Legal opinions issued by Muslim scholars relate to all individual and collective aspects of the material and spiritual life of the believers who ask for them. When used with an appropriate methodology, they offer great avenues, sometimes even amazing ones, to explore the everyday realities and interrogations of Muslim societies, past and present. Coffee, tobacco, cannabis, opium and other drugs, music, dance, trance and sex, marginality, extremism and violence, pious practices and social conventions, relations with non-Muslims and jihād are among the topics considered in this course. Mamlûk, Ottoman and modern sources (both from books and the internet) will be read and commented on. No knowledge of Arabic is required for this course. A basic knowledge of Islam and the history of Muslim societies would be useful.

Class will meet: Monday June 21st to Friday June 25th, 9-12 am & 1-4 pm.

Course Objectives

1) Students should be able to find their way around in the major reference works on fatwā jurisprudence.
2) They are expected to gain an acquaintance with some major social-cultural debates in classical and modern Islamic societies.
3) They should also be able to have an informed opinion on some modern religious controversies.
4) They should be able to benefit from the methodological approach adopted in these classes and apply it for their own studies and/or research projects.

Course Requirements

1) It is strongly recommended that the student arrive at the first class already having a general knowledge about the religion of Islam, as well as about the history and geography of Muslim peoples.
They should also be able to find their way around in the major reference tools for Islamic Studies (Encyclopaedia of Islam, Index Islamicus…).

2) Active class participation (THE ASSIGNMENTS ARE ESSENTIAL) & presentations, regular attendance. If you are unable to attend class, please contact the Professor.

The final grade will be based upon the following:

1) Active class participation (40%).
2) The oral presentation required in Class VIII (Th. June 24, afternoon, 30%).
3) A final research paper (10 pages*) on some fatwā, past or present, and its social-cultural context. The topic should be chosen by the end of the course in consultation with the Professor. This paper will be due by the end of July 2010 (30%).

* All written work is to conform to the seminary writing guidelines, which can be found online at: http://www.hartsem.edu/student/forms/researchpaperguide.pdf. The Hartford Seminary Grading Guidelines will be the standard of evaluation for work in the course.

Class Schedule

I. MON., JUNE 21, MORNING. INTRODUCTION. MUFTĪS, THEIR FATWĀS, AND MUSLIM SOCIETIES

General references:
Düzdağ, Mehmet Ertugrul, Seyhülislâm Ebussu’ud Efendi’nin fetvalarına göre Kanunî Devrinde Osmanlî Hayatî [Ottoman life in the time of Soliman the Magnificent, according to the fetwās of Shaykh al-Islām Abû l-Su’ûd] (İstanbul: Sûle Yayinlari, ‘Tarihi Gerçekler Dizisi, 7’, 1998).
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fatw%C4%81

Assignments:
EI2 (= Encyclopedia of Islam), art. Fatwā.

Choose from books, the press, journals, or the internet, for presentation and discussion in class, an article or video relating to the authority of muftīs and the role of fatwās in Islamic Law and societies, past and present.

II. MON., JUNE 21, AFTERNOON. MUSIC, DANCE AND TRANCE

General references:
IV.

III.

Saraçgil, A., Hattox

General references:


Choose from books, the press, journals, or the internet, for presentation and discussion in class, a fatwâ, article or video relating to this class’ topics.

III. TUE., JUNE 22, MORNING. CANNABIS, OPIUM, ETC.

General references:


Assignments:

EI2, art. Afyûn, Bandi.


Choose from books, the press, journals, or the internet, for presentation and discussion in class, a fatwâ, article or video relating to this class’ topics.

IV. TUE., JUNE 22, AFTERNOON. COFFEE AND TOBACCO

General references:


Assignments:
EI2, art. Kahwa, Tutun.


Choose from books, the press, journals, or the internet, for presentation and discussion in class, a fatwā, article or video relating to this class’ topics.

V. WED. JUNE 23, MORNING. MARRIAGE, LOVE AND SEX

General references:

Assignments:

Choose from books, the press, journals, or the internet, for presentation and discussion in class, a fatwā, article or video relating to this class’ topics.

VI. WED. JUNE 23, AFTERNOON. MEDICINE, ASTROLOGY AND CHARLATANRY

General references:

Assignments:

Choose from books, the press, journals, or the internet, for presentation and discussion in class, a fatwā, article or video relating to this class’ topics.

VII. THUR. JUNE 24, MORNING. THE CITY, THE MARKET, THE COUNTRYSIDE

General references:


Assignments:


Choose from books, the press, journals, or the internet, for presentation and discussion in class, a fatwā, article or video relating to this class’ topics.

VIII. THUR. JUNE 24, AFTERNOON. BE YOUR OWN MUFTI

Fatwā Banks & Collections:

ISLAMONLINE.NET: http://www.islamonline.net/completesearch/english/CounsellorSearch.asp?hID=0.

ISLAM TODAY: http://en.islamtoday.net/Fatwa-Archive.

FATWAISLAM.COM: http://www.fatwaislam.com/fis/.

Assignment: Investigate, present, and discuss with the class, in its societal context, an ancient or modern fatwā concerning one of the topics NOT explored during this week.

IX. FRI. JUNE 25, MORNING. JIHĀD AND TYRANNY

General references:


Assignments:


Choose from books, the press, journals, or the internet, for presentation and discussion in class, a fatwā, article or video relating to this class’ topics.

X. FRI. JUNE 25, AFTERNOON. WITH MUSLIMS AND NON-MUSLIMS

General references:


Assignments:
The New Mardin Declaration. (http://www.kalamresearch.com/component/content/article/23-the-mardin-conference.html)
Select an internet article relating to the Mardin Conference, for presentation and discussion in class.