ST540 – Christian Encounter withIslam
Reformed Theological Seminary, Charlotte
Spring 2016

I. Details
A. Times: Thursdays, 8:30–11:00 (including half-hour break for prayer meeting)
B. Instructor: Dr. James N. Anderson
C. Contact: janderson@rts.edu
D. Availability: If you wish to discuss some aspect of the course, please either arrange (via email) an appointment or knock on the door of my office (in E building) if it’s open.

II. Goals
A. To introduce the student to Islamic history, culture, traditions, beliefs, and practices.
B. To raise the student’s awareness of the considerable diversity found within Islam, both historically and in its contemporary expressions.
C. To encourage the student to think biblically and critically about Christian engagement with Islam, both in the past and in the present.
D. To develop a deeper and more accurate understanding of Islam, so as to cultivate a greater love for our Muslim neighbors and a more effective witness toward them.

III. Course Overview
A. Introduction: Why Study Islam?
B. Christian Principles for Comparative Religion
C. Overview of Islam
D. History of Islam (6thC to 21stC)
E. Islamic Sources: Qur’an, Sunna, Hadith
F. Islamic Law
G. Diversity in Islam
H. Islamic Culture
I. Christian Encounters with Islam: Historical Examples
J. Christian Encounters with Islam: Evangelism, Apologetics, Missions
K. Controversial Issues
L. Summary and Conclusion

IV. Course Requirements
A. Class attendance and thoughtful participation.
   1. As per seminary policy, you are required to attend all the lectures. If you know that you will be unable to attend class on a particular date, please inform me in advance, otherwise you may be penalized for your absence.
   2. There will be opportunity for class participation and questions during the lectures.
   3. You will be expected to use the Internet in the classroom only for appropriate class-related activities, and you will be asked to sign an honor pledge to that effect.
4. A proportion of your final grade (see below) will depend on your attendance record and your participation in the classes (thoughtful interaction with the professor and other students).

B. *Report on mosque visit.*
   1. A group visit to a local mosque will be arranged during the semester. (There may be more than one visit, depending on class size.) The visit will take place on a Friday afternoon and will center on observing (but not participating in) a Muslim worship service.
   2. The date(s) of the visit(s) will be announced early in the semester. If for good reason you are unable to attend the visit, please inform me as soon as possible so that an alternative assignment can be arranged.
   3. You should write a short report (500-1000 words) reflecting on what you learned from this experience. This report should *not* be merely a description of what you observed, but a critical reflection on how it affected your understanding of Islam in relation to your own Christian faith. For example, you could address some of these questions:
      i. What were your preconceptions before the visit?
      ii. How were your preconceptions confirmed or challenged?
      iii. Were you surprised by anything you observed or heard?
      iv. How does Muslim worship compare to Christian worship?
      v. How did the visit affect your attitude towards Islam and Muslims?
   4. Your report is due on **May 10.** It should be submitted on or prior to this date. Ensure that the report is stamped with the date of submission. Late submissions will be penalized.

C. *Reading assignments.*
   1. A proportion of your final exam mark (and thus your final grade) will depend on your acknowledgment that you have completed the required reading (see below).
   2. You will be penalized for each *uncompleted* reading assignment.
   3. A reading schedule will be provided at the start of class.

D. *Writing assignment.*
   1. You should write a critical research paper (3500–4500 words, excluding footnotes) on any topic covered in the lectures or reading. If you’re in any doubt about whether your topic is a suitable one, please run it by me first. Some suggestions:
      i. Comparing the Bible and the Qur’an (teachings, origins, interpretation, etc.)
      ii. Comparing Islamic and Reformed views on free will and predestination
      iii. Evaluating “Insider Movements”
      iv. Islamic views on sin and salvation
      v. Challenges in evangelizing Muslims (theological, cultural, political, etc.)
      vi. Christian responses to Muslim polemics
      vii. Lessons from the writings and ministry of Samuel Zwemer
      viii. Cooperation with Muslims on social issues (abortion, religious freedom, etc.)
   2. Whatever topic you choose, make sure that your paper has a clear, focused thesis.
   3. Your paper will be graded according to the following criteria, in no particular order: responsible use of Scripture, responsible use of sources, creativity, clarity, structure and coherence, cogency of argument, practical relevance, evidence of critical thinking, and good writing style (inc. grammar, spelling, and punctuation).
4. The paper should cite at least 8 scholarly sources.
   i. For the purposes of this paper, a scholarly source is a book or article by a recognized expert in the field (and not aimed at a popular level for a general audience)—ideally one that has been peer-reviewed.
   ii. Wikipedia is clearly not a scholarly source.
   iii. That said, with sufficient discernment, Wikipedia can be a useful pointer to scholarly sources and is generally reliable for fact-checking on uncontroversial issues.
   iv. Please consult me if you have any doubts about whether a source is scholarly.
   v. You should not rely heavily on Internet sources. Use the library!

5. The paper should be word-processed, not hand-written.
   i. Use a 12-point font and double line-spacing for the main text.
   ii. Use section headings where applicable to improve readability.
   iii. Use footnotes (10-point font) rather than endnotes.
   iv. Use a recognized scholarly style for citations (e.g., Chicago, Turabian, SBL).

6. The paper should be submitted with a title page containing all of the following: the name and year of the course; your name; the professor’s name; the title of the paper; and the exact word count for the main text of the paper (obtained from your word processor’s word-count feature).

7. You will be penalized if you do not observe the requirements and guidelines above.

8. Your paper is due on May 10. It should be submitted on or prior to this date. Ensure that the paper is stamped with the date of submission. Late submissions will be penalized.

9. Your paper will be returned to you after grading with limited feedback. Consult the document “Guide to Annotations on Graded Papers” to crack the code. If you wish to receive more detailed feedback, please email me to arrange an appointment.

E. Midterm exam.
   1. The midterm exam will be taken during the week March 21–25. Please note that you will need to make prior arrangements with Kim Macurda (kmacurda@rts.edu) to obtain the exam paper.
   2. The exam will consist of multiple-choice questions based on the class material covered to date. You will have one hour to complete it (in the library) and you will not be allowed to refer to any class notes or other study resources.

F. Final exam.
   1. The final exam will be taken in exam week: May 12–17.
   2. The exam will consist of three short-essay questions based on all of the class material and all of the required readings. You will have three hours to complete it.
   3. You may refer to an English translation of the Bible (but not one with study notes, etc.). You may not refer to any class notes or other study resources.
   4. You will be asked to sign a declaration that you have not discussed the content of the exam with anyone who has previously taken the exam.
   5. You will also be asked to indicate which of the required reading assignments you have completed and to sign a declaration to that effect.

V. Course Documents
   A. Instructions for accessing course documents.
1. Log in to the RTS Canvas website (https://rts.instructure.com).
2. Select “Christian Encounter with Islam” under Courses & Groups.
3. All of the course documents will be accessible from the Modules page.

B. Course outline.
   1. Other than the syllabus, the course outline is the most important document. You will need a copy (either electronic or printed) in front of you throughout the class.
   2. You are strongly encouraged to supplement the outline with your own notes.
   3. The outline will be uploaded to the course website the week before class.

C. Supplementary documents.
   1. The reading schedule and some of the required reading items (see below) will be available on the course website.
   2. You should also consult the documents “Research Paper Checklist” and “Guide to Annotations on Graded Papers”.

VI. Grading
   A. Class attendance and participation — 10%
   B. Midterm exam — 15%
   C. Final exam (including credit for reading assignments) — 20%
   D. Report on mosque visit — 15%
   E. Writing assignment — 40%

VII. Required Reading
You should obtain copies of all the items below. A reading schedule will be provided at the start of class.

   D. James R. White, What Every Christian Needs to Know About the Qur’an (Bethany House, 2013).
VIII. Recommended Supplementary Reading

You are not required to read any of the items below, but you may find them useful to consolidate the course material and for further study as your interests dictate. For many of these, the table of contents can be viewed on Amazon.com or Google Books. These sources reflect a wide range of Muslim, Christian, and secular perspectives on Islam—some sympathetic, some moderately critical, some highly critical—but all are informative and thought-provoking to some degree.

A. General Introductions
      [An undergraduate-level textbook by a well-regarded scholar of Islam.]
      [A reliable popular-level introduction to Islamic history, beliefs, and practices, concluding with some insights about evangelizing Muslims. Chedid is the founder and president of the Children of Abraham ministry and adjunct professor at RTS/J.]
      [A widely-used textbook by one of the leading Western scholars of Islam.]
      [A popular-level introduction to Islam beliefs, practices, and culture, arranged as a series of questions and answers, with a particular eye toward current socio-political issues. Esposito is one of the leading Western scholars of Islam.]
      [A particularly readable introductory textbook; covers all the major bases.]
      [A significant and influential survey by a “liberal and modernist” Muslim scholar.]

B. Reference Works
      [The standard reference work; available in the RTS/C library.]
      [Not as extensive as the Brill set, but more accessible and up-to-date.]

C. Muhammad and the Qur’an
      [Ibn Ishaq’s (d. 768) historical account is one of the earliest and most respected.]
      [A helpful topical survey of quranic teachings.]
      [A sympathetic scholarly biography based on 8th/9th-century sources.]
      [A summary of quranic teachings by a modernist Muslim scholar.]
[A scholarly introduction to the history of Muhammad, his successors, and the Qur’an; raises critical questions about the traditional Muslim narratives.]

   [A fascinating but technical study of the Qur’an applying standard textual critical methods; challenges popular Muslim beliefs and assumptions about the Qur’an.]

   [A short comparison of the textual histories of the New Testament and the Qur’an; an accessible summary of the conclusions of Small’s doctoral research.]

   [A “quest for the historical Muhammad” with very negative conclusions. Spencer is one of the most outspoken critics of Islam writing today. Many would consider him to be hyper-skeptical, but his book raises some serious questions for Muslims.]

D. Christian Engagement with Islam

   [A practical, gospel-centered book by an evangelical pastor and former Muslim.]

2. Laurie Fortunak Nichols and Gary R. Corwin, eds., *Envisioning Effective Ministry: Evangelism in a Muslim Context* (EMIS, 2010).
   [A very helpful collection of short articles from the *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* addressing current challenges and debates in Muslim evangelism, church planting, and contextualization.]

   [Garrison documents the many “movements to Christ” which have emerged in the Muslim world in the last half-century. Informative, encouraging, and challenging.]

   [A introduction to the basic teachings of Islam followed by a critical evaluation from an evangelical Christian perspective.]

5. Timothy George, *Is the Father of Jesus the God of Muhammad* (Zondervan, 2002).
   [George gives an overview of Islam and a nuanced, well-informed answer to the title question, noting the irreconcilable differences between Christianity and Islam.]

   [A very insightful and practical book on evangelizing Muslims.]

   [A mostly helpful resource for understanding the Muslim mindset with respect to Christianity and the West. Also provides invaluable insights on how to evangelize Muslims. Jabbour is sympathetic toward Insider Movements.]

   [A collection of essays countering so-called “Insider Movements”.]


11. Phil Parshall, *The Cross and the Crescent: Understanding the Muslim Heart and Mind* (InterVarsity Press, 2002). [Useful mainly for understanding how Muslims view the world and cope with the challenges of life; very conversational and anecdotal in style.]

12. Nabeel Qureshi, *Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus* (Zondervan, 2014). [Gripping testimony of an Ahmadiyya Muslim who was challenged to investigate the historical claims of Christianity, as compared with those of Islam, and ended up converting to Christ. Both illuminating and encouraging.]


E. Other Resources

1. John L. Esposito and Dalia Mogahed, *Who Speaks for Islam? What a Billion Muslims Really Think* (Gallup Press, 2007). [Intended as an empirically researched corrective to popular assumptions about what Muslims believe. From the blurb: “Gallup conducted tens of thousands of interviews with residents of more than 35 nations that are predominantly Muslim or have significant Muslim populations.” Illuminating at points, but the book contains more interpretation than actual hard data and the authors clearly have an agenda.]


[An influential and controversial work on international affairs. Huntington argues that the post-Cold War world will be divided mainly according to cultural/religious identities, resulting in a major fault-line between the West and the Rest (esp. the Muslim world).]

[Lewis charts the rise and fall of Islam over the centuries, with a view to explaining present-day Muslim bewilderment and frustration at the decline of Islamic power.]

[Nawawi was a 13th-century Islamic legal scholar. This relatively short work gives fascinating insight into what it means to be a “good Muslim” and how exactly the “Five Pillars of Islam” should be practiced.]

[Reilly argues that the crisis in Islam today has its roots in a “battle for the Muslim mind” fought between two rival Islamic schools of theology in the medieval era.]

[An influential and controversial critique of post-colonial Western prejudices and misrepresentations of the Middle East. Said was a Palestinian-American professor of literature at Columbia University.]

[A very thorough (and sobering) survey of militant Islam and its roots. Sookhdeo is the director of the Institute for the Study of Islam and Christianity and International Director of the Barnabas Fund.]

**F. Internet Resources**

1. Qur’an
   i. Quran.com (http://quran.com/)
   ii. Qur’an Browser (http://qb.gomen.org/QuranBrowser/)
   iii. StudyQuran (http://www.studyquran.org/)
   iv. Tanzil Quran Navigator (http://tanzil.net/)
   v. Quranic Arabic Corpus (http://corpus.quran.com/)

2. Hadith
   i. Sunnah.com (http://sunnah.com/)
   ii. Sahih Bukhari (http://www.sahih-bukhari.com/)
   iii. Sahih Muslim (http://www.sahihmuslim.com/)

3. Tafsir
   i. ALTafsir.com (http://www.altafsir.com/)
   ii. Quran Tafsir Ibn Kathir (http://www.qtafsir.com/)

4. Promoting Islam
   i. Al-Islam.org (http://www.al-islam.org/)
   ii. Islamic Awareness (http://www.islamic-awareness.org/)

5. Christian Engagement with Islam
i. Alpha and Omega Ministries (http://www.aomin.org/)
ii. Answering Islam (http://www.answering-islam.org/)
iii. Crescent Project (https://www.crescentproject.org/)
iv. Frontiers (http://www.frontiers.org/)
## Course Objectives Related to MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes

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<th>Objective</th>
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| **Articulation** (oral & written)             | Strong | 1. Research paper tests student’s ability to clearly and accurately articulate understanding of Islamic history, culture, and theology  
2. Class discussion questions test understanding and application |
| **Scripture**                                 | Moderate | 1. Discusses biblical texts relevant to Christian engagement with Islam  
2. Compares Bible with Qur’an  
3. Discusses issues for Bible translation in Muslim contexts |
| **Reformed Theology**                         | Moderate | 1. Discusses engagement with Islam by Reformed theologians and missionaries  
2. Compares and contrasts Reformed doctrines and Islamic doctrines |
| **Sanctification**                            | Moderate | 1. Cultivates passion for outreach to Muslims as application of the “two great commandments” (Matt. 22) |
| **Desire for Worldview**                     | Moderate | 1. Sustained reflection on the Islamic worldview in light of (and contrasted with) the Christian worldview |
| **Winsomely Reformed**                        | Strong | 1. Encourages a critical but charitable approach to engaging with Islam from a distinctively Reformed perspective |
| **Preach**                                    | None    | 1. Promotes a responsible Christian engagement with Islam as a challenge both in North America and worldwide |
| **Worship**                                   | None    | 1. Encourages concern for Muslims both in North America and worldwide |
| **Shepherd**                                  | Minimal | 1. Encourages concern for Muslims both in North America and worldwide |
| **Church/World**                              | Strong | 1. Promotes a responsible Christian engagement with Islam as a challenge both in North America and worldwide |