Sample Syllabus

The Global Politics of Islam: Ideas, Actors, Sites and Practices

Notes to Instructors:

The present syllabus is intended as a template for the teaching of Islamic Politics within a Higher Education context. It is suitable, mutatis mutandis, for a one-semester module at either the final level of the undergraduate degree programme or at post-graduate level.

In its uncut version, it consists of 14 sessions, covering both epistemological questions, conceptual discussions and empirical material relating to intellectual and political history of diverse states, movements, thinkers and activists.

Details on institutional policies and module assessments have not been specified, due to a natural diversity in practices amongst institutions and teaching staff. Nor has the format been determined in order to allow for both lecture-based and seminar-based teaching.

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The Global Politics of Islam: Ideas, Actors, Sites and Practices

Objectives of the Module:
This module intends to introduce the student to historical and ongoing debates about the nature and characteristics of the politics of Islam, understood both as a normative construct and as faith community. It introduces foundational political concepts in classical Islamic political thought as well as later developments in Islamicate political ideas and practices, from the middle of the 18th century to the contemporary period. It focuses on both key institutions (such as states), epistemic communities (such as the ‘ulama), and key thinkers, ideologues, activists and movements. Geographically, the module covers diverse cases of Political Islam in the Middle East, North Africa, South Asia and Southeast Asia.

Intended Learning Outcomes
This module systematically and instrumentally pursues the following ten outcomes:
1. To attain a critical understanding of the founding axioms and ideas in Islamic political thought, both classical and contemporary.
2. To obtain a critical awareness of the diverse approaches to the study of Islamic politics and a broad familiarity with important contributions to the literature thereon.
3. To develop an ability to critically differentiate between variant ideological currents of Islamist thought and to situate them in their contemporaneous intellectual and political context as well as within the context of their intellectual or political histories.
4. To enable critique and evaluation of the central set of ideas and tropes of key thinkers, both Muslim and non-Muslim, on Islam’s relation with the political.
5. To obtain familiarity with the diversity of institutional arrangements and political strategies of Islamic states in relation to Islam as a political resource.
6. To develop systematic knowledge into the social, economic, ideational, and political causes and consequences of Muslim radicalism.
7. To develop a comparative understanding of the political contexts in which Political Islam has emerged and the challenges in politics and society to which Political Islam has responded and/or exacerbated.
8. To independently access and situate contemporary organizations and movements in relation to their ideological and theological allegiances as well as in relation to similar or opposed entities in a variety of global geographies.
9. To enable the critical juxtaposition of proponents of Political Islam in relation to notions of war, peace, gender roles and democracy.
10. To enable understanding and critique of state practices, both Western and non-Western, in relation to the challenge of political Islam.

Suggested Preterm reading:
The present module requires no pre-requisites in terms of prior learning. However, students who are encountering the study of the Muslim world without prior study or engagement, may wish to avail themselves of the literature below, intended as pre-term primers.

The Prophet:

Islamic Theology and Religious Practice:

Islamic History

*Modern Islamic Politics:*

*Key Textbooks:*
The present module is reading intensive and therefore requires engagement with a vast array of diverse literature. There is no single textbook, but the following four texts will recur frequently:

*Readers and Handbooks:*
It is recommended that the following five handbooks be frequently consulted in the library:

*Outline Contents:*
Session 1: Islam in Relation to the Political: Conceptual Challenges and Methodological Dilemmas
Session 2: Seeking the Islamic State: Post-Westphalia and the Burden of History
Session 3: Religious Authority and the Islamic Polity: Whither the ‘Ulama’?
Session 4: Managing Islam: Contrasting Examples of the Religio-Politics of Contemporary "Islamic States”
Session 5: Understanding the Islamist Spectrum: Terminologies, Typologies and Approaches
Session 6: Ideological Foundations of Islamism: From Wahhabi ‘Fundamentalism’ to Salafist ‘Revivalism’
Session 7: The Radical Turn in Islamism: Qutb, Mawdudi, Khomeini
Session 8: Dying for National Liberation: Hamas and Hezbollah
Session 9: Transnational Terror in the Name of the *Umma*: Al-Qaida and Global “Jihadism”
Session 10: Debating the Role of Force in the Political: Retrieving the Shariatic Norms of Jihad
Session 11: Gender and the Politics of Islam: Women and Agency in Religio-Politics
Session 12: Islamization, Democratization or Synthetization? Questions of Compatibility
Session 13: Islamic Politics in Southeast Asia: Revisiting the Full Spectrum
Session 14: Political Islam in Europe: (How) Does Context Matter?
Session 1:  
Islam in Relation to the Political: Conceptual Challenges and Methodological Dilemmas

Discussion Questions:
Is the understanding of Islam as a religion a Western hegemonic construction? To what extent can we generalize about Islam and politics? Does Islam have a particular/peculiar relationship with politics? What is entailed in Said’s critiques of the Orientalist approach to Muslim societies?

Keywords:
The concept of religion, causality in the social world, social construction, Ethnocentrism, Orientalism and its Critics, policy contexts, Edward Said, Ernest Gellner, Talal Asad.

Primary Readings:


Supplementary Readings:


Session 2

Seeking the Islamic State: Premodernity, Post-Westphalia and the Burden of History

Discussion Questions:
In which ways does the Constitution of Medina establish political principles that can be reconciled with modern ideas of statecraft? How did the Abbasid jurists, such as al-Ghazzali, reconcile Islam with power? To what extent were either the Medinan model or al-Ghazzali’s polity theocratic? Before the Westphalian Order, what was the paradigm of the Islamic state? To which extent are late-modern reimaginings of the “Islamic State” borrowing from Western (totalitarian) models, rather than Islam's own political theory?

Keywords:
The Constitution of Medina, The Shariatic polity, constitutional order, institutional balance of power, Caliphate, Sultanate, the Westphalian state system, the 'Ulama, theocracy, Caesaropapism.

Primary Readings:


**Supplementary Reading:**


Session 3

Religious Authority and the Islamic Polity: Whither the 'Ulama?

Discussion Questions:
What effect does the absence of a hierarchically organized clergy have on Islam's political institutions? How did the role of the 'ulama change during and after the colonial period? In which ways do modern technologies undermine the religious authority of the 'ulama? Why have the 'ulama been sidelined in contemporary movements of Political Islam? Why have the 'ulama been sidelined by liberal reformers? How has the falling fortunes of the Ulama been linked with the status of the Sharia as a source of state law?

Keywords:
Normativity, Interpretative Control, Religious Authority, the 'Ulama, Cyberspace, antisacerdotalism.

Primary Readings:

Supplementary Readings:
Session 4:

Managing Islam: Contrasting Examples of the Religio-Politics of Contemporary “Islamic States”

Discussion Questions:
Are constitutional provisions sufficient to make a state “Islamic”? In which sense is Pakistan an “Islamic Republic”? How, and why, does the Iranian model differ from the Pakistani? How has the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia reconciled monarchy with Islamic rule? How does Islam influence foreign policy? Can a meaningful distinction be made between Islam as a policy rationale and Islam as a political discourse?

Keywords:
The Islamic Republic of Iran, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Comparative constitutionalism, Islamic institutions, Islam in foreign policy.

Primary Readings:

Supplementary Readings:
Session 5:

Understanding the Islamist Spectrum: Terminologies, Typologies and Approaches

Discussion Questions:
What are the key streams of contemporary political thought among Muslim thinkers? How have scholars provided different classifications or taxonomies in relation to the types of thinking that exist within political Islam? What is implied by the term “fundamentalism” and how well does this apply to the Islamists? What is the conceptual and practical difference between radicalism and extremism? How do we differentiate between Islamism and political Islam? How do we best understand the Islamic revival: in terms of ideology, class politics or identity politics? What contributions has social movement theory made to our understanding of Islamism and what are its weaknesses?

Keywords:
Fundamentalism, Revivalism, Radicalism, Extremism, Ideology, Social Class, Political Sociology, Political Economy, Social Movement Theory, Identity politics.

Primary Readings:

Secondary Readings:
Burgat, F. (2005), Face to Face with Political Islam (London: I.B. Tauris), Chapter 4: “From One Islamism to Another”
Ramadan, T. (1999), To Be a European Muslim (Leicester: The Islamic Foundation), Appendix I: “Introduction to ‘Islamic Tendencies’ in Europe and the World.”

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Session 6:

I ideological Foundations of Islamism: From Wahhabi 'Fundamentalism' to Salafist 'Revivalism'

Discussion Questions:
In which ways did Wahhabism influence the later trajectory of political Islam? How do we distinguish between Wahhabism and Salafism? What founding axioms were carried on from Salafism to Islamism? Discuss the proposition that Jamal al-Din al-Afghani was concerned primarily with the global balance of power and not so much with the authenticity of faith. What motivated Hassan al-Banna to found the Muslim Brotherhood?

Keywords:
Wahhabism, Salafism, Takfir, Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, Muhammad Abduh, Rashid Rida, Hassan al-Banna

Primary Readings:
Supplementary Readings:
Af saruddin, A. (2009), The First Muslims (Oxford: Oneworld), Chapter 9: “Constructing the Pious Forebears II: Historical Memory and the Present.”
al-Afghani, S. J., “Religion versus Science,” in M. Moaddel and K. Talattof (eds), Contemporary Debates in Islam (Location: Publisher), pp. 23-28
Algar, H., Wahhabism: A Critical Essay
Mousalli, A. (1999), Moderate and radical Islamic fundamentalists (University Press of Florida).
Session 7:

The Radical Turn in Islamism: Qutb, Mawdudi, Khomeini

Discussion Questions:
In which ways have Islamist thinkers understood the Islamic faith as an ideology and what are the implications of this understanding? What was entailed in Qutb’s rethinking of the *jahiliyya* precept? Which life experiences of Qutb might have radicalized his thinking? How did Qutb’s approach challenge alternative streams within the Muslim brotherhood? In which ways did Ayatollah Khomeini depart from Shi’i traditionalism in promulgating his velayat-i faqih doctrine of government? What “family resemblance” does radical Islamism have with European totalitarianism?

Keywords:
Ideologization, Sayyid Qutb, Abul A'la Mawdudi, Ayatollah Khomeini, *jahiliyya*, *fikr Islami*, Islamic State, velayat-i faqih

Primary Readings:

Supplementary Readings:
Session 8

Dying for National Liberation: Hamas and Hezbollah

Discussion Questions:
What is peculiarly “Islamic” about Islamic liberation movements? How has the ideology of Hamas evolved since its inception? What ideological, political and financial ties does Hezbollah have to Iran? Account for the political strategies of either Hamas or Hezbollah, balancing militant strategies with social initiatives. How do we account for the public support behind Hamas and Hezbollah? What logic is at play in the use of suicide terrorism in the Middle East? Is the ‘Bad Press’ that Hamas and/or Hezbollah receives in the West justified?

Keywords:
Primary Readings:

Supplementary Readings:
Deeb M. (2004), Militant Islamic Movements in Lebanon
Hamzeh, A. N. (2004), In the Path of Hizbullah (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press).
Session 9

Transnational Terror in the Name of the *Umma*: Al-Qaida and Global “Jihadism”

Discussion Questions:
Is the term “jihadism” a meaningful signifier of a particular stream of Islamism? How has al-Qaida evolved ideologically since its inception? What kind of reading of history enabled the development of militant thought? How has globalization helped the new global current of Jihadism? What is the relationship between transnational militant actors and state actors? Is al-Qaeda an anarchist organization? How can it be argued...
that al-Qaeda is a modernist movement? Does al-Qaeda act in the name of God or in the name of the umma? Why is this distinction important?

**Keywords:**
Jihadism, al-Qaeda, 9/11, Globalization, anarchism, Osama bin Laden, Ayman al-Zawahiri

**Primary Readings:**


**Supplementary Reading:**
AbuKhalil, A. (2002), *Bin Laden, Islam, and America's New 'War on Terrorism'* (New York: Seven Stories)


Burke, J. (2002), *Holy War, Inc.* (New York: Phoenix)


Jihadis"
Mansfield, L. (2006), His Own Words: A Translation of the Writings of Dr Ayman al-Zawahiri (New York: TLG), see in particular "Knights under the Prophet’s Banner.”

Session 10

Debating the Role of Force in the Political: Retrieving the Shariatic Norms of Jihad

Discussion Questions:
How does the traditional understanding of Jihad differ from the Jihadist understanding? Which have been the key arguments promoted by Traditionalist scholars against Jihadism? What has been the key concern of the Traditionalist in countering militancy within Islam? What resources are available within Islam for peace building? Do non-Islamist forms of political Islam exist, and if so what are they predicated on?

Keywords: Nomocentrism vs. antinomianism, legal traditionalism, peace building, Islamic liberalism, Islamic humanism, Tahir ul-Qadri, Fethullah Gulen, Khaled Abou el-Fadl, post-Islamism.

Primary Readings:
Qadri, M.T. (2010), Fatwa on Terrorism and Suicide Bombings (London: Minhaj). Partially available online.

Supplementary Readings:
Johnson, J. T. and J. Kelsey (1991), Just War and jihad: Historical and Theoretical Perspectives (Westport: Greenwood)
Kelsay, J. and J.T. Johnson, eds, (1991), Just War and jihad (Greenwood)
Peters, R. (1979), Islam and Colonialism: The Doctrine of Jihad in Modern History (Boston, MA: De Gruyter)
Session 11

Gender and the Politics of Islam: Women and Agency in Religio-Politics

Discussion Questions:
Do women retain agency when working in an Islamist organization, or are they appropriated by men? How does Muslim patriarchy differ from Western patriarchy? Consider the argument that women can subvert Islamist organizations by attaining membership: do you agree? How have women influenced Islamist politics? How are women conceived of in different streams of Islamist thinking? Is the term "Islamic feminist" an oxymoron?

Keywords:
Gender, agency, sexuality, masculinity, patriarchy, norms, activism, Islamic feminism

Primary Readings:

Secondary Readings:
Moghadam, V. (2003), Modernizing Women: Gender and Social Change in the Middle East (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner).

Session 12

Islamization, Democratization or Synthetization? Questions of Compatibility

**Discussion Questions:**
In which ways is Islam compatible with democracy? Is democracy useful for the Muslim world? Do Muslims desire democracy? What have historically been the obstacles to democratization in the Muslim world? What intellectual resources in the Islamic tradition can Muslim democrats draw upon? Is a religious democracy conceivable? Which preconceptions about the Muslim world has the Arab Spring challenged? How have Islamist positions changed after the Arab Spring?

**Keywords:**
Democracy, Liberal Democracy, Religious Democracy, Theocracy, Shura, Public Representation, Arab Spring, Noah Feldman.

**Primary Readings:**
Ramadan, T. (2001), Islam, the West and the Challenges of Modernity (Leicester: The Islamic Foundation), Chapter 8: “Shura or Democracy?”
Supplementary Readings
Session 13

Islamic Politics in Southeast Asia: Revisiting the Full Spectrum

Discussion Questions:
How has the state incorporated Islam in national identity in respectively the Malaysian and Indonesian cases? How does ethnicity and class concern have a bearing on Islamic politics in Malaysia? How has the state sought to manipulate Islamic sentiments to strengthen national cohesion in Indonesia? What are the ideological and strategic aims of Jemaah Islamiyyah? Does the ideological difference between Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiya have any parallel in other parts of the Muslim world? How do Islamic parties in Southeast Asia navigate the question of Shari’a in modern society? How has the Moro Islamic Liberation Front been affected by international developments?

Keywords:
Islam and national identity, Shari’a, Islamization, Nahdlatul Ulama, Muhammadiyah, Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party, Jemaah Islamiyyah, Moro Islamic Liberation Front, Moluccan conflict, militant Islamism.

Primary Readings:

Supplementary Readings:
Abuza, Z. (2003), Militant Islam in Southeast Asia: Crucible of Terror (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner)
Boland, B.J. (1982), The Struggle of Islam in Modern Indonesia (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff)


Yegar, M. (2002), Between Integration and Secession: the Muslim Communities of the Southern Philippines, Southern Thailand and Western Burma/Myanmar (Lexington Books)
Session 14
Political Islam in Europe: (How) Does Context Matter?

Discussion Questions:
How has Europe historically constituted itself in relation to Islam? Describe the peculiar trajectory of Political Islam in Turkey. Is there in AKP a model for emulation elsewhere? Is “Islamophobia” an accurate description of conditions of hostility faced by Muslim faith communities in Europe? What are the ways in which militant Islamists operate in Europe? Are Islamic parties meaningful in a Western context? Has the spectre of 'homegrown' terrorism been exaggerated after 7/7? Which challenges face the Muslim community in moving forward after 7/7?

Keywords:
Islamophobia, Citizenship, Radicalization, 7/7, Homegrown terrorism, Euro-Islam, Tariq Ramadan, Turkish Islamism, AKP

Primary Readings:
Al-Sayyed, N. and M. Castells, eds (2002), Muslim Europe or Euro-Islam (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books)
Cesari, J. (2006), When Islam and Democracy Meet: Muslims in Europe and the United States (London: Palgrave Macmillan), Chapter 1 and 4

Supplementary Readings:
Cesari, J. and S. McLoughlin, eds (2005), European Muslims and the Secular State (Farnham: Ashgate)
Esposito, J. L. and F. Burgat, eds. (2003), Modernising Islam: Religion in the Public Sphere in Europe and the Middle East (London: Hurst & Co)
Gest, J. (2010), Apart: Alienated and Engaged Muslims in the West (London: Hurst)
Ramadan, T. (1999), *To Be a European Muslim* (Leicester: Islamic Foundation)