**Spiritual & Ethical Approaches to Islam**

UPADM-GP 255

Wagner School of Public Policy

7 East 12th St Room 124

Mondays | 2:00pm - 3:15pm

# Instructor

Faiyaz Jaffer, Ed.D.

[fj490@nyu.edu](mailto:fj490@nyu.edu)

# Course Description

Spirituality & ethics is an integral segment of every religious tradition, along with sciences like that of theology and jurisprudence. In recent years, Islamic spirituality has often been described as somehow separate from Islam itself. In this course, we will investigate the historical origins of Islamic spirituality and look at a sampling of the major concepts and figures from the pre-modern tradition. Finally, we will turn to the continued importance that spirituality and ethics have played in the contemporary Muslim-majority world, with a special focus on Islamic traditions in North America.

# Requirements

This course will be graded on a 100 point grading system, as broken down below:

(1.) Students will be expected to **attend** all class sessions, be **on-time**, **participate**, and **complete the assigned readings** before each class session (**20 points**).

(2.) Students must submit **3 “reflection papers**” on the required due dates. These reflection papers are meant to capture your thoughts and questions about the readings and classroom discussions, in a respectful way. Students are encouraged to question and even criticize the readings, but please make sure to provide the necessary sources to make a sound argument. A mere summary of the reading will *not* count as a “reflection." Each reflection should be at a minimum of 4 pages long (double-spaced). This is meant to provide you space to freely express yourself in writing. You will receive a full grade by turning them in and demonstrating engagement with the ideas under discussion (**15 points each\ 45 points total**).

(3.) There will be a final paper, that will be **6-8 pages in length**, which speaks to an issue that was in the readings or discussed in class. The final topic proposal should be accepted by the instructor. The final two courses will give students an opportunity to share their thoughts and offer a brief presentation of their final paper (**35 points**).

# Syllabus

**Week 1 – January 22 | Introduction to Islam Part I**

Course Objectives and breakout groups, “How do you define ethics and spirituality today?”

[Finding Our Enlightened State, Ted Talk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7SJCDLHyeqk) by Dr. Andrew Newberg

**Week 2 – January 29 | Introduction to Islam Part II**

How does the Prophet embody ethics and spirituality?

Reading: “Chapter 9: The Role and Character of the Blessed Prophet 9” in [*Muhammad: Man of God*](https://traditionalhikma.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Muhammad-Man-of-God-by-Seyyed-Hossein-Nasr.pdf) by Seyyed Hossein Nasr

**Week 3 – February 5 | The Quran – The Foundation of Islamic Spirituality**

Reading: “Introduction” in [The Study Quran](https://d1wqtxts1xzle7.cloudfront.net/53767464/StudyQuran_ExcerptFinal_updated-with-cover-page-v2.pdf?Expires=1660751472&Signature=F0nTOTqrDHQH13ym91o6GITQS6V1cT2998QWjzkgtDcDQO3JkdkH8h25URe4uIO9mWwJlsOlHrQxlRTdEwjAJDZQfJrKpHcGmuY4bPUrjO1kb4ZQFgzGlIdJHwemQvqUr4SCICWvG4AG-myv1NhiVeua-cwZhfOL7eAsmqlsHsB5o6OGgiSUfgOmVZU4t7Sdn19rjNkVFdbuvuJ2w1A1RaUGw~NE8r7w5Hd7vz3e6vZ3pgNDl4ZO2KREQM83tCgqdsIeq3w5ikb9fLBNEIve6mJGkjUrjrmB9Lb7wEBi~1FKpJTClHyGXmRfp2BW04~RSg4ERArBAb4lKE1GosQzgw__&Key-Pair-Id=APKAJLOHF5GGSLRBV4ZA) by Seyyed Hossein Nasr

**Week 4 – February 12 | Ritual & the Purification of the Soul**

Reading: “The Spiritual Dimension of Prayer” by Allahbakhsh K. Brohi

*First Reflection Paper Due*

**Week 5 – February 19 | No Class – President’s Day**

**Week 6 – February 26 | Introduction to Islamic Spirituality**

What are the primary sources for Islamic spirituality?

Theology + Ethics + Jurisprudence

Reading: “Introduction” in *The Charismatic Community* by Maria Masse Dakake

**Week 7 – March 4 | Teachings from Ali**

Reading: Selected Sermons from Nahj al-Balagha

*Second Reflection Paper Due*

**Week 8 – March 11 | Teachings from Zayn al-Abideen**

Readings: *The Psalms of Islam (Sahifa Sajjadiya)*,(Pages 10-29)

**Week 9 – March 18 | No class – Spring Break**

**Week 10 – March 25 |** **Spiritual Social Justice Part I**

Reading: *Selections from Imam Ali’s Letter to Malik al-Ashtar*

**Week 11 – April 1 | Spiritual Social Justice Part II**

Reading: *Philanthropic Ideals in Imam Ali’s Rule*

*Third Reflection Paper Due*

**Week 12 – April 8 | *Walayah*: Shia Spiritual Authority**

Reading: *The Charismatic Community: Walayah in Islamic Tradition* by Maria Masse Dakake

**Week 13 – April 15 | The Relationship Between Shi’ism and Sufism**

Reading: *The Prophet & Imams*

*Shi'Ism and Sufism: Their Relationship in Essence and in History*

**Week 14 – April 22 | “Mindfulness” in Islamic Tradition: Spirituality is a Non-Spiritual World**

Reading: “[Spirituality in a Non-Spiritual World](https://thesacreddoorproject.org/article/spirituality-in-a-non-spiritual-world/)” by Dr. Faiyaz Jaffer

**Week 15 – May 6 | Final Class Presentations**

**Week 16 – May 13 | Conclusions & Final Classroom Presentations (Part II)**

***Final paper due May 14***