

Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago Course Profile - Spring Term 2008

W-430, "Islam Today" - Instructor: Mark N. Swanson, LSTC

Statement of goals:

This course is designed to introduce students to the great diversity of ways in which the Islamic tradition takes shape in the world, to grasp some of the factors that contribute to this diversity, and to learn something of the intra-Islamic debates taking place at this critical point in Islamic history.

Outline and content of course:

The first weeks of the class will be devoted to a brief overview of Islamic history, with emphasis on responses to the challenges of modernity. Attention will be given to Islamic discussions of democracy, religious pluralism, human rights (including the rights of women and of non-Muslims), Qur'an interpretation, etc. After this *issue*-centered introduction, the remainder of the class will be devoted to a study of the diverse ways in which the Islamic tradition takes shape in selected *regions* of the world, including at least some of the following countries: Saudi Arabia; Egypt, Iran, Turkey; India, Pakistan; Indonesia, Senegal; selected countries in Western Europe and North America. Guests with special expertise in particular regions of the world will be invited to share with the class. Audio-visual resources will be integrated into our study.

Required work for course:

This class will be a seminar that depends for its functioning on students reading widely and participating fully in the discussions. Three short reflection papers on assigned readings will be required. Rather than a final paper, each student (or possibly a team of students) will prepare a presentation for the class entitled "Islam in _____," sharing with the rest of the class about Islamic life, traditions and institutions in some part of the world.

Bibliography:

This course will depend heavily on books and articles on Reserve in the library (and articles on e-reserve on the course Jenzabar site when appropriate). It is recommended that students acquire copies of the following books (all in paperback):

Khaled Abou El Fadl, *Islam and Democracy*, a Boston Review Book (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004).

Bruce B. Lawrence, *Shattering the Myth: Islam beyond Violence* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998; paperback 2000).

Malise Ruthven, *Islam in the World*, 3rd ed. (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

Jane I. Smith, *Islam in America*, Columbia Contemporary American Religion Series (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

Additional information:

A detailed syllabus will be distributed at the first class meeting. For more information, contact Mark Swanson, mwsanson@lstc.edu.