 28 • Kadri, *Heaven and Earth*, "Prologue," "Laying Down the Law" (3-36)
 • *The Qur'an* (selections)
 • Ibn al-Muqaffa', *Kalila wa-dimna* (selections)
- Thu. Jan 30 • John Dewey, "The History of Liberalism," *Liberalism and Social Action* (13-36)
 • John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government* (chapters I, II, V)
- Tue. Feb. 4 • al-Nawawi, *The Forty Hadith* (selections)
 • Ibn Khaldun, *Muqaddima* (selections)
 • Kadri, *Heaven and Earth*, "From Revelations to Revolution," "The Formation of the

Law Schools” (37-70)

- Thu. Feb. 6
- John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government* (chapters VII, VIII, IX, X)
 - John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* (chapter I)
 - **1st short paper due**

Weeks 3 – 5: East & West: Liberal Encounters

- Tue. Feb. 11
- Montesquieu, *The Persian Letters* (selections)
- Thu. Feb. 13
- Rifa‘a Rafi‘ al-Tahtawi, *An Imam in Paris... 1826-31*, (107-34, 163-216)
- Tue. Feb. 18
- Rifa‘a Rafi‘ al-Tahtawi, *An Imam in Paris... 1826-31*, (251-76, 358-78)
- Thu. Feb. 20
- Gustave Flaubert, *Flaubert in Egypt: A Sensibility on Tour* (selections)
 - Edward Lane, *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (selections)
- Tue. Feb. 25
- Ahmad Faris al-Shidyaq, *Leg over Leg* (selections)
- Thu. Feb. 27
- Aziz Nesin, *Istanbul Boy: A Memoir* (selection)
 - Ahmet Hamdy Tanpinar, *The Time Regulation Institute* (selection)
 - **2nd short paper due**

Weeks 6 – 8: Islamic Modernities

- Tue. Mar. 4
- Mehdi Bazargan, “Religion and Liberty,” in Kurzman, *Liberal Islam* (73-84)
 - John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* (chapter II, “Of the Liberty of Thought and Discussion”)
- Thu. Mar. 6
- Ibn Naqib al-Misri, *Reliance of the Traveler* (selections)
 - Kadri, *Heaven on Earth*, “The Re-Invention of Tradition: Salafism” (125-43)
- Tue. Mar. 11
- Muhammad Sa‘id al-‘Ashmawi, “*Shari‘a*: The Codification of Islamic Law,” in Kurzman, *Liberal Islam* (49-56)
 - Kadri, *Heaven on Earth*, “Innovation and its Discontents: Islamic Law and the Challenge of Change” (181-210)
- Thu. Mar. 13
- Adonis, “Poetics and Modernity”
 - Fazlur Rahman, “Islam and Modernity,” in Kurzman, *Liberal Islam* (304-18)
 - **3rd short paper due**
- Tue. Mar. 18
- ‘Ali ‘Abd al-Raziq, “Message Not Government, Religion Not State,” in Kurzman, *Liberal Islam* (29-36)
 - John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* (chapter III, “On Individuality, as One of the Elements of Well-Being”)

Thu. Mar. 20 • **Midterm exam**

Mar. 22—30 • *Spring break*

Week 9 & 10: Liberalism and Sexuality

Tue. Apr. 1 • *The Qur'an* (12:3-34)
• Nazira Zein-ed-Din, “Unveiling and Veiling,” in Kurzman, *Liberal Islam* (101-6)
• Fatima Mernissi, “A Feminist Interpretation of Women’s Rights in Islam,” in Kurzman, *Liberal Islam* (101-6) (112-26)

Thu. Apr. 3 • Ismat Chughtai, “The Quilt”
• Joseph Massad, “Re-Orienting Desire: The Gay International and the Arab World”

Tue. Apr. 8 • Lila Abu-Lughod, “Do Muslim Women Need Saving?”
• Mona El-Tahawy, “Why Do They Hate Us?”

Thu. Apr. 10 • **TBD**
• **4th short paper due**

Weeks 11 & 12: Post-Islamism, Anti-Liberalism

Tue. Apr. 15 • John Dewey, *Liberalism and Social Action* (chapter 2, “The Crisis in Liberalism”)
• Rachid Ghannouchi, “Participation in Non-Islamic Government,” in Kurzman, *Liberal Islam* (89-95)

Thu. Apr. 17 • Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular* (selections)
• Wael Hallaq, *The Impossible State* (selections)

Tue. Apr. 22 • Asef Bayat, “Post-Islamism at Large”
• John Dewey, *Liberalism and Social Action* (chapter 3, “Renascent Liberalism”)

Thu. Apr. 24 • Lara Deeb, *An Enchanted Modern* (selections)
• **5th short paper due**

Fri. May 16 • **Final paper due**