SC-539 - Hadith Methodology: History and Transmission of the Prophetic Sunna
Hartford Seminary

Spring 2021
Weekly, 6:00pm – 8:00pm

Instructor: Suheil Laher
Email: slaher@hartsem.edu
Office Hours: By Appointment

Course Description
Compilations of hadith, or words attributed to the Prophet Muhammad, are the second most important form of religious text, in the Islamic tradition. Hadith are an essential source of deriving Islamic law and determining what is deemed as Sunna or a model of proper Islamic practice based on prophetic precedent. In addition, hadith are critical to understanding the Qur’an and many of its general injunctions which would be otherwise ambiguous without their correlating explanations found in hadith sources. This course will analyze the basic foundations of hadith studies (ʿulūm al-ḥadīth) which are essential to a well-grounded understanding of this important field of Islamic Studies. A progression of the various elements related to hadith studies such as hadith terminology, the legislative authority of the Sunna, methods of collecting and preserving hadiths, important transmitters, canonical hadith sources, hadith classification, weak hadiths, and forged hadiths, will be presented over the course of the semester to build a solid understanding of the role of hadith in shaping the Islamic scholarly tradition. Furthermore, this study of the scholastic aspects of hadith studies will culminate with an exploration of relevant contemporary issues such as debates regarding the authenticity of hadiths in Western scholarship.

Course Objectives
• Understand the history of hadiths
• Recognize that hadiths are of varying reliability, and understand the Muslim scholars’ criteria for evaluating their authenticity
• Understand the different perspectives on hadith in Western scholarship
• Examine the role of hadith as a source of Islamic theology, law and ethics, second to the Qur’an
• Analyze the contents of hadiths with a view to appreciating deductions that can be made from them, and identify potentially problematic issues
• Explain some of the contemporary debates among Muslims regarding particular hadiths
• Develop a holistic view of the field of hadith, useful to personal confidence and/or assisting in pastoral advice
• Be able to list prominent books of hadith, and distinguish which of them are intended for specialists and which are intended for laymen

Program Learning Outcomes
• To demonstrate foundational and critical knowledge of one’s own religion
• To demonstrate knowledge and skills for dialogical and constructive engagement with diversity.
• To demonstrate the ability to relate theory and practice in the social contexts in which a religion’s communities exist.
List of Texts (TENTATIVE)

Required

• Siddiqi, Muhammad Zubayr. Hadith Literature Its Origin, Development &Special Features (ITS, 2012).


• Nawawi. Forty Ḥadīth Nawawi. tr. Ezzeddin Ibrahim & Denys Johnson-Davies. (Kazi, 1982)

• Additional required readings will be made available to students.

Recommended

• Ibn Rajab al-Ḥanbali. The Compendium of Knowledge and Wisdom. (Turath, 2007)


• Mustafa Siba’ee. The Sunnah and Its Role in Islamic Legislation. (IIPH, n.d.)

• Muhammad ‘Awwamah. Influences of Ḥadīth Upon Differences of Opinion Amongst the Jurist Imams. (Turath, 2014)

• Brown, Jonathan AC. Misquoting Muhammad The Challenge and Choices of Interpreting the Prophet’s Legacy. (Oneworld, 2014)

Assessment

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<tr>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance &amp; Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>In-Class Presentations</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Forum Discussions</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weekly Quizzes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Examination / Paper</td>
<td>30%</td>
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• Attendance: You must attend class regularly and promptly. More than two absences will reduce your grade in the course, unless there are extenuating circumstances.

• Presentations: Each student is required to sign up for one in-class presentation, where s/he will present on one of the readings for that week (or the week before, since we only meet every 2 weeks) in 10-15mins. No two people are allowed to present on the same reading, so if there is reading you really want to present it, then sign up ASAP; it is first-come-first-served. The presentation should be 10-15mins long, and should summarize the main points of the reading, but also show that you have thought about it and so you should include some analysis or critique or questions raised. It is optional to use other sources. You must upload your slides.
Rubric for Grading of Presentations:

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<tr>
<td>Capable, succinct summary of material</td>
<td>75%</td>
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<td><strong>Timing</strong></td>
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<td>You will lose points if your presentation is less than 10mins, and more than 17mins</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<td><strong>Time Management</strong></td>
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<td>Did you cover all your material in the allotted time?</td>
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<td><strong>Visual Aesthetics</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Critical Analysis</strong></td>
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<td>Analysis, or critique, or questions raised</td>
<td>10%</td>
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- Forum Discussions: Each student will post TWO reflections per week. One reflection should be 100-250 words, to the Online Forums, and should show that the student has read and thought about the assigned readings(s) for that week. The other reflection should be 50-150 words and should be a response to another student’s posts.

- Weekly Quizzes: will consist mostly of multiple choice and/or short-answer questions

- Final Exam will consist of essay questions. If a final paper is written instead, the topic must be approved by the instructor, and the paper should be 10-15 pages long.

**Plagiarism**

Plagiarism, the failure to give proper credit for the words and ideas of another person, whether published or unpublished, is strictly prohibited. All written material submitted by students must be their own original work; where the words and ideas of others are used they must be acknowledged. Additionally, if students receive editorial help with their writing they should also acknowledge it appropriately. For more details on the Seminary’s Plagiarism policy, see: [https://www.hartsem.edu/current-students/policies/](https://www.hartsem.edu/current-students/policies/)

**List of Topics (TENTATIVE)**

- Introduction: The Event of the Hadith
- Early Transmission and Collection
- The “Golden Age” and Hadith Criticism
- Non-Sunni Hadith
- Hadith and Islamic Law
- Hadith and Islamic Theology
- Hadith and Ethics
- Hadith and Sufism
- Western views on Hadith
- Pre-Modern controversies
- Modern Controversies