

UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY  
FACULTY OF ARTS  
DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES

RELS 357 L01  
*Islam*

COURSE OUTLINE – FALL 2013

**Place and Time:** MW 2:00-2:50pm in ST 064. Friday attendance is optional (see below).

**Instructor:** Dr. David A. Bergen, 403-220-7063, dabergen@ucalgary.ca

**Office:** SS 1308

**Office Hours:** MW 11:00am-12:00pm (other times available by appointment).

**Required Textbooks:**

Bernard Lewis, *What Went Wrong: The Clash Between Islam and Modernity in the Middle East* (Harper, 2002), 160 pages.

Efraim Karsh, *Islamic Imperialism: A History* (Yale University Press, 2007), 304 pages.

Karen Armstrong, *Islam: A Short History* (Modern Library), 191 pages.

**Optional Textbooks (for Friday discussion):**

Jenkins, Keith *Rethinking History* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003).

Kahldoun Samman, *The Clash of Modernities: The Islamist Challenge to Jewish and Arab Nationalism* (Paradigm, 2011)

Additional PDF readings in Blackboard (“Course Documents”).

**Description and Objectives:**

This course will investigate Islamicate civilization from three scholarly perspectives. Utilizing Karen Armstrong’s paperback presentation (‘a small gem, bristling with insight’, according to *The Washington Post*), an overview of a history of Islam will be studied (Monday). Armstrong’s “short history” will then be triangulated with two provocative presentations of Islamicate civilization: Efraim Karsh and Bernard Lewis (Wednesday). In discussing these three perspectives, students will gain an understanding of the contested nature of academic scholarship, in particular the discursive field of Islamic studies.

In addition to the Monday and Wednesday discussion, an additional *and entirely optional* component will be offered on Friday for those students who:

- possess the time (or wish to make time) for intensive academic learning;<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Between course requirements and employment demands, time is often a scarce commodity for many students. The structure of this course recognizes this fact and permits students to choose the intensity of academic learning they may wish to experience in this course. Furthermore, structuring the Friday discussions as optional deliberately situates high-level analysis beyond the fatal undertow of hegemonic instrumentalism that so saturates our society, our university, and our thinking.

- remember the idealistic, even purist motivations that first compelled them in the direction of the university;
- are keen on high-level intellectual abstraction and analysis;
- value (meta-) critical analysis for its own sake (i.e., without instrumental concern for grade results); and/or
- are contemplating graduate studies with the possibility of a career in academics.

For such students, Friday's discussions will delight and provoke as we engage New Historicist theory to analyze conventional constructions of (Islamic) history. In reflecting on "history" as a strategy for myth-making and power-structuring, key questions will be raised: Whose past is being narrated? Who is telling the story? For which audience (and within which discourse) does a particular historiography create understanding and power?

### **Learning Assessments (Monday and Wednesday Materials)**

#### **A. Demonstration of Knowledge (60%)**

Students will demonstrate content knowledge of the Armstrong presentation and associated Monday lectures in three equally weighted exams, to be written on Sept 30, Nov 4, and Nov 18.

#### **B. Demonstration of Understanding (40%)**

Students will demonstrate understanding of the discursive field of Islamic studies in one of two ways:

##### **Written Paper –Deadline Dec 2**

A 5-6 page paper that focuses on a single point of dialogical collision between the published positions of Karsh, Armstrong, Lewis, and one additional source (to be announced by Nov 1).

*OR, if a minimum of five brave students commit to a debate ...*

##### **Academic Debate (Dec 2 – 6)**

Three rounds of academic debate, to take place in the last week of the term. Each round will first involve the setting forth of positions on a question or topic related to our discussion of Islamic studies, followed by challenges and questions from other debaters and students. The questions for the first two rounds of debate will be published at least two weeks in advance of the debate week. The question for the third round of debate will be stated impromptu at the beginning of class. The first two rounds of debate will be each worth 15%, and the final round will be worth 20%.

NOTE: The debate week requires a quorum of five brave students who are interested in debating specific questions related to our Monday and Wednesday discussions. If this minimum requirement is not met, all students will be required to submit a written paper, as described above. If the requirement is met, then only those students interested in the debate will participate. The rest of the class will indulge themselves as the interested and engaged debate audience.

#### **C. Participation Bonus (10%)**

Students will be graded on the quality of their participation in the Wednesday class discussions and given a bonus mark of up to 10%, to be added to their "demonstration of understanding" grade (either the written paper or the debate).

*\*There will be no Registrar scheduled final examination in this course.*

### **Student Responsibilities:**

- *enter* in their personal calendar all deadlines pertinent to the assessments of this course (see schedule in Blackboard);
- *read* thoroughly the assigned pages and prepare for weekly lectures and discussions (see schedule posted in Blackboard, Course Information);
- *check* regularly and frequently for email messages and the Blackboard site for updates, changes, and announcements;
- *study* hard and smart, allotting sufficient time prior to each test for rereading of textbook material.

### **Additional Important Details:**

Please note these important details:

- marks for the tests will be posted in Blackboard within a week of their completion;
- a passing grade on any of the regular tests or group assignments is not essential for passing the course;
- no external aids (e.g., student notes or textbook) are permitted during the written tests.
- a passing grade on any of the graded components is not essential for passing the course.
- the University Calendar states:  
“It is the responsibility of students who have prolonged absences from class because of physical and/or emotional health problems to present to the faculty office offering the course a statement from a physician/counselor attesting to the physical or emotional health of the student.”
- please note that the University of Calgary regulations strictly prohibit the following during written examinations (the penalty for which is suspension or expulsion or such other penalty as may be determined):
  - speaking to other candidates or communicating with them under any circumstances whatsoever;
  - bringing into the examination room any textbook, notebook, or document not authorized by the examiner;
  - leaving answer papers exposed to view
  - attempting to read other student’s examination work.

### **Academic Honesty**

Plagiarism is not tolerated at the University of Calgary and has serious consequences. Your essays/presentations must be your own work and inadequate referencing may be seen as plagiarism. Please see the relevant sections on Academic Misconduct in the current University Calendar. If you have questions about correct referencing, please consult your instructor.

### **Academic Accommodation**

It is the student's responsibility to request academic accommodations. If you are a student with a documented disability who may require academic accommodation and have not registered with Student Accessibility Services, please contact their office at 403-220-8237. Students who have not registered with Student Accessibility Services are not eligible for formal academic accommodation. You are also required to discuss your needs with your instructor no later than **fourteen (14) days** after the start of the course.

### **Blackboard Help**

Go to <http://www.ucalgary.ca/computersupport/online-services/blackboard> for Student Help and FAQs about Blackboard. Troubleshooting tips and a tutorial are available at <http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/blackboard/students>. Instructions for using the Digital Drop Box are available here:

[http://library.blackboard.com/docs/r6/6\\_1/student/bbbs\\_r6\\_1\\_student/digital\\_drop\\_box.htm](http://library.blackboard.com/docs/r6/6_1/student/bbbs_r6_1_student/digital_drop_box.htm).

### **Gnosis**

Gnosis is the Religious Studies Student Club. For membership or more information please email: [gno-sis@ucalgary.ca](mailto:gno-sis@ucalgary.ca) or visit <http://www.ucalgary.ca/~gnosis>.

### **Faculty of Arts Program Advising and Student Information Resources**

- Have a question, but not sure where to start? The Faculty of Arts Program Information Centre (PIC) is your information resource for everything in Arts! Drop in at SS110, call us at 403-220-3580 or email us at [artsads@ucalgary.ca](mailto:artsads@ucalgary.ca). You can also visit the Faculty of Arts website at <http://arts.ucalgary.ca/undergraduate> which has detailed information on common academic concerns.
- For program planning and advice, contact the Student Success Centre at (403) 220-5881 or visit them on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of the Taylor Family Digital Library.
- For registration (add/drop/swap), paying fees and assistance with your Student Centre, contact Enrolment Services at (403) 210-ROCK [7625] or visit them at the MacKimmie Library Block.

### **Student Ombudsperson and Students' Union Representative**

The Student Ombuds Office provides independent, impartial and confidential support for students who require assistance and advice in addressing issues and concerns related to their academic careers. See [www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds](http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds) for more information.

The Students' Union Faculty of Arts representative can be reached at [arts1@ucalgary.ca](mailto:arts1@ucalgary.ca).

### **Emergency Evacuation Assembly Point**

In case of an emergency evacuation during class, students must gather at the designated assembly point nearest to the classroom. The list of assembly points is found at [www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints](http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints). Please check this website and not the nearest assembly point for this course.

### **Safewalk**

The Safewalk program provides volunteers to walk students safely to their destination anywhere on campus (including McMahon Stadium, Health Sciences, Student Family Housing, the Alberta Children's Hospital and the University LRT station). This service is free and available to students, staff and campus visitors 24 hrs/day, 365 days a year. Call 403-220-5333 or use one of the Help phones located throughout campus to request a walk.