

Spiritual & Ethical Approaches to Islam

UPADM-GP 255

Wagner School of Public Policy

Silver 407

Mondays; 11-12:15

Instructors

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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 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 tradition in North America.

Requirements

- (1.) Students will be expected to **attend** all class sessions, to be **on-time, participate**, and to **complete the assigned readings** before each class session. You must keep your cameras on during class time if you are logged in online. **(20 points)**
- (2.) Students must also submit **3 “reflection papers”** before the final class. These reflection papers are meant to capture your thoughts and questions about the readings and classroom discussions, though in a respectful way. Personal opinions are encouraged and students should feel free to question and even criticize the readings, but provide the necessary sources. A mere summary of the reading will *not* count as a “reflection.” Each reflection should be at a minimum of 3 pages long (double-spaced), but there is no maximum length. 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 should be **8-10 pages in length**, which speak to some issue that was in the readings and 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

[All Course Readings available under “Resources” in NYU Classes]

January 24

Introduction to Islam; Course Objectives and break out groups on “how do you define ethics and spirituality today?”

January 31

Introduction to Islamic Spirituality (Sunni) and its primary sources

Reading, NYU Classes: *TBD*

February 7

Introduction to Islamic Spirituality (Shia)

What are the primary sources for Islamic spirituality? Theology + Ethics + Jurisprudence

Reading, NYU Classes: *Introduction to ‘The Charismatic Community,’* Maria Masse Dakake

February 14

Ring The Alarm: Sheikh al-Harari on Being Woke & Negotiating The Shrinking Sacred -

Reading, NYU Classes: al-Harari’s; First Step Towards a Spiritual life

Reflection Paper One Due

February 21

No Class- President’s Day

February 28

***Walayah*: Shia Spiritual Authority**

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

March 7

A Female Jedi: Rabia al-Adawiyya On Hope and Fear (Women and Spiritual Leadership and Practice)

Reading, NYU Classes: *Female Sufis in Islam*

Second Reflection Paper Due

March 14

No class- Spring Break

March 21

The Psalms of Islam

Teachings from Sahifa Sajjadiya of Zayn al-Abideen
Reading, NYU Classes: *Sahifa; Psalms of Islam*
(Pages 10-29)

March 28

Al-Ghazzali Tackles the Bling: Death and the Temporal World's take on Opulence

Reading, NYU Classes: *Al-Ghazali's last-poem*

April 4

Spiritual Social Justice

Imam Ali's Letter to Malik al-Ashtar
Reading, NYU Classes: *Philanthropic Ideals in Imam Ali's Rule*

Third Reflection Paper Due

April 11

A Battle Of Spirits: Abū Nawās' Battles With His Spirits

Reading, NYU Classes: *Revelry and Remorse: A Poem of Abu Nawas*

April 18

The Relationship Between Shi'ism and Sufism

Reading, NYU Classes: *The Prophet & Imams*
Shi'ism and Sufism: Their Relationship in Essence and in History

April 25

Sufi Resistance: On Justice and Capitulation

Reading, NYU Classes: *Sufism in History and Its Relationship With Power*

May 2

"Mindfulness" in Islamic Tradition: Spirituality is a Non-Spiritual World

Final Class Presentations

May 9

Conclusions

Final Classroom Discussion & Presentations (Part 2)