Instructor Information:

Muhammad Faruque, PhD
Office Hours: Wed 2.00-4.00 PM (If you cannot make these office hours, please email me and I'll gladly arrange a time to meet).
Office Location: Duane 142
E-mail: mfaruque@fordham.edu

Course Information:

Lectures: TWTh 9.00 AM-12.00 PM
Classroom Location: Lincoln Center II
Course Website: Blackboard

Course Description:

Why does a millennia-old, Babylonian epic prompt a response from a modern psychologist on the question of evil? How do sacred texts of the Middle East construct conceptions of gender, subjectivity, body, and transcendence that still captivate the modern imagination? Through an exploration of the Babylonian, Israelite, Jewish, Zoroastrian, Christian, Gnostic, Manichean, and Islamic traditions of the ancient and medieval Middle East, this course will introduce students to some of the most thought-provoking ideas concerning gender and sexuality, human and divine subjectivity, the question of evil, and the quest for human perfection. We will discuss the various ways some of these traditions have been in continual dialogue with each other over the past two millennia, and how this interaction has both reified and diversified religious beliefs and practices. Lectures and discussions will be supplemented with visual materials, music, and movies where appropriate.

Course Objectives

Content. The primary objective of this course is to acquire a deeper understanding of the interpretive complexity of the sacred texts of the Middle East.

Theory and Methods. To emphasize cultural and theoretical approaches to the study of religion, and draw attention to the relationship of religion with literature, art, history, psychology, politics and philosophy. We will confront foundational
religious studies questions such as: What is religion? What is the Sacred? And what is the secular? How do these relate to culture, society, and politics? Greater familiarity with these theoretical concerns is a second objective of this course.

**Humanistic Education.** Finally, this course, like all courses in the humanities, aims to sharpen students’ abilities to read, reason, write, and discuss. These are the essential skills of educated life, and we hone them through continuous practice.

**Course Requirements:**

*Class Participation (15%)*

*Panel Discussion (15%)*

*Online Discussion Forum (20%)*

*Media Analysis (10%)*

*Essay (20%)*

*Final Exam (20%)*

Students are expected to complete all required readings prior to each lecture/class, keeping in mind that the success of doing well in this course depends almost entirely on completing the assigned readings. The average number of required pages for each class will be between 30-35.

(1) **Essay**: All students are required to write ONE seven to ten-page essay. Essay questions for each Topic will be provided, but students may write their own pieces for any Topic. For the purposes of writing the essays, students may use scholarly literature (primary and secondary) outside of what is listed in this syllabus.

(2) **Panel Discussion**: In the course of the term, I will divide the class into xxx groups and they will be required to participate in panel discussions. I will provide detailed instructions in class. The purpose of this exercise is to develop both communication and critical thinking skills, and to develop an ability to engage each other and learn to think about various issues discussed.

(3) **Participation**: Please attend class on a regular basis and read all the assigned material with attention. Your participation in raising questions and offering informed comments during the lecture and in the discussion periods will count as portion of the grade. Engaging your peers, colleagues, professors, and mentors is an important part of intellectual growth. For this reason, I encourage you to come to see me at least once during the semester during my office hours or to set up an
appointment. I look forward to talking with you one-on-one about some of the fascinating themes that we will be covering.

(4) **Online Discussion Forum (4):**

Students will be required to participate in FOUR Discussion Forums on Blackboard. Your comments (i.e. each comment) should add up to at least 40-50 words. And you should post at least TWO comments, showing you are willing to engage others. Also, your comments should be reflective of the Readings and Class discussions. The rules are very simple:

1) Overall, everyone has to contribute posts/thread/replies that would add up to at least 40-50 words. The number of posts or replies can vary in length.

2) The posts can either be a new Discussion Thread on any of the topics discussed so far or anything relevant to the course.

3) The posts may also consist of “replies” to the Threads others have created.

4) The posts need not be too formal or lengthy, but I will look for “informed” comments or replies.

5) You will have 3-4 days to complete a given Discussion Forum.

(5) **Media Analysis (One):**

For this assignment you will need to produce a media analysis (3-4 pp.) by focusing on a topic related to the religious traditions of the Middle East. So you need to find a media piece about a topic of your choice, and analyze how that media piece touches on aspects of the religious traditions of the Middle East by using at least four of the readings from Week 2 to Week 5. When you make a reference to an article, you have to provide in parenthesis the surname of the author and also the page number at the end of the sentence in which you make the reference. The media piece may be an ad on a newspaper, on TV or an online ad; a YouTube video, a news/newspaper or magazine article, a sequence from a movie, the cover of a book or a magazine, a paragraph from a novel or a short story; a stanza of a poem, and so on.

**Writing Format:**

All writing assignments are to be word-processed, double spaced, with 1-inch margins, in a standard size 12 font, Times or Times New Roman only. The bibliography does not count toward the page limit. Further information will be provided during the Essay Workshop.
Grading:

A = 100% - 93%  A- = 92% - 90%  |  B+ = 89% - 87%  B = 86% - 83%  B- = 82% - 80%
C+ = 79% - 77%  C = 76% - 73%  C- = 72% - 70%  |  ...  F = 59% - 0 and below

Attendance

Attendance will be taken at the beginning of every class. Please notice that unannounced and unexcused tardiness of more than 15 minutes will cause you to be marked as absent. More than three unexcused absences will constitute grounds for lowering the student’s final grade by two thirds of a letter grade for each additional absence. Excused absences cannot exceed four. Excused absences are defined as absences caused by personal illness, serious illness or death in the family, or other serious personal issues, as well as absences due to documented athletic or academic reasons. The procedure for verifying the excusability of a student’s absence requires that he or she submit in a timely fashion all the documentation to the Dean, who will then notify me of the situation. If you wish to have an absence excused, please ensure to contact your Dean and to Cc me on your email if appropriate.

Late Policy:

Essays turned in late, without prior communication, will receive a late penalty of 1/3 grade per calendar day late (for instance, B+ paper becomes a B- two days past deadline).

Use of Electronic Devices:

Students may use laptops and the internet ONLY to access required readings and take notes. Students are not allowed to use the internet to browse the social media or text others. Cell phones and other small personal electronics are to be turned off and put away while in class. Please remember that you are at university to professionalize yourself. Opting for entertainment over engagement during class is an expensive waste of your own and others’ time and highly disrespectful and unprofessional; it will be penalized as such. Finally, the instructor retains the discretion to disallow the privilege of internet access, if it is too distracting for class.

Plagiarism:

Plagiarism occurs when a student attempts to present as his or her own work what has come from another source without proper attribution. Plagiarism takes place whether such theft is accidental or deliberate. It is no defense to claim that one has
“forgotten” to document ideas or material taken from another source. Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to:

I. Using the ideas of another person, whether or not such ideas are paraphrased, from whatever source, including oral, print, broadcast, or computer-mediated communication;

II. Rewriting borrowed material by simply dropping a word here and there, substituting a few words for others, or moving around words or a sentence;

III. Presenting borrowed material, whether a phrase, sentence, or whole paragraphs, without placing quotation marks around the borrowed material in the approved style and providing an appropriate citation to the source;

IV. Presenting as one's own an assignment, paper, or computer program partially or wholly prepared by another person, whether prepared by another student, a friend, or a business or on-line service that sells or distributes such papers and programs;

V. Failing to use proper citation for information obtained from print sources or the internet, according to citation criteria specified by the instructor.

Classroom Code of Conduct:

It is all right to disagree with a given opinion. However, it is crucial that one maintains a level of respect for others in the class while doing so. Ad hominem attacks and the like are not constructive and will have no place in this class.

Equal Access:

Under the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973, all students, with or without disabilities, are entitled to equal access to the programs and activities of Fordham University. If you believe that you have a disabling condition that may interfere with your ability to participate in the activities, course work, or assessment of the object of this course, you may be entitled to accommodations. Please schedule an appointment to speak with someone at the Office of Disability Services (Rose Hill – O’Hare Hall, Lower Level, x0655 or at Lincoln Center – Room 207, x6282).

Prerequisites: This course has no prerequisites; it presumes no knowledge of the sacred texts of the Middle East.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Readings</th>
<th>Due/Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1    | Love, Desire, and Deification in Babylon and Egypt | **Tuesday:**
Introduction of students and faculty and brief explanation of overall course aims, structure and requirements.

Watch and Listen: The Oldest Known Melody (Hurrian Hymn no.6 - c.1400 B.C.)

**Wednesday:**
Ogunnaike, “Of Cannons and Canons.”

**Thursday:**
*The Epic of Gilgamesh*, selections.
Foster (tr.), *Ancient Egyptian Literature: An Anthology*, selections.
Watch: The Epic of Gilgamesh in Sumerian

**Tuesday:**

Genesis 1-2; Exodus 19-20; Leviticus 17-23; Deuteronomy 1, 32-34.
Watch: The Best of Israel  
*Wednesday:*  
Sommer, *The Bodies of God and the World of Ancient Israel*, selections.  
*Thursday:*  
Job 1-3 and 38-42.  
|---|---|---|
| 3 | Selfhood, Spirituality, and Sexuality in the World of Christianity | *Tuesday:*  
Fredriksen, *From Jesus to Christ*, selections.  
Watch: God Gave You Rock and Roll  
*Wednesday:*  
*Thursday:*  
Graiver, “Possible Selves in Late Antiquity: Ideal Selfhood and Embodied Selves in Evagrian Anthropology.”  
Hundert, “Augustine and the Sources of the Divided Self.” | **Essay** |
Subjectivity and Body in Manicheanism and Gnosticism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tuesday:</th>
<th>Wednesday:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Watch:** Hollywood Film ‘300’ Sparks Iranian Anger - BBC

**Watch:** The Youngest Female Zoroastrian Priestess in Iran

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thursday:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acts of Archelaus, selections.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tuesday:</th>
<th>Media Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ingrid Mattson, “How to Read the Qur’an.”</td>
<td>Show: Calligraphy and Illumination</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Qur’an: The Blood Clot (96), The Opening (1), Sincerity (112), Joseph (12).

M. Rustom, “The Quranic Story of Joseph as a “History” of the Human Soul.”

**Watch:** Quran Recitation by an Arab Kid

**Watch:** Mohamed Zakariya: The American Master of Islamic calligraphy
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5</th>
<th>Selfhood, Gender and Transformation in Islam</th>
<th>Wednesday:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nafiseh Ghafournia, “Towards a New Interpretation of Quran 4:34.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Souad Hakim, “Ibn Arabi’s Twofold Perception of Woman: Woman as Human Being and Cosmic Principle.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Watch: Mona Haydar - Hijabi (Wrap my Hijab)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Christianity, Islam, and Judaism in the Middle Ages</td>
<td>Tuesday:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Letter of Pope Leo IX to the Emperor Constantine Monomachos (1054).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Accounts of Urban II’s Speech at the Council of Clermont (1095).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Albert of Aix and Ekkehard of Aura, “Emico and the Slaughter of the Rhineland Jews” (1096).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wednesday:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thursday:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rabbi Yehuda Halevy, Poems, selections.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>St. Theresa of Ávila, The Way of Perfection, selections.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Peter Abelard, Dialogue Between a Philosopher, a Jew, and a Christian, selections.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Final Exam**