INTRODUCTION TO ISLAMIC THEOLOGY (TH-553)

This course explores the content and structure of Islamic belief, as elaborated by Muslim classical thinkers (7th-15th centuries), in relation to a selection of representative texts. The Introduction questions the nature and modalities of theology in Islam. The History studies the origins and growth of the science of Kalâm in its interaction with the other major religious disciplines of Sunnism -- exegesis, Prophetic tradition, jurisprudence, sects, philosophy (falsafa) and Sufism. The Creed is then analyzed more theoretically in its major components: the lordship and divinity of God, the mediation of the Messenger, the servitude and ethics of the believers. Society offers a last avenue for enquiry, in so far as it was shaped by particular theological doctrines. The Way/Law (shari‘a), power, love, innovation, and alterity -- religious or other -- are among the topics envisaged. No knowledge of Arabic is required for this course.

Class will meet twice a week for 12 weeks on Tuesdays, 7:45-9:30 pm, and Thursdays, 6–7:45 pm, beginning Tuesday 6 September 2016. Each of these twelve classes will be divided in two sessions: A) Lecture; B) Discussion of the required readings.

Course Objectives

1) Students should be able to find their way around in the major reference works on Islamic theology.
2) They are expected to gain an acquaintance with the most important classical definitions of the Islamic Creed (‘aqīda): divinity and prophethood, divine attributes and justice, Sunnism versus Shī‘ism, Ash‘arism versus Mu‘tazilism and Hanbalism, sects and other religions…
3) They should have some general accurate knowledge of the ways classical Kalâm developed, the historical and ideological contexts in which it evolved, its key figures and the main doctrines, schools or movements it crystallized into.
4) In reference to the classical period, they should also be able to take an informed view of the modern theological developments and debates in the Muslim world, as well as of contemporary positions of Islam towards other world religions.

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) Attendance in class is required. If you know that you will be unable to attend a session please inform the professor in advance. Missing two sessions will result in an automatic lowering of your final grade by 30%. Missing three or more sessions will result in automatic failure of the course.

3) For each session A of weeks 2-12, students shall submit a summary of the reading assignments and be ready to speak about them in class. Each student can skip any one week during that time for a total of 10 submissions. Here are the guidelines for these summaries:
   - Approximately 2 pages (3 pages maximum)
   - One modern study must be used in each summary
   - Students must make copies of their summaries for all students in the class

4) A final written examination, as described below.

**The final grade will be based upon the following:**

1) Weekly summaries (25%) and class participation (25%).

2) During the week following the last class, on Tuesday December 13, 7:45 pm, a final two hour long written examination consisting of ten multiple choice questions (20%) and a short essay on a question (to be chosen among three) relating to the content of the course (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. It must use the transliteration system given in class I. It must be run through a grammar and spell-check program or read by the writing tutor if necessary before submission. The Hartford Seminary Grading Guidelines will be the standard of evaluation for work in the course.

IMPORTANT: 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. Credit will not be given for work containing plagiarism, and plagiarism will lead to failure of the course. Please see the Hartford Seminary Catalogue for the full plagiarism policy.

**General references**

ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF ISLAM, INDEX ISLAMICUS…


CLASS SCHEDULE

Class I. A: Sept. 6. B: Sept. 8: *Introduction: Kalâm and Islamic Theology*

General references:


Reading Assignments:


General references:


Reading Assignments:


General references:


Reading Assignments:


Class IV. A: Sept. 27. B: Sept. 29: *History: the Construction of Orthodoxy II*

General references:


Reading Assignments:


General references:


Reading Assignments:


General references:


İBN ṬUFAYL (d. 1185), Hayy ibn Yaqqān; a philosophical tale translated with introd. and notes, by Lenn Evan GOODMAN (New York: Twayne Publishers, [1972]). BP753 .I53 R53 1972


Reading Assignments:


Class VII. A: Oct. 18. B: Oct. 20: Creed: Tawḥīd or the Oneness, Lordship and Divinity of God

General references:

BP166.I78 1994

BP170.I18913 1984

Reading Assignments:

BP166.7A7 1953a

BP25.M4513 1999

Class VIII. A: Oct. 25. B: Oct. 27: Creed: Nubuwwāt or Prophethood

General references:

BP166.I78 1994

BP166.F3413 2010

BP134.P745 W48

BP166.1.C36 2008

Reading Assignments:

BP166.I78 1994

OCOLC:50336967

BP166.1.C36 2008

Class IX. A: Nov. 8. B: Nov. 10: Creed: ‘Ubūdiyya or Servanthood and Praxis Mystica

General references:

BP188.16.L68 B44

BP166.2.I26213 1999

Reading Assignments:

BP166.2.I26213 1999

BR127.A27 2005
Class X. A: Nov. 15. B: Nov. 17: Society: Shari‘a or a Way/Law of Loving Obedience

General references:


Reading Assignments:

(Nov. 21-27: Reading week)


General reference:


Reading Assignments:


General references:


Reading Assignments:

WRITTEN EXAMINATION: Tuesday December 13, 7:45 pm.