Islam and the West: Historical and Contemporary Dimensions

Instructor: Dr. Marcela Perett
Class Times: Monday, Wednesday 10:45-12:15
Class Location: P98A Seminar Room 4
Office: Platanenstr. 98a.U.04
Office Hours: Thursday 15:00-16:30 or by appointment
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Course Description

This course introduces students to the foundations of Christianity and Islam, with an emphasis on their mutual dialogue, coexistence and competition. Reflecting on Samuel Huntington’s provocative thesis about the inevitable “clash of civilizations,” the class examines the interaction between Christians and Muslims in the period from the sixth century to the present, with special attention to the rise of Islam and the Crusades in the Middle East. After a brief introduction to the sacred texts and customs of both religious traditions, we will spend each week studying different moments in the interaction between Christians and Muslims through the lens of a particular set of sources. Although issues of religion will be addressed, we will focus on cultural, intellectual, literary, political, economic, and military encounters and exchange. Special attention will be given to Iberia and the central Mediterranean, but the wider Mediterranean and the Middle East will also be considered. The course is designed around primary sources (presented in translation) and focuses on the skills of reading, interpreting and critiquing historical sources in the context of Christian-Muslim debates whose outcome has made the Western world what it is today.

Course Policies and Requirements

Students are expected to come to every class on time and prepared. Readings should be completed in advance of the planned discussion. Students’ class participation grade depends on meeting these requirements. More than two absences (that is absences from two sessions of 90 minutes) in a semester will significantly affect the grade for the course. Each further
absence will lower your final grade by 10%.

Every student will write two essays (2500-2750 words). Essays should argue a thesis or main idea in clear prose. To do so they should draw evidence from the primary text. At the center of the endeavor should be the text’s intelligent analysis; only the relevant primary text(s) is needed in writing your essays, no further research is required.

Because clarity of oral expression must also be practiced, every student will also give two presentations of 15 minutes in length analyzing one primary and one secondary text (to be handed out by the instructor) to the class.

There will be a map quiz, given on a pre-arranged date. Further “surprise” quizzes may be given in class. If so, each quiz will count as 5% of the participation grade.

Grading

Grading will be distributed as follows:

35% Participation
20% Class presentations
40% Essays
5% Map quiz

Books

Students will need the following books. Used copies are fine as long as the edition is the same.

5) Course pack (CP)
Class Schedule and Readings

Introduction to the Course
Week 1:
9/1 Introduction to the Course: Class Goals and Policies

9/3 Clash of Civilizations?
Read for today:
Samuel Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations” in CP

9/11 and Its Legacy for Christian-Muslim Interactions
Week 2:
9/8 9/11 and the War on Iraq
Read for today:

9/10 Repercussions of the Iraq War
Read for today:
Remarks by Vice President Dick Cheney Before the Council on Foreign Relations, New York Times, 16 February 2002

Week 3:
9/15 Religion and/in Politics
Read for today:
Fawaz A. Gerges, “The Great Satan, Near and Far” in Journey of the Jihadist: Inside Muslim Militancy, chapter 4, in CP

Map Quiz

9/17 Perceptions of Modern Islam:
Film Screening and Discussion at 19:30 in Lecture Hall

Historical Origins of Christianity and Islam
Week 4:
9/22   Jesus and Christianity I
Read for today:
Gospel of Luke

9/24   Jesus and Christianity II
Read for today:
Gospel of Luke

Week 5:
9/29   Christianity Becomes Institutionalized
Read for today:
Letter of Polycarp to the Philippians and the Martyrdom of Polycarp in CP

10/1   The Prophet and His Revelations
Read for today:
Sura 17, 51, 60
Armstrong, *Islam: A Short History*, 1-37

Week 6:
10/6   The Foundations of Islam I
Read for today:
Sura 20, 21, 22
Esposito, *Islam: The Straight Path*, 68-93 in CP

10/8   The Foundations of Islam II
Read for today:
Sura 1, 47, 48
Esposito, *Islam: The Straight Path*, 93-100 in CP

The Beginning of Christian-Muslim Dialogue
Week 7:
10/13  The Quran as the Guiding Principle for Life
Read for today:
Christians in the Quran: Sura 2:1-177, Sura 3, Sura 4: 170-171, Sura 5
The *Quran* and Holy War: Sura 8, 9, 10

10/15  Early Attempts at Christian-Muslim Dialogue
Read for today:
John of Damascus, *On the Heresies* (the opening paragraphs) in CP
Constable 107-09 (On the inconsistencies of the 4 gospels) in CP

10/20-10/24  Fall Break

Week 8:
10/27  Muslim Conquest of Spain + Essay Writing Workshop
Read for today:
Arabic and Christian accounts of the 711 conquest of Spain in *Conquerors and Chroniclers of Early Medieval Spain* (Liverpool, 1999): The Chronicle of Alfonso III (161-177) in CP
*Pact of Umar* (describing the status of non-Muslims under Muslim rule) in CP
Armstrong, *Islam: A Short History*, 38-77

10/29  Christians in Muslim Spain: Martyrdom
Read for today:
Paul Alvarus’s *Life of Eulogius* in CP
Coope, *The Martyrs of Cordoba* (Lincoln, NB, 1995) chapter 4 and 6, 55-69, 80-90 in CP

11/1  Essay 1 Due by 11:59 pm

**Reconquista in Medieval Iberia**

Week 9:
11/3  *Reconquista* in Literature I
Read for today:
*Poem of the Cid*, First Cantar

11/5  *Reconquista* in Literature II
Read for today:
*Poem of the Cid*, Second Cantar

Week 10:
11/10  *Reconquista* in Literature III
Read for today:
Poem of the Cid, Third Cantar

Medieval Crusades: Christian and Muslim Perspectives
11/12 Convening the First Crusade
Read for today:
Pope Urban II at the Council of Clermont, 25-37
Riley-Smith, The crusades: a short history, 1-25

Week 11:
11/17 The First, and Only Successful, Crusade
Read for today:
Fulcher, A History of the Expedition to Jerusalem, 112-37 in CP
Riley-Smith, The crusades: a short history, 26-49 and 109-120 in CP

11/19 The Noble Saladin and the Third Crusade
Read for today:
Gabrielli, Arab Historians of the Crusades, 73-84 and 87-113 in CP

Week 12:
11/24 The Fall of Jerusalem
Read for today:
Gabrielli, Arab Historians of the Crusades, 138-175 in CP
Capture of Jerusalem by Saladin in CP
Roger of Hoveden, The Fall of Jerusalem in CP

11/26 No Class

11/27 Perceptions of Medieval Islam: Film Screening and Discussion at 19:30 in Lecture Hall

The Challenges of Modernity
Week 13:
12/1 Muslim Brotherhood
Read for today:
“Milestones” in The Sayyid Qutb Reader,” 35-42 in CP
Armstrong, Islam: A Short History, 115-138

12/3 Radical Solutions
Read for today: “The Spoils of War” in *The Sayyid Qutb Reader,* 43-81 in CP

Week 14:
12/8  Fundamentalism and *jihad*
Read for today:
“Religion and Society in Christianity and Islam” in *The Sayyid Qutb Reader,“* 150-160 in CP
Tibi, *Islamism and Islam,* 1-30 in CP
12/9  Film Screening and Discussion in Lecture Hall at 19:30
12/10 No Class

Week 15:
Completion Week

**12/19**  Final Essay Due by 11:59 pm