

**HUM 3419: Islamic Thought & Culture**  
**Michael Muhammad Knight**  
**T/TR, 1:30-2:45, BHC 126**  
[Michael.Knight@ucf.edu](mailto:Michael.Knight@ucf.edu)  
**Office hours: Wednesday, 1:00-2:00**

This course explores the development of Islam from its origins in the Arabian Peninsula to its flourishing across the known world. We will discuss the historical context in which the original Muslim community emerged, as well as the development of Muslim theological, mystical, legal, and political institutions. This course will give special attention to the ways in which Muslim thinkers conceptualized and interpreted the Qur'ānic revelation and the significance of the Prophet Muḥammad. At the heart of the course readings and discussions lies an exploration of Muslim diversity concerning questions of religious authenticity and authority.

### **Required Texts**

- Brockopp (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Muḥammad*
- Colby, *Narrating Muḥammad's Night Journey*
- Spellberg, *Politics, Gender, and the Islamic Past*

### **Grading and Assignments**

Ḥadīth Sciences Assignment: 15%

Reading Notes: 15%

Midterm: 30%

Final: 30%

Professionalism: 10%

### **Reading Notes**

The readings for each session are to be completed for the date under which they are listed. Over the course of the semester, you are responsible for submitting 10 “reading notes” on dates of your choosing. These assignments do not receive letter grades, but are marked as complete or incomplete. A reading note consists of a 5-point bulleted outline, provided in 12 pt

font, **single** spaced, **not** more than one page, with full header (name, HUM 3419, date) and bibliographic citation. Reading notes are due **in hard copy at the start of class**. Email attachments are not accepted. In its 5 bulleted points, a reading note covers the following:

1. **Thesis:** in as close to one sentence as possible, explain what the author is arguing.
2. **Evidence/methodology:** how does the author prove her/his argument?
3. **Quote (properly attributed and cited):** use the author's own words to illustrate the main or secondary points of the reading.
4. **New Terms/Concepts (if applicable):** did the article introduce or draw upon unfamiliar terms or concepts?
5. **Critique:** are there any elements of the reading that you find problematic? Anything that could have been discussed further?
6. **Conclusions:** observations, informed reflections, connections between this reading and lectures or other course materials?

### **Ḥadīth Sciences Assignment**

For this short paper (in the proximity of 700 words, with word count noted on first page), you will apply the methods of premodern ḥadīth scholars to explore a question related to Muslim theology. All necessary information is provided for you. The assignment consists of 1) analysis of a small selection of ḥadīths through the lens of classical ḥadīth evaluation, and 2) application of your findings to a short reflection on the question provided. The assignment is to be submitted in **hard copy only**.

### **Midterm and Final**

The midterm and final exams will each consist of a take-home paper, 1450 words of content (double-spaced, with word count noted on first page), in response to a prompt that will be provided two weeks in advance. The midterm and final are both to be submitted in hard copy. Late submissions without justification (illness or emergency) are penalized by 2.5 points per day. Email attachments are not accepted.

## **Grading Scale**

A	94-100
A-	90-93
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
C	73-76
C-	70-72
D	60-69
F	< 60

## **Professionalism**

This includes attendance, which will be taken at every session, and your contribution towards a productive classroom environment. Everyone starts with a perfect score: points are lost for missing sessions, disrupting sessions, undermining class discussion, unexcused late work, inappropriate email etiquette, using phones during class, and other forms of unprofessional conduct. For this course to be successful, the classroom needs to be a site of mutual respect and support.

1% of this score includes participation in the federally required course activity (see below).

## **Federally Required Course Activity**

Per federal financial aid regulation, students must engage in a course's academic activity to receive federal aid for that course. Please take the online syllabus quiz to meet this requirement. The quiz counts for 1% of your professionalism grade.

## Safe Zone and Title IX Statement

I have pledged to affirm the identities of and provide resources to people of all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions.

I am committed to the safety and well-being of everyone in our campus community, and therefore willing to be a resource for your concerns beyond this course. If you come to me for non-course-related concerns, I will protect your confidentiality within the limits of the law. As a member of the faculty, I am legally required to report information concerning sexual discrimination and misconduct. Please become familiar with your rights and resources, including access to confidential counseling, at <http://osrr.sdes.ucf.edu/titleix>.

## Disability Accommodation

Students with disabilities who may need academic accommodation should contact me as soon as possible. Please become familiar with UCF resources for student accessibility at <http://sas.sdes.ucf.edu/>.

## Course schedule (subject to change):

### Tuesday, August 22: Introduction to the course

### Thursday, August 24: Rethinking the study of religion

- McCutcheon, "The History of 'Religion'"
- Quran.com: sūra 110 (Reading the Qur'ān in conversation with McCutcheon's argument, what problems arise for interpretation of the text?)

### Tuesday, August 29: Introducing the Sources, Thinking Historically

- Spellberg, *Politics, Gender, and the Islamic Past*, ch.1

### Thursday, August 31: Muḥammad in His World

- *The Cambridge Companion to Muḥammad*, ch.1
- Uri Rubin, "Prophets and Prophethood"

### Tuesday, September 5: Muḥammad in Mecca

- *The Cambridge Companion to Muḥammad*, ch.2

### Thursday, September 7: Muḥammad's Ascension

- Colby, *Narrating Muḥammad's Night Journey*, ch.1-2

**Tuesday, September 12: Muḥammad in Medina**

- *The Cambridge Companion to Muḥammad*, ch.3

**Thursday, September 14: Muslims After Muḥammad**

- Spellberg, *Politics, Gender, and the Islamic Past*, ch.2

**Tuesday, September 19: Early Caliphates**

- Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers: At the Origins of Islam*, 90-119

**Thursday, September 21: the Qur'ān and Textual History**

- Whelan, "Forgotten Witness: Evidence for the Early Codification of the Qur'ān"

**Tuesday, September 26: Formations of Sunnī Traditions**

- Colby, *Narrating Muḥammad's Night Journey*, ch. 5

**Thursday, September 28: Ḥadīth Literature**

- Lucas, "Major Topics of the Hadith"

**Tuesday, October 3: 'Ā'isha bint Abī Bakr**

- Spellberg, *Politics, Gender, and the Islamic Past*, ch.3

**Thursday, October 5: 'Ā'isha bint Abī Bakr**

- Spellberg, *Politics, Gender, and the Islamic Past*, ch.4

**Tuesday, October 10: Fāṭima bint Muḥammad**

- Klemm, "Image Formation of an Islamic Legend: Fāṭima, the Daughter of the Prophet Muḥammad"

**Thursday, October 12: Formations of Shī'ī Traditions**

- Colby, *Narrating Muḥammad's Night Journey*, ch. 4

**Tuesday, October 17: Legal Traditions**

- *Cambridge Companion to Muḥammad*, ch. 4
- Choose one of the following:
  - Haider, "Contesting Intoxication: Early Juristic Debates over the Lawfulness of Alcoholic Beverages"
  - Lucas, "'Perhaps You Only Kissed Her?': A Contrapuntal Reading of the Penalties for Illicit Sex in the Sunni Hadith Literature"

**Thursday, October 19: Institutions and Popular Piety**

- Meri, "Aspects of Baraka (Blessings) and Ritual Devotion Among Medieval Muslims and Jews"

- **Ḥadīth Sciences Assignment Due**

**Tuesday, October 24: “Religion” vs. “Magic”**

- Asatrian, “Ibn Khaldūn on Magic and the Occult”
- Michot, “Between Entertainment and Religion: Ibn Taymiyya’s Views on Superstition”

**Thursday, October 26: Knowledge Beyond the Text**

- Kinberg, “The Legitimization of the Madhāhib through Dreams”
- Ghaemmaghami, “Numinous Vision, Messianic Encounters”

**Tuesday, October 31: Philosophical Prophetologies**

- *Cambridge Companion to Muḥammad*, ch.8

**Thursday, November 2: The Philosophers’ Qur’ān**

- De Smet and Sebti, “Avicenna’s Philosophical Approach to the Qur’an in the Light of His *Tafsīr Sūra al-Ikhlāṣ*”
- **Midterms due**

**Tuesday, November 7: Ṣūfī Traditions**

- Heck, “Sufism—What is it Exactly?”
- *Cambridge Companion to Muḥammad*, ch. 10

**Thursday, November 9: al-Ghazālī**

- Barger, “Sufism’s Role in al-Ghazālī’s First Crisis of Knowledge”

**Tuesday, November 14: Ibn al-‘Arabī**

- Briefly examine the Muhyiddin Ibn ‘Arabi Society archive (<http://www.ibnarabisociety.org/articlelist.html>); if an article interests you, you can submit a reading note on it

**Thursday, November 16: Ṣūfī Interpretations of the Qur’ān**

- Silvers, “In the Book We Have Left Out Nothing”

**Tuesday, November 21: Ibn Taymiyya**

- Michot, “Ibn Taymiyya’s Commentary on the *Creed* of al-Ḥallāj”
- Memon, *Ibn Taimīya’s Struggle against Popular Religion*, 46-87

**Thursday, November 23: no class**

**Tuesday, November 28: Perforated Borders**

- Ernst, “Situating Sufism and Yoga”

**Thursday, November 30: conclusions**

**Thursday, December 7: finals due by 9:50 a.m.**