Introduction to Islam
WM/AP 647

Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary
Paul T. Martindale
Fall 2013
Mondays 6:30 to 9:30 PM

Course Description:
The purpose of this course is to provide a comprehensive introduction to the history, culture, traditions, beliefs and practices of Islam. The various historical manifestations of contemporary Islam will be explored including the rise of modern Islamic Fundamentalism. The text of the Qur’an will be studied in chronological order and we will observe and discuss together the development of various doctrines that formed within the changing context of the early Islamic community in Mecca and Medina. The theology and culture of Islamic thought will be compared to that of Evangelical Christianity as a means of more effectively understanding both. This course will also integrate the professor’s practical experience of working with Muslims in the hope of exploring ways the gospel can be most effectively communicated to members of the Islamic faith, the second largest and fastest growing religion in the world today.

Course Objectives: As a result of this course students will:
1. Have a good working knowledge of the traditions, ideology, theology, beliefs, and practices of Muslims today.
2. Understand the religious, political, social, cultural, and theological development of Islam and its institutions.
3. Analyze and appreciate the historical context of the development of Jihad, shariah law, and the early believer community in Islam.
4. Examine the role of Mohammed in the development of Islam as a religion, political state, and community.
5. Understand the Islamic worldview and theological frame of reference from which the Muslim understands Christianity in order to more accurately evaluate how Christian doctrines have been distorted in their understanding and writing.
6. Evaluate Muslim objections against the Trinity, Deity of Christ, Crucifixion, and Atonement, and formulate appropriate responses.
7. Be stretched in their understanding and appreciation of the Bible, Christian doctrine, and the gospel message by developing a biblical understanding and response to Islam.
**Required Textbooks:** (1,428 pages of assigned reading)


**Quran Readings:**

You will be given a list of selected readings for the course from the different time periods of Muhammed’s ministry in Mecca and Medina. Choose ONE of the following three translations of the Quran for class discussions and readings.


Fakhry, Majid. 2004. *An Interpretation of the Quran. English Translation of the Meanings*. A Bilingual Edition, New York University Press. ISBN 0-8147-2724-7. This one is written by a Muslim scholar and is approved by Al-Azhar University which is similar to the Vatican for Orthodox Sunni Muslims. Also a readable translation.

**Selected Journal Articles:**


_____. “Misunderstanding C-5: His Ways are not Our Orthodoxy.” Evangelical Missions Quarterly 40, no. 3 (July 2004): 296-304.


Requirements of Course:

1. Research Paper
A research paper on a topic of your choosing according to the following requirements:
1. It must be on a subject matter related to the course material.
2. The topic should be selected and a thesis statement must be submitted by Monday Oct 21st at class time. This thesis statement should also list at least five sources.
3. The text of your paper should be 10 to 12 typed pages (double space, 12 pt. type) long, following acceptable standards of form and style. Include a title page, table of contents, footnotes, and a bibliography.
4. Your paper should include a one paragraph summary of your entire paper.
5. The paper is due on December 17th.

2. Apologetic Response
Each student must choose ONE of the following three choices:
1. Interview a Muslim and discuss your faith in Jesus Christ. What are the major objections that the Muslim has to Christianity or the Christian faith? What confusions about the Christian gospel did you detect in the conversation? Submit a report of your interview that answers these two questions.
2. Spend at least five hours witnessing to Muslims and write a report of your experience.
Note: The above two projects can easily be fulfilled through a single trip to Harvard Square, an area mosque, a dialogue meeting, or the Turkish Cultural Center. There are thousands of Muslims who live, study and work within immediate driving distance of the Seminary.
3. Choose five key challenges that Islam poses against the Christian faith and write up a cogent, theologically informed, apologetic response to each of the five challenges. For example, a key challenge could be an issue like the so-called “corruptible Bible” or the challenge that Christians are not monotheists, etc…
The apologetic response is due on Dec 17th.

3. Final Exam
There will be a final exam covering the lectures and readings in this course. The Final Exam will occur on the last day of classes Monday, December 9th. The format of the exam will include multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions.

4. Reading of Textbooks
On the last day for written work, Dec. 17th, your list of reading assignments completed will be due.

5. Attendance
Perfect attendance is encouraged and will greatly enhance your ability to perform well on the exam and comprehend the daily readings. In consideration of the rest of the class, please turn off
all cell phones and refrain from doing emails and surfing the Internet during the instructional period.

**Grading**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading of textbooks</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Paper</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apologetic Response</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>30%</td>
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</tbody>
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**The Grading Scale is as follows:**

A+: 100-97;  A: 96-94;  A-: 90-93;  B+: 89-87;  B: 86-84;  B-: 83-80;  
C+: 79-77;  C: 76-74;  C-: 73-70;  D+: 69-67;  D: 66-64;  D-: 63-60  F: 59-0

**Review of Key Dates:**

- Oct 21<sup>st</sup>  Thesis statements due
- Dec 9<sup>th</sup>  Final Exam
- Dec 17<sup>th</sup>  Research Papers Due
- Dec 17<sup>th</sup>  Apologetic Response Due
- Dec 17<sup>th</sup>  Reading Report due

**Topics Covered:**

2. Main beliefs of Islam and 10 commandments for witnessing with Muslims.
3. Pre-Islamic Arabian context, Origins of Islam, Mohammed, the four rightly-guided Caliphs, and how Islam spread.
4. Ritual worship and sacred space in Islam, view of purity.
5. The Religious and Cultural Context of Mecca.
8. Fundamentalism in Egypt.
9. The Hajj.
10. Views of Mohammed, Islam, and Muslims as people.
15. Sources of Islam and the Christian Background in Islam.

**Select Bibliography**

__________. “The Qur’an as the Word of God”. See, Linzey, A. and Wexler, P.
Heaven and Earth: Essex Essays in Theology and Ethics, Worthing: Churchman, 1986 (pp. 38-54).


There is a wonderful ten volume, Encyclopedia of Islam available on CD in the library.