Preliminary Syllabus

HARTFORD SEMINARY, SPRING 2011

Islamic Political Theology (TH-692)

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Class sessions: Thursdays, 7:00 pm to 9:20 pm
Office hours: Tuesdays, from 2:00 pm to 3:00 pm
Thursdays, from 5:30 pm to 6:30 pm

Course Description

This course offers an in-depth exploration of geographically and thematically organized case studies that address Muslim theological approaches to politics in the 20th and 21st centuries. Our case studies will include political discourses from Egypt, Iran, Turkey, India, Pakistan, and the United States. Our thematic exploration will range from theories of withdrawal from and the shaping of modern political systems. Particular attention will be paid to the analysis of discourses on modernity, gender, memory and uses of tradition, and Muslim minorities’ participation in public life. A background information about modern world history, particularly of the Islamic countries, would be very helpful. Please note that this course is a seminar, which means that all students must contribute to each class discussion, both orally and in writing. The format of analyzing case studies has the specific aim of refining each student’s written and oral interpretative skills.

Evaluation

Grading will be based on

1. Weekly reflections/“talking points” (30%)
2. Mid-term essay (20%) – due on March 3
3. Class presentation (10%)
4. Final essay (30%) – due on May 9
5. Class participation (10%).

Logistics

1) Weekly Reflections:

You will be expected to analyze and discuss the assigned readings at each session. Weekly reflections will be your “talking points.” They will help you organize your thoughts and prepare for each class.
Our class meets on Thursdays at 7:00 pm. You will be required to post your reflection on our class page on SONISWEB by 12:00 pm on the day of the class. In addition, make sure to print out and submit to me one hard copy of your reflection at the start of each class.

Each reflection must be around 2 pages (a bit less or a bit more does not matter). Please approach each reflection as a dialogue between you and the readings. In other words, what are your thoughts on one or two points an author makes? What are some questions that have arisen while you read the assignment?

It is up to you to shape each reflection. Some possible ways may be to

- Reflect on an idea you found intriguing
- Explore how an author presents a particular theme
- Think through implications of a particular idea (don’t make it too broad)
- Compare between this and previous weeks’ readings.
- Trace how this week’s reading speaks to a theme we have encountered earlier.

Make sure that each reflection contains 2 or 3 written questions to be asked in class.

You will be required to start submitting reflections as of our 2nd session. The grade for this assignment will be based on the quantity and quality of your submissions. I will return printed copies of your reflection with a grade of either a “+” or a “-.” Plus stands for pass, and minus for fail.

The scale for the final evaluation will be as follows:

- A=11 passing entries
- B=8 passing entries
- C+ = 6 passing entries
- C=5 passing entries
- F=4 or fewer passing entries.

No late submissions will be accepted. There will be no way to make up for missed reflections.

2) Midterm and Final Essays:

You will have to submit two essays during the semester. The midterm essay should be 5-7 pages in length. The final essay should be 10-12 pages.

I will assign the topic for the midterm paper. However, you will be responsible for selecting the subject of your final essay.

Please feel free to contact me with your ideas for both papers at any stage of preparation.

Grading standards for the essays will be:
A = Excellent. Excellent presentation and analysis that demonstrates original interpretation.
B = Good. Solid command of facts and good attempt at analysis.
C+ = Adequate in the sense of doing minimal compliance with the assignment.
C = Poor; did not complete the assignment adequately but shows some effort.
F = Failing; did not complete the assignment.

3) Class Presentation:

At the end of semester, we will hold three sessions where each student will present and defend their proposal for the final essay. In the week when you present your proposal, you will not be required to submit a reflection. Instead, you will e-mail me your proposal, which must include: a) preliminary title; b) thesis statement (1 paragraph); c) brief outline of your analysis; d) bibliography.

Texts


9) Hamid Dabashi, *Islamic Liberation Theology: Resisting the Empire* (Routledge, 2008)


*Additional primary and secondary literature will be assigned. These texts will be available either on SONISWEB, via e-mail, or as links to online sources.

Schedule

1) January 27 – Introduction:

2) February 3 - A bit of theory and history

• Carl Schmidt, *Political Theology* (the whole book)


3) February 10 – Arab Middle East: Ideologies of Resurgence

• Abu-Rabi, *Intellectual Origins*, pp. ix-91

• Hasan Al-Banna, “New Renaissance: The Viewpoint of the Muslim Brotherhood,” pp. 115-121 (available on SONISWEB)

• Mahmud Shaltut, “Socialism and Islam,” pp. 126-133

• Recommended (not required):

4) February 17 – Continued – Ideologies of Resurgence

• Abu-Rabi, pp. 92-219

• The Sayyid Qutb Reader – selections from the *Milestones* and *In the Shade of the Qur’an*, pp. 35-150

5) February 24 – Case Study: Ibn Taymiyya and His Modern Interlocutors

• Yahya Michot, Ibn Taymiyya on Muslims under non-Muslim Rule, pp. ix – 132.


6) March 3 – Case Study: Women - Interpreters and Interpreted


• Zainab al-Ghazali, Return of the Pharaoh: Memoir in Nasir’s Prison (selected sections – TBD)

• Amina Wadud, Qur’an and Woman (selected sections- TBD)

**Due date for midterm essays**

7) March 10 – Iran: Politics and Women

• Ziba Mir-Hosseini, Islam and Gender: The Religious Debate in Contemporary Iran
8) March 17 – Iran: Political Theology
   - Shariati, Khomeini, – selection of texts TBD (all available online or SONISWEB)

9) March 24 – South Asia: Political Theology – Overview

10) March 31 – South Asia: Political Theology – Primary texts
    Iqbal and Mawdudi – TBD (all available online or SONISWEB)

11) April 7 – Islamic Liberation Theology?
    - Abu-Rabi, 220-264
    - Hamid Dabashi, Islamic Liberation Theology (selected sections – TBD)

12) April 14 – The US: Case Study One - W.D. Mohammed and American Public Life
    - W.D. Mohammed – audio recording, 1987 lecture at Masjid Bilal, Cleveland, OH

April 21 – No Class

13) April 28 – The US: Case Study Two - Hamza Yusuf and American Public Life
    - Hamza Yusuf – video recording, selection from two speeches (TBD)
    - Recommended (not required): selections from Shaykh Abdallah Bin Bayyah and Hamza Yusuf, Sacred Law in Secular Lands, audio recording.

Papers Due – May 9