

Dr. Lamuel G Salik

RELI: 405 ISLAM AN INTRODUCTION

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RATIONALE

Islam is a monotheistic and Abrahamic religion which claims that there is only one God (Allah) which is the Arabic word used for God. This particular belief of monotheism is intertwined with the teachings of Judaism and Christianity. The Quran is the Muslim's holy book and according to the adherents of Islam it is the true word of the God. They believe in all prophets and the prophet Mohammad as the last prophet of Allah. The teachings of Islam not only touch the spiritual lives of all the Muslims but they believe that it is a complete way of life, even in today's tumultuous world. Muslims around the world adhere to the Quran and Hadith for guidance. So the aim of this course is to understand the Islam by looking at the life of the prophet Mohammad (PBUH), the teachings of Islam and how they govern the daily social and political lives of all the Muslims. Although it is not the intention of this course to encapsulate all the facets of Islam, however at the end of this course student will have a basic understanding of Islam as a religion.

OBJECTIVES

This course will help the students to learn about Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) and the teachings of Islam and how do they influence the social, legal, political and mystical lives of the Muslims and this will culminate with the projections about the future of Islam in today's World.

At the end of the course, students will be able to provide general answers to the following questions.

- Who was Prophet Mohammad?
- What kind of life did he spend?
- Who were the successors of Prophet Mohammad?
- What are the key teachings of Islam?
- What is Sunnah?
- What is the importance of human rights and ethics in Islam?
- What human rights does Islam give to women?
- What is Islamic clothing and diet? In what way it is different?
- What does Islam teach about drugs, alcohol and other substances?
- What is Shari'ah?
- Define the sanctity of life in the context of Islam?
- What does Islam say about justice, crime and punishment?
- What is mysticism and how is it connected with Islam?
- What are the Islamic teachings about fundamentalism, sufism and neo-sufism?
- How does Islam look at militancy?
- What is the distinction between modernism and moderate Islam?
- How do you see Islam in the 21st century?

STRATEGY

This course will focus on the life of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH), the main events of his life, the significance of various historical events, the four rightly guided caliphs, the conflicts between the prophet's descendants and Umayyads and its consequences. This will lead to the call for Islam and the teaching of the Islamic doctrine. In this you will learn about the Quran, the Hadith collections.

The key beliefs of Islam – tawhid (the reality of the one Almighty God), resalah (the channel of prophesy), akhirat (the judgement and life to come) and qadr (free will and predestination). The aforementioned topics and sub topics will set the stage to learn about the social and legal Islam. In this section the topics that will be covered are Islamic rights and duties, the equality of male and female in Islam, rules regarding dress and diet (including alcohol), Islam and workplace, The importance of friendship and hospitality, in the legal Islam you will learn about the Muslim way – Shariah, the principles of Islamic justice, the importance of judges, categories of crime and punishment.

Like other religions Islam also has an element of Sufism or in other words mysticism. Mysticism or Sufism is the intention to take a spiritual journey or path towards the truth by means of love and devotion. We will learn about the meanings of Sufism, the aims and goals of Sufism, details of some leading Sufis and the criticism of Sufism. Every religion in the world has been affected by politics in one way or the other. However no religion in the world radiates from politics. Muslim reformers generally believe that the world's problems stem from the secular influences and the laxity and ignorance of many of today's Muslims regarding their own beliefs and practice of Islam. We will learn about the Islamic reform – Fundamentalism, Sufism and Neo Sufism, the rise of Islamic militancy and anti Americanism.

Moderate Islam, Liberalism and freedom of thought, the Islamic state and the meaning of Khilafah, the extremist threat and hopes for peace will be discussed. As we all know that the world is rapidly changing, we can see great strides in every imaginable aspects of the world. Such great changes have never been witnessed in the human history. This will pose the need to promote interfaith dialogues, understanding, tolerance and co-operation, especially between the people of the Book (Jews, Christians and Muslims). In these topics we will cover, Islamic Feminism, Islam and the west, projections for the future. The student will be required to answer essay questions to demonstrate their understanding of the topics covered in the course. Formal papers, however, will not be required as the student's journal will substitute for the writing of academic papers.

REQUIRED READING

Islam An Introduction. Written by Ruqaiyyah Waris Maqsood in the Teach Yourself series, available at Banes & Noble bookstores.

EVALUATION

All students will be required to select a topic from the course and prepare a written assignment and a short presentation that will be evaluated and used for grading.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER READING

The Holy Qur'an – Translation by Abdullah Yusuf Ali. 1988. Publisher Tahrike Tarsile Qur'an, Inc. New York, USA.

Dr. Muhammad Muhsin Khan. 1979. The Translation of the Meanings of Sahih Al –Bukhari. Volume 1 to 10, Kazi Publications, Pakistan.

Great Religions of the World. 1978. National Geographic Society, Washington DC USA.

Walid Shoebat. 2005. Why I Left Jihad. Publisher Top Executive Media, USA.

John Ankerberg & John Weldon. 2001. Fast Facts on Islam. Harvest House Publishers, Eugene, Oregon, USA.

Mark A Gabriel. 2002. Islam and Terrorism, Publisher Charisma House. Lake Mary, Florida, USA.