Readings in the Shi’i Tradition

SYLLABUS

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Course Description

This course is intended to familiarize students with the rich heritage of Shi’i Islam. In this brief venture into Shi’I thought and history an attempt is made to let primary sources, both classical and contemporary speak for the Shi’I tradition. We shall limit our study to Ithna’ashari, or Twelve-imami Shi’ism, it being the largest and most influential Shi’I community.

The course will be conducted as a graduate seminar, where student participation is essential. Presentations introducing a given topic or theme will be made as needed.

Attendance

Attendance and on-time arrival is expected at all class sessions. If you are unable to attend a class session please inform the instructor or teaching assistant in advance so arrangements for make-up work can be made. Since attendance and participation constitute 10% of your grade, excessive tardiness or absence will lower your grade. Students who miss more than one class will not be able to successfully pass the course.

Course Schedule and Daily Readings

Most readings, unless otherwise noted, will be found in the extensive library of Shi’I sources online: www.al-islam.org


Day 2: Shi’I Literature - Biographies of the Imams Muhamad Ibn Ali, his son Ja’far al-
Sadiq, and the Twelfth Imam in Kitab al-Irshad by al-Mufid. These are in SonisWeb. Interpretation (tafsir) of the Qur’an and the words of the Imam.
   a. Mahmoud Ayoub – Principles and Development of Shi’a Tafsir.

Day 3: Shi’I devotions and supplications, Theology and Mysticism
   d. Shi’I Theology (Kalam) Shi’ite Anthology, part I On the Unity of God and - Shiite Creed by al-Shaykh al-Saduq (Ibn Babawayh al-Qummi). Shiite Creed can be found online: [http://www.scribd.com/doc/7620120/Shia-Creed
   e. Shi’i Mysticism and Gnosis (‘irfan): Light within me, an anthology of writings by Mutahhari, Khomeini and Tabatabai [http://www.al-islam.org/lwm/ parts 1 and 2 by Mutahhari and Tabatabab

Day 4: Jurisprudence (fiqh) and Religious Authority
   a. Questions on Jurisprudence (by Sharaf al-Din al-‘ameli explaining the peculiar Shi’i juridical viewpoints) [http://www.al-islam.org/masail

Day 5: Contemporary Shi’a political thought:
   a. Islam and Revolution 1: Islamic Government from Writings and Declarations of Imam Khomeini translated and edited by Hamid Algar p. 27-167
c. Class presentations, concluding the course.

**Course Requirements**

All students are expected to read all daily readings on time and participate in discussions. Beginning with Day 2, two students each day will prepare discussion starters for the assigned reading for that particular day. Students will be assigned their designated time on the first day by the instructor and TA. Every student will prepare a final term paper of 12-15 pages in length, with proper footnotes or endnotes and bibliography. All students will be asked – the second half of day 5 -to share the fruits of their research and ideas for the final paper with the rest of the students in a 10 minute class presentation.

**Grading**

Grades will be computed as follows:

- Class attendance and general participation 10%
- Introducing the readings and class presentations 40%
- Final term paper 50%

**Required Texts for purchase**


**For Further Reading**


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*Khamenei’s Ajwibat al-Istifta’at* (Practical Laws of Islam)  


For further research and additional readings, please consult the extensive library of Shi’ite sources on line: [www.al-islam.org](http://www.al-islam.org).