

**Course Outline: Winter 2022**

**SYSTTHEO 5208B**

**Key Issues in Islamic Theology**

**Instructor:** Ingrid Mattson, PhD

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Department of Theology, Room A227

**Time and Days:**  Thursdays 2:30 – 5:00pm **Room:** H227/Remote

**Prerequisites:** At least one previous university-level course in Islamic Studies

**Course description:** A study of the major theological issues addressed by traditional and modern Muslim theologians, such as the attributes of God, revelation and reason, moral epistemology, human freedom and responsibility, suffering and religious pluralism.

**Learning Goals:** Upon successful completion of this course, a student should be able to:

* Articulate the key concerns of classical Islamic theology and identify the majority positions of the dominant schools of thought with respect to these concerns
* Describe the major historical, political and cultural factors which shaped the trajectory of Islamic theology in the formative period
* Undertake a historical-critical analysis of an Islamic creedal statement
* Identify several theological issues and methods which have taken prominence since the emergence of modernity
* Identify and access primary and secondary sources for research in Islamic theology

**Required Text:** *The Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic Theology.* Edited by Tim Winter. Cambridge University Press, 2008. Available in paperback from online book sellers and digitally through Western library. Other readings will be available on OWL in the “Resources” folder.

**Assignments and Grading:**

1. Participation (10%) – You will earn one point for each class you attend and in which you actively participate up to a maximum of 10 points
2. Reading Notes (20%) - Submit to the Dropbox, before the start of class, your reading notes for that week. Reading notes are typed or handwritten technical terms, individuals or key points from the readings. You might want to also organize a separate glossary for your own use. Two points a week for a maximum of 20 points.
3. Book Report (20%) - Approx. 1500 words; submitted to the instructor and short overview presented in class
4. Oral summary of an assigned reading – 2 x 10% = 20%
5. Research Paper (30%) – among the topics that could be addressed: how a specific theological concept or issue is treated by one or more Islamic theologians; intellectual profile of a specific theologian; description of the evolution of an Islamic school of theology; exploration of the theological underpinnings of a Muslim political movement, etc. words (approx. 3000 words)

**SCHEDULE**

\*Subject to change\*

**Class One: January 13 – Introduction to class**

**Class Two: January 20 – Foundations of Islamic Theology**

* M.A.S. Abdel Haleem, “Qur’an and Hadith,” Chapter I of *The Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic Theology.*
* Khalid Blankinship, “The Early Creed,” Chapter 2 of *The Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic Theology.*
* Enrichment: This gives an overview of the issues we will be discussing for the next few weeks. F.E. Peters, “Islamic Theology,” Chapter 8 of *A Reader on Classical Islam* (Princeton University Press, 1994).

**Class Three: January 27 – Classical Islamic Philosophy and Islamic Theology**

* Feryal Salem, “Freewill, *Qadar,* and *Kasb* in the Epistle of Ḥasan al-Baṣrī to ʿAbd al-Malik”
* Oliver Leaman and Sajjad Rizvi, “The Developed *kalam* Tradition,” Chapter 4 of *The Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic Theology.*
* Enrichment: Hossein Ziai, “Islamic Philosophy,” Chapter 3 of *The Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic Theology*
* Enrichment: Yasir Qadhi, “Salafī-Ashʿarī Polemics of the 3rd & 4rth Islamic Centuries,” in *The Muslim World,* v. 106 (July 2016): 433-447.

**Class Four: February 3 – Who is God and How Do We Know God?**

* Nader El-Bizri, “God: Essence and Attributes,” Chapter 6 of *The Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic Theology*
* Yahya Michot, “Revelation,” Chapter 9 of *The Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic Theology*
* Ayman Shihadeh, “The Existence of God,” Chapters 10 of *The Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic Theology.*

**Class Five: February 10 – How Can Humans Know What is Right and What is Wrong?**

* Steffen A.J. Stelzer, “Ethics,” Chapter 8 of *The Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic Theology*
* Ramon Harvey, Chapters 1 & 2, *The Qur’an and the Just Society*

**Class Six: February 17 – Who can ‘speak for God’?**

* Ahmed El Shamsy, “The Social Construction of Orthodoxy,” Chapter 5 of *The Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic Theology.*
* “The Ḥadīth of the Ghadīr of Khumm,” and “The Sermons of Abū Ḥamza the Khārijī,” readings from John A. Williams, *The Word of Islam,* pp. 170-178.
* Enrichment: Reading from Khaled Abou El Fadl, *Speaking in God’s Name: Islamic Law, Authority and Women,* pp. 18-69 of the printed book; for the digital book available in the library, read “The Notion of Authority” and “The authoritative in Islam,” from Chapter Two, “The Authoritative”.

**February 24: Fall Reading Week – no class**

**Class Seven: March 3 – Creeds in Context + Book Reports**

* John Renard, “Creeds and Polemic” from John Renard, *Islamic Theological Themes: A primary source reader,* pp. 103-134.
* Book reports due and presented in class

**Class Eight: March 10 – Who goes to heaven?**

* All: Reading from al-Ghazali, *Fayṣal al-Tafriqa bayna al-islām wa’l-zandaqa;* translated by Sherman A. Jackson, *On the Boundaries of Theological Tolerance in Islam*
* Chapters from *Between Heaven and Hell: Islam, Salvation, and the Fate of Others* to be assigned individually:
  + Tim Winter, “Realism and the Real: Islamic Theology and the Problem of Alternative Expressions of God,” in
  + Mohammad Fadel, “No Salvation Outside Islam: Muslim Modernists, Democratic Politics, and Islamic Theological Exclusivism,” in *Between Heaven and Hell: Islam, Salvation, and the Fate of Others*
  + Reza Shah-Kazemi, “Beyond Polemics and Pluralism: The Universal Message of the Qur’an,” in *Between Heaven and Hell: Islam, Salvation, and the Fate of Others*
  + Jerusha Lamptey, “Embracing Relationality and Theological Tensions,” in *Between Heaven and Hell: Islam, Salvation, and the Fate of Others*
* Enrichment: Christian Lange, “Ibn Hazm on Sins and Salvation”

**Class Nine: March 17 – Why Do Evil and Suffering Exist?**

* All: Michael W. Dols, “The Comparative Communal Response to the Black Death in Muslim and Christian Societies,” chapter from *The Black Death in the Middle East* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 269-287.
* Chapters from Sherman Jackson, *Islam and the Problem of Black Suffering* will be assigned to individual students:
  + Chapter 2: Mu`tazilism and Black Theodicy
  + Chapter 3: Ash`arism and Black Theodicy
  + Chapter 4: Maturidism and Black Theodicy
  + Chapter 5: Traditionalism and Black Theodicy

**Class Ten: March 24 – Does God Favor Men over Women?**

* Riffat Hassan, “Women and Man’s “Fall”,” in *Muslima Theology*
* Asma Lamrabet, “An Egalitarian Reading of the Concepts of *Khilafah, Wilayah, and Qiwamah,”* from *Men in Charge: Rethinking Authority in Muslim Legal Tradition*
* Amina Wadud, “*Musawah:* Gender Equity through Qur’anic Discourse,” Chapter 4 of *Communities of the Qur’an: Dialogue, debate and diversity in the twenty-first century*

**Class Eleven: March 31 – Are Science and Religion in Conflict?**

* Ragep, F. Jamil, and Alī Al-Qūshjī. "Freeing Astronomy from Philosophy: An Aspect of Islamic Influence on Science." *Osiris* 16 (2001): 49-71. http://www.jstor.org/stable/301979.
* Veysel Kaya, “Can the Quran Support Darwin? An evolutionist approach by two Turkish scholars after the Foundation of the Turkish Republic,” *The Muslim World,* V. 102(April 2012): 357-370.
* Umeyye Yaziciouglu, “In Defense of a Literal Reading of Miracles: Ghazali’s Case for Contingency and Grace,” and “Said Nursi’s Contemporary Reading of Qur’anic Miracle Stories,” Chapters 1 or 5 of Isra Yazicioglu, *Understanding the Qur’anic Miracle Stories in the Modern Age* (Penn State University, 2013).

**Class Twelve: April 7 – Animism, Extraterrestial Life and Non-Human Rational Beings**

* Hamid Algar, “Eblis,” from *Encyclopaedia Iranica:*  [EBLĪS – Encyclopaedia Iranica (iranicaonline.org)](https://iranicaonline.org/articles/eblis)
* Sarra Tlili, “The Meaning of the Qur’anic Word ‘*dābba’*: ‘Animals’ or ‘Nonhuman Animals’?” *Journal of Qur’anic Studies* 12 (2010): 167-87.
* Ingrid Mattson, “Rethinking Islam and Animism: Connecting with the Community of Created Beings,” in edited volume to be published by Mohr Siebeck in 2022.
* Mimouni, Jamal and Nidhal Guessoum. “Islam and Extraterrestial Life,” from the website Islam & Science: An Educational Approach. <https://islam-science.net/islam-and-extraterrestrial-life-2908/>

**April 14 – Final paper due**

**Your book report must include:**

* Your name
* Title, author, date and other bibliographic information about the book
* Relevant information about the author
* Summary sentence about the contents of the book
* A presentation of the contents of the book; include illustrative excerpts of the book as appropriate
* A short critical analysis of the book, to the extent that you are able
* How this book relates to topics or themes discussed in our class
* The impact of the book and its reception among readers, if you are able to find that information
* Whether you would recommend this book to others and why or why not

**Essay Format:**

* 3000-5000 words
* 12-point font; standard margins; 1.5 space
* Title page
* No plastic cover
* Footnotes and bibliography (Chicago style preferred but other academic reference styles are acceptable)
* You must run a spell and grammar check before submitting the paper
* Standard Arabic transliteration according to these guidelines: <http://web.gc.cuny.edu/ijmes/pages/transliteration.html>; diacritics are optional.

**WRITING GUIDELINES**

**Violation of these guidelines can result in your paper being returned for rewriting or a failing grade.**

**If, after having read all the guidelines, you are unsure of your ability to write academic papers, consult the writing tutor before you begin to write.**

**Pick a Topic and Start Researching:**

1. How do you pick a topic? Reflect on what you have heard and read in the course so far. Was there something discussed that you would like to learn more about? Was there an issue mentioned that troubles you? The more interest you have in learning more about a topic, the better your research will be.
2. Look through the college library search engine to peruse titles related to the general topic in which you are interested. Then go to the library stacks and pull some books off the shelves and flip through them.
3. Once you have a specific topic, look through reference works, such as *The Encyclopedia of Islam* (Brill) and *The Encyclopdia of the Qur’an* (Brill) for an entry on or related to this topic. This can give you a summary overview of issues you need to consider.
4. Look through the college library journal search engine, such as *JSTOR* and subject indices such as *The Index Islamicus* to find articles and book chapters that explore details of your topic.
5. Skim a pile of books and articles you have gathered on the topic until you have a clear sense of the sources, controversies, theories and issues related to your topic.
6. Do not begin to write your paper until you have a detailed outline which shows you what you have decided to discuss and how you are going to get there. Do not start writing without a clear plan.
7. Once you have your plan/outline, scrutinize it: do you get distracted with unimportant asides, are you looking at the subject in enough depth, do you have substantial sources for your sub-topics.

**Writing the Paper**

1. Keep on topic
2. Support factual claims with sources
3. Use secondary sources critically, explaining why or why not you agree with them
4. If you are taking a position, state that clearly, support your position with evidence and respond to possible objections to your position.
5. Do not waste time explaining basic terms or concepts of the field: this not the place to explain the meaning of “Islam” or the five pillars of Islam.
6. Always attribute the subject of a statement. “Islam says” is not a meaningful phrase. The Qur’an ‘says’ things; hadith are claims that the Prophet Muhammad ‘said’ or ‘did’ something; particular scholars state that Islam requires one thing or another; Muslims state that Islam supports one view or another.
7. Avoid if possible passive sentences. xxx
8. If you are writing a research paper, as opposed to a persuasive essay, then you must adopt a neutral point of view. What is a neutral point of view? Wikipedia discusses it in its editorial guidelines here: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia%3ANeutral_point_of_view>. Please also view this video: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Training/For_Ambassadors/Verifiability>.
9. Do explain technical and advanced concepts as needed.
10. Give death dates for all historical figures/sources cited.
11. Do not rely too heavily on one or two sources. I ask for a minimum of five academic articles or book chapters on your topic not so they can be listed in your bibliography, but so you will use the specialized and focused research for your paper.
12. A common problem is failing to cite your reference or source for factual statements.
13. Wikipedia is not an acceptable academic source for citation, although you may consult it to see if it can point you to useful sources. Be careful, however, that you do not let the wiki entry or any other encyclopedia source structure your argument for you.
14. If you do not know what an acceptable academic source is, find out! Here is an a good resource to help you evaluate internet resources: Link: <http://www.collegeathome.com/articles/evaluating-online-information/>.
15. Do not fail to draw on the sources and theories which we spent the semester learning for your analysis of sources. Why did we read those hundreds of pages and discuss them in detail if you are not going to use them?
16. Do not plagiarize. If you do not know what constitutes plagiarism, ask.

**Form:**

1. Written expression: Even if you have been communicating in English for many years, writing requires a degree of accuracy in expression that is not necessary in oral communication. Writing improves only with practice, with feedback, and by the writer being willing to throw out bad or unclear writing – words, sentences, paragraphs, even whole sections – and rewrite and reorganize. All good writing is the product of many drafts.
2. Citing sources in footnotes and bibliography: Chicago style is preferred although other recognized systems may be used.
3. Use standard sized margins, double-spacing (do not use more than double-spacing), and 12 point font for your papers. Do not insert a space between paragraphs, unless you are starting a new section.
4. Long quotations should be single-spaced block quotes.
5. Follow generally the guidelines for form in this document: <http://hartsem.edu/new_forms/GeneralGuidelinesforResearchPaper.pdf>
6. Use of Arabic and other non-English words: All non-English words should be italicized at first use. Some scholars will continue to italicize a word after the first use; others will not. Pick a style and be consistent. Some words that are not English in origin have become Anglicized and do not need italicization. Check the Oxford English Dictionary (preferred) or another academic dictionary to see if this is the case. Many Arabic-Islamic words, such as Islam, Muslim, Imam, hadith, etc. have been Anglicized. The standard spelling of the Islamic sacred text is: “Qur’an.”
7. Transliteration: Use “standardized” academic Arabic transliteration. The difficulty here is that there is not a universal system. The best system is the one used by IJMES found here: <http://web.gc.cuny.edu/ijmes/pages/transliteration.html>.

**Here’s what your essay grade represents:**

A+ Exceptional; given to one or two students a year

A Exceeds expectations; deep analysis; unusual insights

A- Well-written and documented, some good insights

B+ A solid paper; meets basic expectations but lacks some originality

B A good start; needs more documentation and analysis; some errors

B - Not too many mistakes, but offers little analysis or significant content

C+ Some errors; poorly documented or argued

C Difficult to follow the argument; little documentation or analysis

**Additional Statements:**

**Course delivery with respect to the COVID-19 pandemic**

Although the intent is for this course to be delivered in-person, the changing COVID-19 landscape may necessitate some or all of the course to be delivered online, either synchronously (i.e., at the times indicated in the timetable) or asynchronously (e.g., posted on OWL for students to view at their convenience).  The grading scheme will not change.  Any assessments affected will be conducted online as determined by the course instructor.

1. **Statement on Use of Electronic Devices:** It is not appropriate to use technology (such as, but not limited, to laptops, PDAs, cell phones) in the classroom for non-classroom activities. Such activity is disruptive and is distracting to other students and to the instructor and can inhibit learning. Students are expected to respect the classroom environment and to refrain from inappropriate use of technology and other electronic devices in class.
2. **Statement on Academic Offences:** Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following web site: http://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/2014/pg113.html.
3. **Plagiarism-detecting Software/Computer Marking:**
4. All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the

commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection

of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents

in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently

submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently

between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com ( http://www.turnitin.com ).

1. **Support Services:**

* Huron’s Faculty of Theology, Office of the Dean: <http://www.huronuc.on.ca> > Theology
* Faculty of Theology office: srice@uwo.ca, 519-438-7224, ext. 289
* Bachelor’s Academic Advising at Huron: https://huronuc.ca/index.php/academic-advising
* Huron’s Writing Skills Centre: http://www.huronuc.on.ca/student\_life/writing\_services.
* Mental Health@Western: <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to this website for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.
* Student Accessibility Services
  + Western is committed to achieving barrier-free accessibility for all its members, including graduate students. As part of this commitment, Western provides a variety of services devoted to promoting, advocating, and accommodating persons with disabilities in their respective graduate program.
  + Students with disabilities (for example, chronic illnesses, mental health conditions, mobility impairments) are encouraged to register with Student Accessibility Services, a confidential service designed to support graduate and undergraduate students through their academic program. With the appropriate documentation, the student will work with both SAS and their faculty (normally their Dean and/or Course instructor) to ensure that appropriate academic accommodations to program requirements are arranged.
* Services provided by Western University Student Council: http://westernusc.ca/your-services/

1. **Academic Accommodation for Absences:**

*New pilot policy, as of September 1, 2019 (*[*complete details here*](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/Academic_Consideration_for_absences.pdf)*)  
Student Medical Certificate can be found here, if required:   
 https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf*

Students who experience an extenuating circumstance (illness, injury, or other extenuating circumstance) sufficiently significant to temporarily render them unable to meet academic requirements may submit a request for academic consideration through the following routes:

1. **Submitting a Self-Reported Absence form** provided that the conditions for submission are Met (see below);
2. **For medical absences, submitting a Student Medical Certificate (SMC)**, signed by a licensed medical or mental health practitioner in order to be eligible for Academic Consideration (for instance, when a Self-Report is not possible: any assignment worth more than 30%, final exams, or December mid-terms during exam schedule); or
3. **For non-medical absences**, submitting appropriate documentation (e.g., obituary, police report, accident report, court order, etc.) to Academic Counselling in their Faculty of registration in order to be eligible for academic consideration. Students are encouraged to contact their Academic Counselling unit to clarify what documentation is appropriate.

Any documentation required must be submitted by the student directly to your Faculty’s Dean’s office (or academic counselor), and not to the instructor. For students of the Faculty of Theology, all such documentation must be submitted to room A227. It will be the Dean`s office that will determine if accommodation is warranted.

**Further Details about Requests for Academic Consideration Self-Reported Absence Form**

The full Policy on Academic Consideration for student absences is available at:

<https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/Academic_Consideration_for_absences.pdf> .

Students who experience an unexpected illness or injury or an extenuating circumstance (48

hours or less) that is sufficiently severe to temporarily render them unable to meet academic requirements (e.g., attending lectures or labs, writing tests or midterm exams, completing and submitting assignments, participating in presentations) should self-declare using the online Self-

Reported Absence portal. This option should be used in situations where the student expects to resume academic responsibilities within 48 hours or less.

The following conditions are in place for self-reporting of medical or extenuating circumstances:

1. students will be allowed a maximum of two self-reported absences between September and April and one self-reported absence between May and August
2. any absences in excess of the number designated in clause a above, regardless of duration, will require students to present a Student Medical Certificate (SMC), signed by a licensed medical or mental health practitioner, detailing the duration and severity of illness, or appropriate documentation supporting extenuating circumstances to the Academic Counselling unit in their Faculty of registration no later than two business days after the date specified for resuming responsibilities.
3. The duration of the excused absence will be for a maximum of 48 hours from the time the Self-Reported Absence form is completed through the online portal, or from 8:30 am the following morning if the form is submitted after 4:30 pm;
4. The duration of the excused absence will terminate prior to the end of the 48-hour period should the student undertake significant academic responsibilities (write a test, submit a paper) during that time;
5. The duration of an excused absence will terminate at 8:30 am on the day following the last day of classes each semester regardless of how many days of absence have elapsed;
6. Self-reported absences will not be allowed for scheduled final examinations; for midterm examinations scheduled during the December examination period; or for final lab examinations scheduled during the final week of term;
7. Self-reporting may not be used for assessments (e.g. midterm exams, tests, reports, presentations, or essays) worth more than 30% of any given course.
8. students must be in touch with their instructors no later than 24 hours after the end of the period covered by the Self-Reported Absence form, to clarify how they will be expected to fulfil the academic expectations they may have missed during the absence.