

CUYAMACA COLLEGE
COURSE OUTLINE OF RECORD

RELIGIOUS STUDIES 135 – RELIGION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

3 hours lecture, 3 units

Catalog Description

In this course students will learn about the diverse religious traditions and communities of the Middle East. The course examines how religion has significantly influenced the societies, cultures, political institutions, gender roles, legal codes, and economies of various regions in the Middle East, particularly Iraq, Egypt, the Arabian Peninsula, Palestine, Iran, Syria, Turkey, Lebanon, and Israel. Special attention will be paid to the role of religion as a force of stability and instability in the region, a significant marker of identity, the status of religious minorities, and the challenge of nationhood.

Prerequisite

None

Course Content

- 1) What is religion?
 - a. Definitions of religion
 - b. Dimensions of religion
- 2) What is the Middle East?
 - a. Geography
 - b. Difficulties with definition
 - c. Cultural and linguistic terms
- 3) Ancient Religions of the Middle East
 - a. Ancient Egyptian Religion
 1. Relationship of religion and political power in ancient Egypt
 - b. Mesopotamian Religion
 1. Relationship of religion and political power in ancient Mesopotamia
 - c. Babylonian Religion
 1. Relationship of religion and political power in ancient Babylon
 - d. Zoroastrian Religion
 1. Relationship of religion and political power in Sasanian Empire
 - e. Greek and Roman religion
 1. Hellenistic culture in the Middle East
- 4) Judaism in the Middle East
 - a. Major beliefs and practices of Judaism
 - b. Ancient Israelite Society
 - c. Jewish Monotheism
 - d. The Development of Rabbinical Judaism
 - e. Jewish Diaspora
- 5) Christianity in the Middle East
 - a. Major beliefs and practices of Christianity
 - b. Persecuted minority to an Imperial Religion
 - c. Development of regional Christian churches, emphasis on the Chaldean Church
 1. Eastern, Orthodox, Coptic, Maronite, Ethiopian, etc.

- 6) Rise of Islam and Islamic Empire in the Middle East
 - a. Major beliefs and practices of Islam
 - b. Origins of Islam in the Arabian Peninsula
 1. Charter of Medina
 - c. Expansion of Islam through conquest and conversion
 1. Pact of Umar
 - d. Relationship between religion and the state in early and classical Islam
 1. Emergence of the caliphate
- 7) Sunni and Shi'a Muslims
 - a. Reasons for the denominational split
 - b. Death of Imam Hussain
 1. Understanding of the role of the Imam in Shi'ite theology
 - c. Immigration of Shi'a community
- 8) Religion and State in Classical and Medieval Muslim Empires
 - a. Relationship between Islam and the State
 - b. Religious minorities in Muslim Civilization
 1. Religious and legal background of the dhimmis
 2. Rights and responsibilities of the dhimmis
 3. Consequences of the dhimmi policy on the intersection of religion and social identity
 - c. Religious and social consequences of The Crusades
- 9) Religion and State in the Ottoman Empire
- 10) Religious Communities in the Modern Middle East
- 11) Iran
 - a. Religious demographics
 1. Majority and minority religious communities and relations
 - b. Shi'a Islam
 1. 1979 Revolution
 - c. Zoroastrian faith and community
 - d. Iranian Jewish faith community
 - e. Baha'I faith and community
- 12) Iraq
 - a. Religious demographics
 1. Majority and minority religious communities and relations
 - b. Yazidi faith and community
 - c. Sunni and Shi'ite Relations
 1. Saddam Hussain's "faith campaign"
 2. Political power of Shi'a clergy
 3. Sectarian violence
 - d. Jewish community
 - e. Chaldean Christian faith and community
 - f. Mandaean faith and community
- 13) Egypt
 - a. Religious demographics
 1. Majority and minority religious communities and relations
 - b. Sunni Islam
 1. Al-Azhar University and its role in Middle Eastern politics
 - c. Coptic Christian faith and community
 - d. Druze faith and community
- 14) Saudi Arabia and the Arabian Peninsula

- a. Religious demographics
 - 1. Majority and minority religious communities and relations
 - b. Wahhabi Islam
- 15) Syria
- a. Religious demographics
 - 1. Majority and minority religious communities and relations
 - b. Alawite Islam
 - c. Syrian Civil War
- 16) Turkey
- a. Religious demographics
 - 1. Majority and minority religious communities and relations
 - b. Sunni Islam
 - c. Sufism
 - d. Secularization in the 20th century
 - 1. Ending of the caliphate
 - e. Armenian Genocide
 - f. Religious revival in the 21st century
- 17) Palestine and Israel
- a. Religious demographics
 - 1. Majority and minority religious communities and relations
 - b. Judaism
 - 1. Zionism
 - 2. Creation of the State of Israel
 - (1) Relationship of religion and state in Israeli government
 - c. Christian communities
 - 1. Israeli Christians
 - 2. Palestinian Christians
 - d. Muslim communities in Israel and Palestine
 - e. Druze faith and community
 - f. Samaritan faith and community
- 18) Lebanon
- a. Religious demographics
 - 1. Majority and minority religious communities and relations
 - b. Catholic Christians
 - 1. De-colonization from the French and the role of the Catholic community in the Lebanese Constitution
 - c. Maronite Christians
 - d. Sunni and Shi'ite relations
 - e. Druze

Course Objectives

- 1) Identify the diverse religious traditions and communities of the Middle East, both “majority” and “minority” religions.
- 2) Analyze how religion has influenced Middle Eastern societies in the past and today, specifically related to culture, political institutions, gender roles, legal codes, and economies.
- 3) Apply their understanding of Middle Eastern religions to current events and to their own lived experience.
- 4) Analyze the role of religion in the development of Middle Eastern nation-states, political institutions, and legal codes.

- a. Sunni – Shi'ite relations in the development of political institutions in Iraq, Iran, and Saudi Arabia.
- 5) Analyze how religion intersects with social factors of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, language, and nationality.
- 6) Analyze the experiences of religious “minorities” in the Middle East.
- 7) Examine how religion has been utilized to promote both peace and conflict in the Middle East.

Method of Evaluation

A grading system will be established by the instructor and implemented uniformly. Grades will be based on demonstrated proficiency in subject matter determined by multiple measurements for evaluation, one of which must be a project, an essay exam, or skills demonstration.

- 1) Class participation/work
- 2) Written assignments
- 3) Field Trips
- 4) Group Projects
- 5) Presentations
- 6) Papers and essays
- 7) Quizzes and exams
- 8) Journals

Special Materials Required of Student

None

Minimum Instructional Facilities

Smart classroom

Method of Instruction

- 1) Lecture
- 2) Multimedia presentations
- 3) Group discussions
- 4) Field trips/field observations
- 5) Student presentations
- 6) Guest speakers
- 7) Instructional videos

Out-of-Class Assignments

- 1) Short essays and written assignments
- 2) Written homework assignments (worksheets, journals, etc.) that summarize and/or reflect upon the assigned reading materials or instructional videos
- 3) Research papers
- 4) Projects or presentations

Texts and References

- 1) Required (representative examples):
 - a. Lee, Robert D. *Religion and Politics in the Middle East: Identity, Ideology, Institutions, and Attitudes, 2nd Ed.* Routledge, 2013.
 - b. Holland, Glenn S. *Gods in the Desert: Religions of the Ancient Near East.* Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2010.
 - c. Longva, Anh Nga and Anne S. Roald. *Religious Minorities of the Middle East: Domination, Self-Empowerment, Accommodation.* Brill, 2011.
 - d. Eibner, John, Ed. *The Future of Religious Minorities in the Middle East.* Lexington Books, 2017.
 - e. Bowen, Donna Lee, et al., Eds. *Everyday Life in the Muslim Middle East* *Everyday Life in the Muslim Middle East, 3rd Ed.* Indiana University Press, 2014.

f. Lapidus, Ira M. *A History of Islamic Societies, 3rd Ed.* Cambridge University Press, 2014.

2) Supplemental: None

Student Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- 1) Interpret how the social, cultural, political, and historical context of religious traditions inform their respective beliefs, values, and practices.
- 2) Analyze and apply the beliefs, values, and practices of religious traditions to students' own lives, identities, and experiences.
- 3) Analyze how religions are used to contest, assert, or mediate social, political, and cultural power related to race, class, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, language, and/or nationality.
- 4) Develop an argument or thesis statement related to religious studies and support that argument with reliable evidence.