SHI@`I@ ISLAM: Thought and History

(HI 651 – Fall 2011)
Thursday : 6:30 pm – 9:30 pm.

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Office hours will be determined by the needs and schedules of the students

Syllabus

Course DESCRIPTION

This course will be based on the assumption that Islam is both a belief system and a world civilization. Therefore, all movements, sects and schools of thought will be treated as an integral part of Islam, broadly understood. The course will introduce Shi`ism as a general phenomenon within Muslim history, but will concentrate on Twelver Imami Shi’ism, as it is the most developed and influential Shi’ite legal school (madhhab). We will study Shi’ism in Muslim history from its beginning to the present. We will examine primary texts in translation, and when possible, in original languages. We will also read and discuss a good sampling of secondary literature.

This is a graduate seminar that will be based on class participation and lectures. Grading will be based on class attendance and participation, weekly readings and discussions, a class presentation of an individual research of a topic that will be developed into a 15-20 page final term paper.

Grading

Grades will be computed as follows: class participation, discussion and leading weekly book discussions 30 percent; class presentation of research topic 20 percent and final term paper 50 percent.

Course Outline and weekly topics

Week 1: I - Background
A. Islam: name, concept and worldview
B. Arabia before Islam: the place of Makkah and the impact of Judaism and Christianity.

Week 2: II - Formative History of the Muslim Ummah
A. The Prophet Muhammad and the Theocratic Community
B. The end of theocratic rule and the beginning of the Caliphate
C. The normative or “rightly guided (ra>shidu>n) first four caliphs.
Week 3: III - The beginnings of Shi`i history and the Umayyad caliphate
   A. from the death of `Ali, the first Shi`i Imam to the tragedy of Karbala’ and martyrdom of his son H{usayn, the third Imam.
   B. Protest movements: Shi`ism and Sufism.

Week 4: IV – The tragedy of Karbala and its devotional and ritualistic aspects
   A. Poetic portrayals of the Tragedy, Elegiac (mara>thi Literature)
   B. The ziya>rah or spiritual visitation to the Imam’s tomb
   C. Memorial services ((maja>lis al-`aza<‘)
   D. Visual portrayals, the Persian Passion Play (The shabi@h khaneh)
A video of Shi’I rituals will be shown.

Week 5: V - The Shi`ite Imams after Karbala’
   E. Ali@ Zayn al-`Abidin [son of H{usayn]
   B. his son Muhammad al-Baqir
   C. al-Baqir’s son the sixth Imam Ja`far al-Sadiq, the founder of the Ja`fari madhhab, or legal school.

Week 6: VI - Penitents, avengers and rebellious mawa>li@: Early Shi`ite extremist movements
   A. The Kaysa>niyyah
   B. The Khat{t{a>biyyah
   C. other temporary fringe movements.

Weeks 7and 8: VII - The Isma`i@liyyah
   A. rise and pre-Fatimid developments
   B. the Fatimid period
   C. the Duru>z (Druzes) sect
   D. post Fatimid developments

Weeks 9 and 10: VIII - The ithna`ashariyyah or Twelver Shi`ah
   A. the period of the Imams to the end of the minor occultation (al-ghaybah al-s{ughra>) of the Twelfth Imam
   B. Beginning of the Greater Occultation (al-ghaybah al-kubra>): crisis and consolidation
   C. Buid support and the crystallization of moderate Shi`ism
   D. Shi`ism under the Seljuks and Mongols

Week 11: IX – Development of the Religious Sciences
   A. The Qur’a<n and sunnah in the view of the Shi`ah and rise of Shi’I hadi@th: the Four Books and other sources
   b. Juris Prudence (fiqh)
   c. Theology (kala<m)
   d. Philosophy and mysticism (`irfa<n)
Week 12: X - The Nuṣayrī - ʿAlawīs
A. Introduction to Nuṣayrī history
B. ʿAlawīs religion
C. The ʿAlawīs of Syria in modern times

Week 14: XI - Safavid Iran [1600] to the Iranian Islamic Revolution, 1979
A. Consolidation of Shiʿite power under the Safavids and the role of the ʿulamaʾ>
B. post Safavid developments: the Religious Establishment and the authority of the supreme mujtahid, or marjaʾ
C. Shiʿism in the twentieth century, before the Revolution
D. The Islamic Revolution and after: whither Shiʿism?

Required Readings:

5. Fyzee, Asaf A. A, A Shiʿite Creed, World Organization for Islamic Services, Tehran, Third edition 1999/1420

* Denotes books you need to buy. The rest will be made available online or electronically through email.
Recommended Readings


For further research and additional readings, please consult the extensive library of Shi`ite sources on line: www.al-islam.org.
All required books will be assigned for weekly readings, where two students will introduce a book and lead a discussion of it. It is of course assumed that all students will also have read each book in the assigned, and not listed order. This is an important part of your class participation, which will constitute 30% of your final grade.