

**GC-560 Reflection on Ministry Experience (Syllabus)  
The Imam Training Program (Hartford Seminary  
and the International Institute for Islamic Thought)  
October-March, 2017-18, 4:00-7:30pm at IIIT**

Dr. Larry Golemon:

[lgolemon@washtheocon.org](mailto:lgolemon@washtheocon.org) ph: 1-703-232-5303 (cell)

This is a 12 week seminar dedicated to reflection on the practice of imams and other Muslim leaders in their local *masjid* or ministry setting. The course will include readings on reflective practice and religious leadership, but the focus will be on peer learning from the actual practice of Muslim leaders in their own communities. The goal is for each participant to shape a form of reflective practice that integrates their approach to Islamic theology and thought with the daily demands of providing leadership, instruction, and spiritual care to local Muslim communities.

**Learning Goals:** This seminar is a peer-learning process that builds on the growing trust, reflective wisdom, and experience of the participants. The goals then must address the integrity of the process of learning as well as the planned outcomes.

The reflective practice seminar is designed to:

- Overcome the isolation and separation of imams and other Muslim community leaders;
- Create peership and collegiality among imams and other leaders;
- Address issues raised by group members from their communities;
- Learn a pattern of reflection on leaders' practice in their communities;
- Cultivate an appreciative view of new situations and challenges;
- Develop a style of leadership that assists imams and others in unifying Muslims of various backgrounds into a cohesive community;
- Speak to personal and leadership challenges that arise from interacting with American society and culture.

**Seminar Process:** The seminar process is adapted from models of reflective practice in ministry used by other religious communities. It is designed to strengthen Muslim leaders' reflection on practices that unify and build up local Muslim communities. Assuming that most leaders deal with a wide range of cultural and ethnic backgrounds in their local mosque or organization, the seminars will focus on ways leaders can strengthen community identity and unity through their own leadership or guidance.

The process of reflection is contextual and local, as it brings *four resources* to bear on a challenging situation of leadership or ministry:



This reflection process calls on participants to:

- Describe the presenting ministry situation
- Draw on the *four resources* (in any order) to describe challenges and opportunities for leadership in the situation
- Develop a plan of action that will enhance Muslim identity and community in their context
- Identify colleagues and community members to carry out and/or evaluate the plan of action.

**Meeting Schedule:** The proposed schedule is to meet bi-monthly on **Wednesdays** (4:00-7:30pm) running from **October 18 through March 28**. Meeting twice a month allows contemporary experiences by students in leadership and ministry to be brought to the course as case studies. The location will be the Fairfax Institute (IIIT), except for sessions when we visit a local mosque or event.

**Ground Rules:** Given the process goals of building trust, collegiality, and peer learning, the following ground rules will be laid out and, where needed, modified with the participants at the beginning:

- **Appreciative listening and inquiry** will be our conversational model. This focuses on a) questions of clarification, b) “Did you consider” alternatives, c) appreciation of strengths and d) identifying future challenges. The point of conversation is to build up the presenter’s ability to lead.
- The **presenting situation will guide the participants’ conversation**, using theological or legal differences as a resource—not a judgment—to help the imam or leader make effective decisions for his or her community.
- The group will respect each other’s feedback but recognize the **ultimate responsibility/authority to act in a community lies with that imam or leader**.
- **Confidentiality of oral conversations and written case studies** in the group. Participants and instructor/facilitator will not share outside the group members.
- **Confidentiality of your community and people in your cases will be practices.** Please do not use real names of people you include in an assignment, unless you have their permission to do so.
- Participants are **encouraged seek feedback or advice** from group members outside the group meetings, and bring these consultations to the group process for further learning.

### **Assignments:**

1) Regular Class Attendance, Weekly Readings, and active discussion (readings online). Make sure you complete readings before class. If you are unable to attend a class session due to illness or an emergency, please inform the professor in advance by phone or email. Missing two sessions will lower your final grade by 10%. Missing more than two can result in failure of the course.

2) Each participant will be required to write **three case studies** (5 pages) plus a **final paper/project (12-15 pages)** that highlight challenges they must address in their community. Each of the three cases will focus on a distinct aspect of leadership:

Case #1: An issue of Prayer, sermons or education in your community

Case #2: An issue of Ethics, legal counsel, or spiritual guidance in your community

Case #3: An issue Organizational development, management or leadership

3) The **final project** will be a 12-15 page paper that develops one of your cases into a full-blown case study of your community and plan of action for your leadership in the future.

Each week, assigned students will share a case they have prepared (3-4 pages) They will be expected to integrate group feedback, aspects of their approach to Islamic tradition, and seminar readings in their cases. After an initial orienting and practice session, each **three and a half hour seminar** will be divided between:

- a) Group check in and brief discussion of current issues.
- b) Overview and focused conversation of assigned readings for the week, looking for tools that enhance research and reflective action.
- c) Presentation of case studies written by students, with conversation and reflection that utilizes appreciate inquiry model.

The final session will review final projects/papers, celebrate and assess student learnings, and reflect on how one's leadership has changed.

As the sessions proceed, the process for writing up a case study (focus, scope, dimensions), and a pattern of reflection (Islamic wisdom, local traditions, social-cultural tools, and ministry/leadership goals) will be adapted and refined to fit the local context, theological approach, and leadership authority and style of participants. The model of reflection must be adaptive and flexible.

**Possible topics:** At the first session, the instructor will brainstorm possible topics for case studies with the class. These may include issues of spiritual care and guidance, education and community programming, issues with imam/leader authority and leadership style, expectations and readiness of public role of the imam or leader, differences between first and second/third generations in mosque programs and prayer, organizational challenges and development, and conflicts between cultures, sub-groups or members in the community.

**Class Schedule :** Each week, the focus will be on *case studies that the students bring*, for peer discussion and reflection. But there will be assigned articles which students must read, and be prepared to draw on as resources for discussion this. The goal of the readings will be to provide tools for researching one's own community and planning one's strategies for leadership more effectively.

**Oct 18: Orientation to the course:** Appreciative Inquiry, case study reflection. Brainstorm issues that Muslim communities and leaders currently face today in the North American context.

**Reading (before class):** "Bridge Building" by Imam Hassan Qazwini in *American Crescent* (Random House, 2007), pp. 95-109.

**Nov. 1: Choosing and Preparing Cases.** Explore Case study writing and what qualifies as a “good case.”

Assignments: Read “Minarets on the Skyline: The Culture of the Muslim Community” in *Muslims in the United States*, by Ilyas Ba-Yunus, Kassim Kone (Greenwood, 2006)

→ Each student will bring at least 2 examples of cases (from above categories) they wish to explore in their own community, which challenge their leadership or guidance.

**November 15: Case #1: An issue of Prayer, sermons or education in your community**  
Presenters introduce their case, and invite constructive feedback.

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Reading: “The Life of the Mosques” in Linda Walbridge’s *Without Forgetting the Imam*, (Wayne State Univ, 1997), pp. 99-127.

“The Islamic Sermon (Khutba), The Islamic Preacher (Khatib), and Modernity,” in Richard T. Antoun’s *Muslim Preacher in the Modern World...* (Princeton, 1989), pp. 126-142.

**November 29: Case #1 (cont.)**

Presenters introduce their case, and invite constructive feedback.

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Readings: “Why Most American Converts... are African-Americans” in Mbaye Lo’s *Muslims in America: Race, Politics, and Community Building* (Amana, 2004), pp. 29-53.

Shah, Saeeda J.A. “Educational Leadership: an Islamic perspective” (2006). British Educational Research Journal, 2006, 32 (3), pp.363-385. Online: <https://ira.le.ac.uk/handle/2381/1004>

**December 13: Case #2: An issue of Ethics, legal counsel, or spiritual guidance in your community**

Presenters introduce their case, and invite constructive feedback.

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Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad and Barbara Freyer Stowasser, ed. *Islamic Law and the Challenges of Modernity*, (Rowman Altamira, 2004) (Selections)

Introduction pp. 1-15 with some skipped pages: <http://www.amazon.com/Islamic-Challenges-Modernity-Yvonne-Yazbeck/dp/0759106711>

Also read the review: [http://i-epistemology.net/v1/attachments/916\\_ajiss24-1-stripped%20-%20Book%20Reviews%20-%20Islamic%20Law%20and%20the%20Challenge%20of%20Modernity.pdf](http://i-epistemology.net/v1/attachments/916_ajiss24-1-stripped%20-%20Book%20Reviews%20-%20Islamic%20Law%20and%20the%20Challenge%20of%20Modernity.pdf)

**January 3: Case #2 (cont.)**

Presenters introduce their case, and invite constructive feedback.

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Reading: Norma Tarazi, *The Child in Islam: A Muslim Parent's Handbook* (American Trust, 1995), pp. 125-173 on "Practices, Manners, and Values".

Readings: Alwani, Zainab and Abugideiri, Salma. (2003). *What Islam Says About Domestic Violence: A Guide for Helping Muslim Families*. Herndon, VA: FAITH (Foundation for Appropriate and Immediate Temporary Help).

### **January 17: Muslims in American Life**

All class members share an issue with the class—oral presentation (handouts optional), about 7-8 minutes each, followed by discussion .

McCloud, Dr. Aminah, "Muslims in America: Identity and Participation," published on the web-site of the International Strategy and Policy Institute: <http://www.ispi-usa.org/policy/policy5.html>

Sherman A. Jackson, "Muslims, Islam and Public Policy in the United States," published on the web-site of the International Strategy and Policy Institute: <http://www.ispi-usa.org/policy/policy4.html>

### **January 31: Case #3: Issues of Organizational development and leadership**

Presenters introduce their case, and invite constructive feedback.

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Reading: "Mosques and Islamic Centers" and "Islamic Schools" in Mohamed Nimer's *The North American Muslim Resource Guide* (Routledge 2002), pp. 39-63.

### **February 14: Case #3 (cont.)**

Presenters introduce their case, and invite constructive feedback.

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Reading: Rafik Issa Beekun. *Strategic Planning and Implementation for Islamic Organizations* (IIIT, 2011).

### **February 28: Islam, Interreligious Dialogue, and Human Rights**

Readings: Oxford Islamic Studies Online, "Muslim-Christian Dialogue" <http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t236/e0567>

Abdulaziz Sachedina, "Freedom of Religion and Conscience: The Foundation of a Pluralistic World Order," in *Islam and the Challenge of Human Rights*, New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 185-208.

### **March 14: Final Projects: Research and Reflective Leadership in my Community**

Each student will give a 10-15 minute overview of his/her final project, and the class will offer constructive feedback to help strengthen the final paper. This paper/project will:

a) describe in detail a current challenge in the community you serve, using the fourway "ministry situation" categories (above).

- b) identify the resources available to you as a leader/spiritual guide to address the issue,  
c) lay out an action/intervention strategy that you think will build up the community in light of this challenge.
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**March 28: Final Projects (cont.)**

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FINAL PAPERS (12-15 pages) ARE DUE by April 9 emailed to the instructor at the Hartsem email, with a backup copy to: [lgolemon@washtheocon.org](mailto:lgolemon@washtheocon.org)

Other resources:

- M. A. Muqtedar Khan's *American Muslims: Bridging Faith and Freedom* (Amana, 2002), pp. 61-94.  
Beekun, Rafik Issa (1996). *Islamic Business Ethics*, International Institute of Islamic Thought.  
Beekun, Rafik and Jamal Badawi (1999). *Leadership, an Islamic perspective*. Amana Publications.