Description

This is a course about what Islam is and what Turks believe that it is. Particular topics include: a) Islamic message, sources, and theological conflicts; b) Turkish encounters with Islam, the Ottoman legacy, and interactions between secularism and Islam; c) intellectual and mystic movements; and d) Islamist politics and the discord between political and social activists. The course explores these topics through the prism of original sources such as Quran and Islamist literature, and emphasizes ways cultural forces contribute to the making of modern Islam. At the end of the course, students should be able to identify major themes in Islam and Turkey; demonstrate an understanding of Turkish and Muslim identities; analyze complex religious issues with empirical evidence; and develop skills for advanced focus on European, Middle Eastern, and Turkish studies.

There is no prerequisite for the course and all the materials will be provided in English on the e-learning site.

Administration

Participation (10 pts). The course consists of lectures and discussion. Students must attend lectures, complete readings before class, and contribute to discussions when possible.

Interview (5 pts). Students conduct 2-4 interviews with Turks and Muslims in town or elsewhere. Instructions and questionnaire will follow.

Review (20 pts). Students write a 3-4 page abstract on a text of their choice, or from recommended readings below. The abstracts that capture the core of a book’s arguments and substance of its themes can take full credit.

Research (30 pts). By Week 12, students submit a research paper of 6-10 pages. Assistance and guidelines will be provided.

Take-home (35 pts). Students write a final examination drawn from lectures and selected readings. The review class will address this exam.

Simulation (10 pts). In this bonus project, students select a Turkish Islamist movement and study it within groups. The instructor introduce specific cases and students deal with them from their movement’s perspective. The instructor will discuss this on September 18.
Schedule/Readings

Part I: The Forging of Islam

Week 1- The Messenger
Tuesday 8/26 Course mechanics and introduction
Thursday 8/28 The life and teachings of Muhammad
  • Movie. *Muhammad: the Messenger of God*
  • Muhammad’s Farewell Sermon and speech on education and jihad
  • Ali Buluç, “the Medina Document”

Week 2- The Message
Tuesday 9/2 Qur’an and the Right Way
Thursday 9/4 **Discussion**
  • Documentary. *Decoding the Past: Secrets of the Koran*
  • Verses on believers, family, human rights, and inheritance
  • Hassan Khalil, “Saving/Damning non-Muslims through Translation”

Week 3- Authority and Knowledge
Tuesday 9/16 Qur’an, Sunnah, consensus, inference, and custom
Thursday 9/18 **Discussion**
  • PBS Documentary. *Empires of Faith: the Awakening*
  • Ahmed Shouaiaia, “On the Sources of Islamic Law and Practices”
  • Gudrun Kramer and S. Schmidtke, “Religious Authority and Religious Authorities”

Week 4- Schism
Tuesday 9/9 Sunnis, Shiites, and the ideological drift
Thursday 9/11 **Discussion**
  • Documentary. *Sunni Shia Split*
  • Ehsan Puresmaeil, “Seeing Allah While Dreaming: Shia and Sunni Beliefs”
  • Wael Hallaq, “Was the gate of Ijtihad Closed?”

Part II: The Turkish Path

Week 5- Encounters with Islam
Tuesday 9/23 **Book review**, Turk migrations to the Abode of Islam
Thursday 9/25 **Discussion**
  • Carter Findley, “Islam and Empire from the Seljuks through the Mongols”
  • Robert Devereux, “Al-Kashgari and Early Turkish Islam”

Week 6- Early Conversions
Tuesday 9/30 Dervishes: God’s unruly friends
Thursday 10/2 **Discussion**
  • Ahmet Karamustafa, “Renunciation, Deviant Individualism, and Sufism”; “Dervish Groups in Full Bloom”; “Dervish Groups in the Ottoman Empire, 1450-1550”

Week 7- Representing Muslims
Tuesday 10/7 **Interview**, Ottoman Islamic legacy
Thursday 10/9 **Discussion**
- Documentary. *Empires of Faith: the Ottomans*
- Donal Quataert, “Why Study Ottoman History?”
- Halil Inalcik, “Istanbul: An Islamic City”
- Hakan Yavuz, “The Enduring Ottoman Legacy”

**Week 8- Containing Islam**
Tuesday 10/14 Guest Lecture by Buket Oztas--Secularism and Islamists
Thursday 10/16 **Discussion**
- Hakan Yavuz, “The Tempering of the Kemalist Revolution”
- Thomas Smith, “Between Allah and Ataturk: Liberal Islam in Turkey”

**Part III: Turkish Islams**

**Week 9- Sufism: Nakshibandiyya**
Tuesday 10/21 The Nakshibandis and the Suleymanli community
Thursday 10/23 **Discussion**
- Hakan Yavuz, “Matrix of Turkish Islamic Movements: the Nakşibendi Sufi Order”

**Week 10- Sufism: Mawlana**
Tuesday 10/28 Rumi’s whirling dervishes
Thursday 10/30 **Discussion**
- Documentary. *The Whirling Dervishes of Rumi*
- Selected texts from Mawlana’s Masnavi
- Cyrus Masroori, “An Islamic Language of Toleration: Rumi’s Criticism of Religious Persecution”

**Week 11- Activism: the Nur Movement**
Tuesday 11/4 Said Nursi and the Islamist utopia
Thursday 11/6 **Discussion**
- Movie. *Free Man*
- Short chapters from Nursi’s *The Words*
- Ahmet Kuru, ‘Apolitical Interpretation of Islam: Said Nursi’s Faith Based Activism in Comparison with Political Islamism and Sufism’

**Week 12- From Classroom to the Pulpit**
Tuesday 11/11 **Veterans day**
Thursday 11/13 **Research essay**; Muslim Prayers Schools
- Diren Cakmak, “Pro-Islamic Public Education in Turkey: the Imam-Hatip Schools”
- Dorian Jones, “In Turkey, Religious Schools Gain a Foothold” (*VOA*)

**Week 13- Activism: the Hizmet Movement**
Tuesday 11/18 Guest Lecture by Fatih Gordu--Fethullah Gulen and the golden generation
Thursday 11/20 **Discussion**, **Simulation Project**
- CSIS Conference. *Evolution of the Gulen Hizmet Movement*
- Sections from Gulen’s *Emerald Hills of the Heart*
Part IV: Claiming Islam

Week 14- Publicizing Islam
Tuesday 11/25 Debating the hijab: the case of Merve Kavakci
  • Interview with Kavakci. My Life as a Muslim Woman Activist Scholar
  • Kim Shively, “The Merve Kavakci Affair”
Thursday 11/27 **Thanksgiving**

Week 15- Politicizing Islam
Tuesday 12/2 **Take-home announcement**; The National Vision and the Party (Justice and Development Party, AKP)
Thursday 12/4 **Discussion**
  • Angel Rabasa and S. Larrabee, “The AKP in Power”
  • Hakan Yavuz, “The National Outlook Movement”

Week 16- Discords and Negotiating the Past
Tuesday 12/9 **Review class**; Hizmet vs. the party
  • Erdogan’s speech and interview with Gulen

Recommended Readings
Arat, Yesim. *Rethinking Islam and Liberal Democracy: Islamist Women in Turkish Politics*
Azak, Umut. *Islam and Secularism in Turkey: Kemalism, Religion, and the Nation State*
Cagaptay, Soner. *Islam, Secularism, and Nationalism in Modern Turkey: Who is a Turk?*
Dedeoglu, Saniye, and Adam Elveren. *Gender and Society in Turkey: The Impact of Neoliberal Policies, Political Islam, and EU Accession*
Gole, Nilufer. *The Forbidden Modern: Civilization and Veiling*
Gulen, Fethullah. *Key Concepts in the Practice of Sufism*
Hart, Kimberly. *Then We Work for God: Rural Sunni Islam in Western Turkey*
Karamustafa, Ahmet. *Sufism: the Formative Period*
Karpat, Kemal. *Politicization of Islam: Reconstructing Identity, State, Faith, and Community in the Late Ottoman State*
Kaya, Ibrahim. *Social Theory and Later Modernities: The Turkish Experience*
Koprulu, Mehmed Fuad. *Early Mystics in Turkish Literature*
Kuru, Ahmet and Alfred Stepan. *Democracy, Islam, and Secularism in Turkey*
Ozdemir, Adil and Kenneth Frank. *Visible Islam in Modern Turkey*
Pamuk, Orhan. *Snow*
Peres, Richard. *Day Turkey Stood Still: Merve Kavakci’s Walk into the Turkish Parliament*
Rogerson, Barnaby. *The Heirs of the Prophet Muhammad and the Roots of the Sunni-Shia Schism*
Saktanber, Ayse. *Living Islam: Women, Religion, and the Politicization of Culture in Turkey*
Shankland, David. *The Alevis in Turkey: The Emergence of a Secular Islamic Tradition*
Vahide, Sukran and Ibrahim Abu-Rabi. *Islam in Modern Turkey: An Intellectual Biography of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi*
White, Jenny. *Princeton Studies in Muslim Politics: Muslim Nationalism and the New Turks*
Yavuz, Hakan. *Islamic Political Identity in Turkey*
Zurcher, Eric. *The European Union, Turkey, and Islam*