Preliminary Syllabus: SHI’ITE ISLAM: Thought and History

Hartford Seminary

Fall 2015

Instructor: Dr. Sayed Ammar Nakhjavani
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Course Description:
This course will be based on the assumption that Islam is both a belief system and a world civilization. Therefore, all movements, sects and schools of thought will be treated as an integral part of Islam, broadly understood. The course will introduce Shi`ism as a general phenomenon within Muslim history, but will concentrate on Twelver Imami Shi`ism, as it is the most developed and influential Shi`ite legal school (madhhab). We will study Shi`ism in Muslim history from its beginning to the present. We will examine primary texts in translation, and when possible, in original languages. We will also read and discuss a good sampling of secondary literature.

This is a graduate seminar that will be based on class participation and lectures. Grading will be based on class attendance and participation, weekly readings and discussions, and a class presentation of an individual research of a topic that will be developed into a 12-15 page final term paper.

Grading:
Grades will be computed as follows: class participation, discussion and leading weekly book discussions 30%; class presentation of research topic 20%; and final term paper 50%.

**Email Policy:**
The instructor will use the official Hartsem student email addresses for all communications. Please check your Hartsem email account regularly.

**Office Hours:** Office hours will be determined by the needs and schedules of the students.

**Required Readings:**

6. Mavani, Hamid. Ayatullah Khomeini’s Concept of Governance (Wilayat al-Faqih) and the Classical Shi'i Doctrine of Imamate. Published online, 2011.

Recommended Readings:


38. Nasr, Seyyed Hossein, Hamid Dabashi and Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr, eds. 


52. Takim, Liyakat. The Origins and Evaluations of Hadith Transmitters in Shi‘i Biographical Literature.

For further research and additional readings, please consult the extensive library of Shi‘ite sources on line: www.al-islam.org and http://www.noorlib.ir/View/en/Default

All required books will be assigned for weekly readings, where two students will introduce a book and lead a discussion of it. It is of course assumed that all students will also have read each book in the assigned, and not listed order. This is an important part of your class participation, which will constitute 30% of your final grade.

**Course Outline:**

**September 17**

I - Background

    A. Islam: Abrahamic legacy
B. Abu Talib

II - Formative history of the Muslim Ummah
   A. The Prophet Muhammad and the theocratic community
   B. The end of theocratic rule and the beginning of the Caliphate
   C. The normative or “rightly guided” first four Caliphs

III - The beginnings of Shi’i history and the Umayyad Caliphate
   A. Succession of Hassan son of Ali
   B. Treaty with Muawiyah

**Readings:**

Madelung - The Succession to Muḥammad

Momen - An Introduction to Shi’i Islam (ch. 2-5)

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**October 8**

IV – The tragedy of Karbala, and its devotional and ritualistic aspects
   A. Poetic portrayals of the tragedy
   B. The ziyarah or spiritual visitation to the Imam’s tomb
   C. Memorial services
   D. Visual portrayals, the Persian Passion Play (A video of Shi’i rituals will be shown)

V - The Shia Imams after Karbala
   A. Ali ibn Husayn, Zayn al-‘Abidin (son of Husayn)
   B. Muhammad ibn Ali, al-Baqr (son of Ali)
   C. Ja’far ibn Muhammad, as-Sadiq (son of Muhammad)
VI - Taqiya (Dissimulation): A tool for survival

A. Quranic tradition

B. Hadith debates concerning taqiya

C. The Wikala

Readings:

Ayoub - Redemptive Suffering (ch. 4-6)

Shaykh Al-Mufid - Kitab al Irshad (Imams 4-6)

October 29

VII - Shia sects and the early Shia extremist movements: penitents, avengers and rebellious Malawi

A. The Kaysaniyyah

B. The Khattabiyyah

C. Other temporary fringe movements

VIII - The Isma`iliyyah

A. The rise and pre-Fatimid developments

B. The Fatimid period

C. The Druzes sect

D. Post Fatimid developments

IX - The Ithna`ashariyyah or Twelver Shia

A. The period of the Imams to the end of the Minor Occultation (al-ghaybah al-sughra) of the Twelfth Imam

B. Beginning of the Greater Occultation (al-ghaybah al-kubra): crisis and
consolidation

**Readings:**

**Haider - Shi'i Islam (ch. 4-7)**

**Hussain - The Occultation of the Twelfth Imam**

**November 19**

X – Development of the Religious Sciences

A. The Qur’an and Sunnah in the view of the Shi’ah and rise of Shi’i hadith: the Four Books and other sources

B. Jurisprudence

C. Theology

D. Philosophy and mysticism

XI - Development of Shi’i centers of learning

A. Hilla

B. Baghdad, and Najaf

C. Reyy, Qom, Shiraz, and Isfahan

**Readings:**

**Newman - Twelver Shiism (ch. 1-8)**

**December 10**

XII - Safavid Iran [1600] to the 20th Century and Pahlavi Era

A. Consolidation of Shi’ite power under the Safavids and the role of the ‘Ulama’
B. Post Safavid developments: the religious establishment and the authority of
the supreme Mujtahid or Marja`

XIII - Iranian Islamic Revolution, 1979

A. Shi`ism in the twentieth century, before the Revolution

B. The Islamic Revolution and after: whither Shi`ism?

Readings:

Mavani - Ayatullah Khomeini's Concept of Governance and the Classical Shi`i

Nasr - The Shia Revival

Newman - Twelver Shiism (ch. 9)