Preliminary Syllabus

HARTFORD SEMINARY, SPRING 2015

Islamic Political Theology (TH-692)

Timur Yuskaev, PhD
Office: Budd Building, Room 8
E-mail: yuskaev@hartsem.edu
Phone: 860-509-9554

Office hours:

Tuesdays and Thursdays from 12:00 pm to 2:30 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, 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. Familiarity with modern world and Muslim history is 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 and Participation in Discussions (30%)
2. Mid-term essay (30%) – due date TBA.
3. Final essay (40%) – due date TBA

Logistics

1) Weekly Reflections and Discussion Forum:

You will need to participate in the class discussion forum each week. In an online course, the discussion forum functions in the same way that classroom discussions do in a face-to-face setting. These are your opportunities to engage with other students and the instructor. This is your chance to share and test your ideas.
Your participation in the discussion forum is mandatory. And, it should consist of three components:

- Your reflections on the assigned material
- One question about the readings
- Your short answers to fellow classmates and respectful comments on their ideas.

Your weekly reflections should address one of the discussion questions I will post at the end of each lesson. These assignments are designed to help you analyze the material and generate class discussion.

The reflections should be at least 300 words in length, but don’t make them too long either – at most around 600 words!

Each reflection should end with a question that relates to the assigned text. Your question may or may not relate to the subject of your reflection. It is just an opportunity for you to talk with other students, as well as your instructor, about something that stirred your interest. It is very important that you keep up this routine of asking questions. We will use them to jump start our discussions.

In most cases, you will be expected to complete the readings and post your reflections by **Wednesday**. By **Thursday**, you will have to read other students’ reflections, find a question that they ask that intrigues you most, and answer it in the discussion forum. If someone answers your question, try to respond to their answer. If nobody answers your question, try to engage in a discussion that addresses another student’s inquiry. You must post all of your consequent responses (ongoing discussion, as in when you would like to respond to more than one reflection, or respond to somebody’s comments on your reflection) by 11:59 pm on Sunday each week.

Your reflections will be graded as either acceptable (check) or unacceptable (minus). All you have to do to receive a check is to briefly but substantively answer one of the discussion questions. This means that you will have to

- Formulate your answer
- Provide brief reference to something in the texts that supports your answer.
- Make sure that your reflection is at least 300 words in length
- Make sure to submit your reflection on time.

The grading scale for the reflections is:

- A = 12 acceptable entries
- B = 11 acceptable entries
- C = 10 acceptable entries
- F = fewer than 10 acceptable entries

Once you post your reflections on the discussion forum, I will comment on it on the blackboard. In some cases, I will e-mail my response to you directly. This will be in cases where your
reflection is going off track, or if I have some further suggestions for your personal progress in the course.

Make sure to keep all your reflections after you submit them. **On the last day of class, you will have to e-mail me a portfolio of all of your reflections** (cut and past them into one Word document).

Note that your reflections by themselves will amount to 20% of the overall grade. Your participation in the general discussion (answers and comments) will count toward 10%.

---

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.

---

**Texts**

• Albert J. Bergesen, *The Sayyid Qutb Reader: Selected Writings on Politics, Religion and Society* (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**

**Week 1: Introduction**

• “Religion and Political Theory,” in Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy:  

**Week 2: Introduction**

• Khaled Abou El Fadl, “Islam and the Challenge of Democracy: Can individual rights and popular sovereignty take root in faith?”  
  [http://bostonreview.net/BR28.2/abou.html](http://bostonreview.net/BR28.2/abou.html)

**Week 3: Theory**

• Carl Schmidt, *Political Theology*, Preface, Ch 1 - Ch 3 (pp. 1-53)

**Week 4: Theory**

• Carl Schmidt, *Political Theology*, Ch. 4 (pp. 53-67)

**Week 5: 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
Week 6:


Week 7:

- Abu-Rabi, pp. 92-219
- The Sayyid Qutb Reader – selections from the Milestones and In the Shade of the Qur’an, pp. 35-150

Week 8: Case Study: Ibn Taymiyya and His Modern Interlocutors


Week 9: Case Study: Women - Interpreters and Interpreted

- Zainab al-Ghazali, Return of the Pharaoh: Memoir in Nasir’s Prison (entire text; but read selectively; posted on SONIS)
- Amina Wadud, Inside the Gender Jihad, Chapters 1 and 6

Week 10: Iran: Politics and Women

- Ziba Mir-Hosseini, Islam and Gender: The Religious Debate in Contemporary Iran, pp. 1-280

Week 11: Wednesday, March 20: Iran: Political Theology

- Shariati – selection of texts TBD
- Taleqani, Taleqani’s last sermon
- Khomeini – selection of texts TBD
- Bazargan, “Religion and Liberty”
• Selection from Fischer and Abedi, *Debating Muslims: Cultural Dialogues in Postmodernity and Tradition*

Week 12: Theoretical Reflections

• Asad, *Formations of the Secular Modern*

Week 13: South Asia: Political Theology – Overview

• Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam*, pp. 1-192

Week 14: Iqbal and Rahman

• Fazlur Rahman, Major Themes of the Qur’an (an excerpt; TBD)

Week 15: The US: Case Study - Hamza Yusuf and American Public Life

• Yuskaev, draft of Chapter 5 from *Speaking Qur’an*, “Qur’an and Politics”
• Jose Casanova, “Civil Society and Religion: Retrospective Reflections on Catholicism and Prospective Reflections on Islam.”
• View two online videos by Hamza Yusuf

  a) “Making Sense of Our Past” (There are many places one can find it. One of them is on http://www.aswatalislam.net/FilesList.aspx?T=Video&C=Lectures&T1=Hamza%20Yusuf)

  b) “Give and Take for God’s Sake” (you can find this one easily on YouTube and elsewhere)