

Understanding Civilisations: Islam and The West



Faculty Contact Information

Name:

Email:

Office Hour information:

Course Information

Course Description

This course focuses on the historical, political, and religious relationships between 'Islam' and the 'West'. Islam has for centuries been Europe's neighbour and cultural contestant with a history of conflict and co-existence. Since September 11, 2001 there has been increasing talk of a 'clash of civilisations', but globalisation has also created an interdependency of faiths that requires greater co-operation, understanding, and dialogue. A recurrent theme of this course is whether it is possible to separate the world into monolithic entities called 'Islam' and the 'West'. Why is one defined in terms of religion and the other a geopolitical designation? Further, we are increasingly witnessing 'Islam in the West'. Muslims are not confined to the Middle East but have spread in large numbers to Europe and the United States and there have been Islamic communities living in the Balkans and in parts of southern Europe for centuries. Another theme on the course is the issue of 'alternative modernities'. Is modernity Western or are there viable alternatives rooted in non-Western civilisations such as Islam? The first part of the course examines the early history of Islam and Christianity and the main themes and episodes of the Crusades and the 'golden age' of Islamic Spain which witnessed the mingling of Islamic, Christian, and Jewish cultures. In the second part, the rise of the West is considered in the context of capitalism and colonialism leading to the creation of the modern state system in the Middle East, the rise of 'Islamic fundamentalism' and the current 'war on terror'.

Course Goals

Through selected readings this course explores the changing locus and significance of the "cultural other" in the constructions of Islam and the West in the contemporary world. Islam and the West have become powerful connotations, discursive realities, and influential constructions beyond their mere terminological meaning. They inform people's behaviour and have become inscribed in everyday social and political practice. This course addresses and analyses the implications of these powerful discursive constructions on politics as well as the role and function of the ubiquitous notion of intercultural dialogue.

This course is not designed to find out who is right or who is wrong between Islam and the West. Rather, the task is to deconstruct commonly assumed ideas about the other and to look at the historical development within the specific context of abstract ideas like secularity, religiosity, gender, human rights, freedom, and many more.

Student Learning Outcomes

At the end of this course, students will:

1. Produce arguments based on assigned readings and current issues and debates, in written work, and class discussions
2. Differentiate the diversity of 'Islam' and its various relations with Western modernity

Course Assignments, Grading, and Assessment

| Assignment | Percentage | Grading Requirements |
|------------------------------|------------|------------------------------|
| Attendance and Participation | 20% | |
| Presentation | 20% | Please see rubric on MyStudy |
| Midterm Exam | 30% | Please see rubric on MyStudy |
| Term-paper | 30% | Please see rubric on MyStudy |

Brief Assessment Overview

Assessment 1: Presentation

Due:

For this assignment students are required to research, analyse, and evaluate one aspect of Islam and the West and facilitate a 15-minute presentation via PowerPoint which includes images, with an additional 5 minutes for Q&A.

Assessment 2: Mid-term Exam

Due:

An exam covering content explored so far in the class.

Assessment 3: Research Essay (3,000 words)

Due:

3,000 words on one of the topics, below. Students may choose their own essay topics but they must be approved in advance.

- 1) How did Islam respond to the rise of the West? (Here you should choose one Islamic movement e.g. the Muslim Brotherhood and write a critical exposition of their interpretation of Islam and its relations with the West).
- 2) In what sense are contemporary Islamic movements 'fundamentalist'?
- 3) Why is the issue of women and the family so important to Islamic fundamentalists?
- 4) Discuss the significance of the veil in Islam. Why has the veil become so popular amongst some Muslim communities?
- 5) Can Islam liberate women? (Here you should give a critical exposition of the ideas of an Islamic feminist e.g. Fatima Mernissi).
- 6) Is Islam incompatible with democracy?

- 7) Why did the French government ban the veil from classrooms in 2004? Was it right in doing so?
- 8) 'American Muslims are better integrated and less attracted to radicalism than European Muslims'. Discuss.

Grading

Alternative formats of the FIE Grading Rubric are available in the Student Resources area of MyStudy@FIE.

| | Relevance Questions are interpreted correctly; Argument/thesis is clear and developed throughout; Discussion is focused on topic of the questions; Irrelevant content and discussion are not included | Knowledge and Understanding Recommended literature and/or research guidelines are used and interpreted appropriately; Selection and use of evidence shows understanding and insight; There is evidence of study beyond the recommended literature and that introduced in the module | Analysis, Critical Thinking and Integration of Experiential Learning Approach shows evidence of analysis and independent reasoning; Originality in argument; Evidence of critical insight and reasoned questioning of assumptions; Integration of connections and experiences outside of the formal classroom | Scholarship and Style Conclusions are well justified and complete; Facts reported and statements made are accurate; Writing is clear and fluent; All sources are appropriate, accurately acknowledged and formatted in recognised style; All work is the student's own |
|-------------------------|--|---|--|--|
| A 93-100% | Totally appropriate interpretation and relevant; Excellent and thorough thesis development | Comprehensive understanding and mastery of core evidence and extensive wider reading | Excellent analytical skills, outstanding evaluation of evidence, independent and original critical insight; Meaningfully integrates experiential learning where appropriate | Exceptional fluency and accurate writing using appropriate language, conclusions are well-justified; Accurate and thorough referencing |

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| A- 90-92% | Almost wholly appropriate interpretation and relevant; Very strong thesis | Very strong understanding of evidence and clear evidence of appropriate wider reading | Well-developed analytical skills, excellent evaluation of evidence, shows strong critical insight; Effectively integrates experiential learning where appropriate | Almost wholly accurate and fluent writing using appropriate language, conclusions are full and justified; Accurate referencing |
| B+ 87-89% | Appropriate interpretation and relevant; Good thesis throughout | Strong understanding of evidence and appropriate wider reading | Very good analytical skills, strong evaluation of evidence; Shows critical insight; Acknowledges and compares experiential learning and other perspectives | Largely accurate and fluent writing using appropriate language; conclusions are justified; Accurate referencing |
| B 83-86% | Largely appropriate interpretation and relevant; Thesis is clear | Good understanding of evidence and some appropriate wider reading | Good analytical skills, good evaluation of evidence; Shows critical insight; Acknowledges and compares experiential learning and other perspectives | Largely accurate and fluent writing using appropriate language; Conclusions are justified; Accurate referencing |
| B- 80-82% | Mostly appropriate interpretation and relevant; Thesis is underdeveloped but clear | Sound understanding of evidence and some wider reading | Sound analytical skills; Sound evaluation of data; Shows some critical judgement identifies | Sound level of accuracy and written fluency and some use of appropriate language; Conclusions are coherent; |

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| | | | experiential connections | Sound use of referencing conventions |
| C+ 77-79% | Some appropriate interpretation and relevant; Thesis is underdeveloped and lacks clarity | Evidence is largely understood and some wider reading | Sometimes inconsistent analytical skills; Some evaluation of data; Shows some critical judgement though often descriptive; Identifies experiential connections | Sound level of accuracy and written fluency and some use of appropriate language; Conclusions are coherent but not fully supported; Sound use of referencing conventions |
| C 73-76% | May contain some misinterpretation and/or irrelevant material; Thesis lacks clarity | Evidence is largely understood; Limited reading beyond material introduced in module | Mostly inconsistent analytical skills; Some evaluation of data; Scant critical judgement mostly descriptive; Identifies experiential connections | Some level of accuracy and written fluency and some use of appropriate language; Conclusions are coherent but not fully supported; Sound use of referencing conventions |
| C- 70-72% | Limited interpretation and relevance; Thesis is inconsistent | Weak understanding of evidence; Limited reading beyond material introduced in module | Mostly inconsistent analytical skills; Some evaluation of data; Lacks critical judgement; Little integration experiential learning | Inconsistent written fluency; Weak use of appropriate language; Weak justification for conclusions; Adequate use of referencing conventions |

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| D 60-69% | Limited interpretation and relevance; Lacks thesis | Weak understanding of evidence and limited, inappropriate wider reading | Inconsistent and weak analytical skills, poor evaluation of evidence, lacks critical insight; Little integration of experiential learning | Inconsistent written fluency; No justification for conclusions; Inaccurate use of referencing |
| F 0-59% | Significant misinterpretation and irrelevant material | Lacks understanding of evidence and inappropriate or no wider reading | Lacks analytical skills, lacks evaluation of evidence, lacks critical judgement; Lacks integration of experiential learning | Poorly written with little fluency; No justification for conclusions; Poor referencing; Evidence of plagiarism or inappropriate use of AI |

Policies specific to this course

- **Co-curricular Activities and Field Trips:** Field trips for your FIE courses have been planned to help students achieve the learning objectives of the course and are required. They take place during class time unless otherwise notes. Details about required visits appear on the class by class schedule below. Please note that any make up for missed co-curricular activities are at the personal expense of the student.
- **Late submission of work:** Written work may be submitted later than the due date only with express permission in advance of the due date from the course instructor. Late work will receive a 5% reduction in points for each 24-hour period handed in past the deadline, including each weekend day. Work submitted a week late will be marked at a C or lower. Any extensions made beyond the last class meeting must be requested in writing to the faculty and include any information on the circumstances that require the extension, the nature of work yet to be submitted, and the date by which the work will be received. If said work is not received by the agreed extension date, barring further exceptional circumstances, the work will not be given credit.
- **Late arrivals to class or site visit:** Please arrive on time. Lateness, particularly on days with co-curricular visits, results in missed course material. Faculty may use their discretion to mark a student as 'Absent' if they feel the student has arrived too late or left too early to be considered 'Present' for that session.
- **Trigger Warnings:** Some topics covered in class may expose students to past traumas and evoke a negative reaction. Sensitive topics can vary, such as sexual violence, death, racism, or xenophobia. I want this to be an inclusive space where every student feels comfortable; therefore, I will provide content warnings before lectures for sensitive

subject matters. Content warnings are meant to give students a forewarning so they can prepare for their emotional safety. It is important to note that anything in the environment could be a trigger for someone's trauma, such as smell, sound, or texture; it is impossible to account for all possible triggers, and ask for grace as I do my best as an educator to warn students of potentially distressing content during lectures, assignments and/or discussions.

Attendance and Participation

- Regular attendance is essential in order to pass a course. A class constitutes lectures, student presentations, discussions, seminars, co-curricular activities, tests, and examinations. In addition, under UK Home Office regulations class attendance is mandatory.
- Class attendance and participation is formally recorded and incorporated into a student's final grade.
- In addition to physical presence in class, a student's participation in a class is evaluated on the mastery of assigned course readings as reflected in a consistent, valid contribution to class discussions, in-class exercises, and in asking questions that enrich the on-going discourse. Consistency and validity in participation is expected in every class. Limited participation will have a negative impact on a student's participation score.
- When unexpected events cause students to miss a class, it is the student's responsibility to initiate contact with the faculty member to notify them in advance, or as soon as is reasonably possible.
- Absence from class does not relieve a student of responsibility for assignments. Students bear the ultimate responsibility for all missed class material and assessment.
- If a student misses 25% or more of a course, then they may be awarded a failure for the course and/or not permitted to finish the course.
- [See the full attendance policy here](#)

Required Readings

Daniel Brown, *A New Introduction to Islam*, Third Edition, Wiley Blackwell, 2017.

Additional Resources and Readings

J. Cesari, *When Islam and Democracy Meet: Muslims in Europe and in the United States*

R. Euben and M. Zaman (eds), *Princeton Readings in Islamist Thought*

N. Hashemi, *Islam, Secularism and Liberal Democracy*

O. Roy, *Globalised Islam*

O. Roy, *Secularism Confronts Islam*

P. Mandeville, *Global Political Islam*

T. Ramadan, *Western Muslims and the Future of Islam*

P. Lewis, *Young, British and Muslim*

D. Mcgoldrick, Human Rights and Religion: The Islamic Headscarf Debate in Europe

F. Mernissi, Beyond the Veil

R. Meijer (ed), Global Salafism

Vali Nasr, The Shii Revival

S. Huntington, The Clash of Civilisations

G. Salibi, Islamic Science and the Making of the European Renaissance

M. Said, Interpreting the Quran

A. Wadud, Inside the Gender Jihad

S. Zubaida, Beyond Islam

[MyStudy@FIE](#)

MyStudy@FIE is FIE's virtual learning environment based on the open-source platform Moodle. Students are required to access MyStudy@FIE for course information, readings, link to resources, assignment submissions and communication with faculty.

[FIE's Values in the Curriculum](#)

A unique aspect to FIE's curriculum is our courses reflect an engagement with values of 1) knowledge and inclusivity, 2) ethics and human rights, 3) social and cultural engagement, and 4) sustainability. For information about each of these values and how each of FIE's courses aligns with them, please see [Our Values](#).

[Topics](#)

- What is 'Islam'? What is the 'West'? Islam, Muhammad, and the Quran
- The Early Expansion of Islam; the Sunni-Shii Schism
- The Influence of Islam on Medieval Europe; Islam and Science
- The Crusades
- Islamic Art and Architecture
- The Ottoman Empire; The Emergence of Modern Turkey
- The Arab-Israeli Conflict and the West
- The Rise of the West and the Making of the Modern Middle East
- Contemporary Islamic Movements: Fundamentalism and Islamism; Al-Qaeda and the 'War on Terror'; Liberal Islam
- Islam and Gender
- 'Islam in the West'; Muslim Communities in Europe and the United States; Turkey and the European Union
- A Clash of Civilisations?

Possible co-curricular activities

- Study Tour to Leicester
- Jameel Gallery of Islamic Art, Victoria and Albert Museum, South Kensington
- Suleymaniye Mosque and UK Turkish Islamic Cultural Centre, Shoreditch
- Al-Manaar: Muslim Cultural Heritage Centre, North Kensington

Academic Integrity

By enrolling at FIE, you have joined an academic community and you are expected and required to act honestly regarding the work you submit for assessment in your courses. Academic integrity is closely related to the concept of good academic practice.

Any attempts to Cheat; Fabricate; Plagiarise; Collaborate without Authorisation; Participate in Academically Dishonest Activities; and/or Facilitate Academic Dishonesty will be viewed as a breach of this regulation.

[Please see FIE's Academic Integrity Policy in full.](#)

Most students do not have any problems understanding the rules and expectations about acting honestly at university. If you have any questions you must talk to your faculty or a member of FIE's Academic Team.

Writing and Language Support

FIE's Writing Support Tutors are available to assist students of all levels of expertise with all phases of the writing process. Available year-round and to all students. To book an appointment or for more information visit www.fie.org.uk/wst.

Please note that FIE allows the use of a foreign language/English dictionary in exam situations for students where English is not their primary language UNLESS the use of the dictionary would give the student a significant advantage (e.g. where the exam is aimed at getting the students to define terms that might be found in the dictionary).

Accommodations for Students

Students who wish to use academic accommodations at FIE can register to do so via FIE's Administration Team, by providing the appropriate supporting documentation. Students who have approved FIE academic accommodations should discuss them directly with their faculty member(s) within or around the first few class sessions, or via email. Exams are facilitated by FIE faculty and students should give 2 weeks' notice to faculty members if use of approved exam accommodations is required. The Administration team can assist students and faculty with liaison and facilitation as needed.

Additional Policies and Resources

Mental Health and Stress Management Support

FIE offers mental health support. If students wish to seek this support, including with FIE's counsellor, simply email studentlife@fie.org.uk. If you have a counsellor from back home that

you are seeing, we strongly encourage you to maintain contact with them throughout your time studying abroad with FIE.

Diversity and Inclusivity

FIE regards its housing and classroom facilities as safe spaces to live, study, and work with students, faculty, and staff who are understanding, supportive, and trustworthy. Inappropriate, derogatory comments and/or actions, harassment, bullying, victimisation and discrimination are not tolerated. Any such behaviour will be investigated and dealt with appropriately. Students must be respectful of diverse opinions and of all class members regardless of personal attribute and use inclusive language in written and oral work.