

## **ISLA 505: Islam: Origins and Early Development, Hadith**

**Ahmed Fekry Ibrahim**

**Fall 2016**

*Ahmed Fekry Ibrahim: Thursday 2:35-5:25 (Morrice Hall, Room 328, Institute of Islamic Studies)*

*Office Hours: Thursday 1-2 or by appointment*

### **Course Description**

This course focuses on the formation of Islam by paying special attention to its pre-Islamic origins, its early formation, the consolidation of Islamic orthodoxy, competing interpretations, the role of the hadith literature in the creation of Islamic orthodoxy, and debates to which the hadith literature gave rise in the modern period.

### **Course Requirements and Evaluation**

15 % Attendance

15 % Participation

10 % Debate

30 % Two Reflection Papers (500-600 words)

The point of the reflection paper is to help me assess that you have done the class readings and are able to summarize the major debates/discourses in your own words and provide your own informed opinion on the topic you choose.

- This paper is only 500-600 words. Going too far over or under this general limit will be penalized. Please write the word count at the top of the reflection paper.
- You may choose any theme or topic covered in class thus far for your paper and we ask that you primarily focus on the class readings related to that topic.
- A good way of helping you think of good topics is to look at the different class headings in the syllabus to give you an idea of what each classes' readings will discuss. This will give you some ideas of what theme to choose and on which readings you should focus.
- The more class readings you incorporate in your paper the better. Do not get overwhelmed by the nitty gritty details of each scholar's argument. Just give us a general sense of what the authors of the various readings are arguing/discussing.
- Please make sure to use a proper citation guide and stick to it when quoting or paraphrasing a particular reading. You're not required to go beyond the class readings for this assignment but you are certainly more than welcome to use other academic literature
- In giving your opinion it is always best to err on the side of caution based on your limited understanding of the field than provide radical arguments/statements that would need to be substantiated.

- **IMPORTANT:** Please avoid making "normative" claims in any of your research papers. A normative claim is one where you speak on behalf of the tradition or give us your own opinion what you think the 'tradition' ought to look like. For example: "I believe the hadith should be discarded or that Islamic law should be reformed in such and such a manner" Stick to academic analysis of what you think of the readings and their arguments.

### 30 % Final Paper (2000-2500 words)

- The paper should be roughly 2000-2500 words in length. Anything that exceeds or falls short of this word count by a significant margin will be penalized. Please write the paper's word count at the top.
- Unlike your other assignments, you will be required to do your own original research for this paper. If you choose to cover a theme that we have discussed thoroughly in class (e.g. authenticity of hadith debate), you will be expected to go significantly beyond the class readings in your citations and address other dimensions of the debate.
- Only use academic secondary sources (i.e. peer reviewed journal articles and academic books). You can certainly refer to non-academic Muslim resources/websites etc, if these are the primary sources of your study. For example, if you are studying a particular Muslim community, you can cite their own publications in describing the object of your study.
- Once again, please pay attention to accurate descriptions, proper grammar, and sentence structure.
- Make sure you have proper citations using a citation guide. We recommend Chicago Style, as it is the most common in the field, but any other will do (APA, MLA etc).
- For some good resources to help you get started, check out the online subject guide available on our Islamic studies website (click on the tabs above): <http://libraryguides.mcgill.ca/islamicandmiddleeast>
- **IMPORTANT:** Please avoid making "normative" claims in any of your research papers. A normative claim is when you speak on behalf of the tradition or prescribe what you think the 'tradition' ought to look like. For example: "I believe the hadith should be discarded." Abide by an academic analysis of the topic at hand and the legal tradition, its challenges, and how Muslims are engaging with it.

### Class Policies

- You should do all readings and be expected to lead discussions of them.
- Extensions will be granted only in cases of genuine emergency.
- No incompletes will be given except in cases of genuine emergency.

### Required Books (the top 3 are available at the McGill bookstore)

- Fred McGraw Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers: At the Origins of Islam* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010).
- Jonathan Brown, *Misquoting Muhammad: The Challenge and Choices of Interpreting the Prophet's Legacy* (London: Oneworld, 2014)
- Jonathan Brown, *Hadith: Muhammad's Legacy in the Medieval and Modern World* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2009).
- Jonathan Porter Berkey, *The Formation of Islam: Religion and Society in the Near East, 600-1800* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pps. 3-53 (**Available at McGill as an E-book**).

## Reference Works and Guides

*The Encyclopaedia of Islam*

### Week 1: Sept. 8 – Introduction to the course

#### Week 2: Sept. 15 – The Pre-Islamic Context

Jonathan Porter Berkey, *The Formation of Islam: Religion and Society in the Near East, 600-1800* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pps. 3-53.

Fred McGraw Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers: At the Origins of Islam* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010), pps. 1-38.

### Week 3: Sept. 22 – The Believers' Moment: The Message of Islam

Fred McGraw Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers: At the Origins of Islam* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010), pps. 39-89.

Jonathan Porter Berkey, *The Formation of Islam: Religion and Society in the Near East, 600-1800* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pps 57-82.

### Week 4: Sept. 29 – Expansion and Sectarianism

Fred McGraw Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers: At the Origins of Islam* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010), pps. 90-193.

### Week 5: Oct. 6 – The Emergence of Islam? Is there Islam before the Umayyads?

#### *Reflection paper 1 due today*

Fred McGraw Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers: At the Origins of Islam* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010), pps. 194-224.

Jonathan E Brockopp, "Interpreting Material Evidence: Religion at the "Origins of Islam",," *History of Religions* 55, no. 2 (2015): 121-47.

### Week 6: Oc. 13: Debate

You will be divided into two groups, which will debate a theme of the readings in class.

### Week 7: Oct. 20: The Hadith as the Mirror of Islamic Origins

Jonathan Brown, *Hadith: Muhammad's Legacy in the Medieval and Modern World* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2009), pps. 1-67.

### Week 8: Oct. 27: Hadith Criticism and Hadith in Shi'i Islam

Jonathan Brown, *Hadith: Muhammad's Legacy in the Medieval and Modern World* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2009), 67-149.

### Week 9: Nov. 3: Hadith and Islamic Law

Jonathan Brown, *Hadith: Muhammad's Legacy in the Medieval and Modern World* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2009), 150-172.

**Week 10: Nov. 10: The Authenticity Debate and Modernity**

Jonathan Brown, *Hadith: Muhammad's Legacy in the Medieval and Modern World* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2009), 197-275.

**Week 11: Nov. 17: The Interpretive Tradition*****Reflection Paper 2 due today***

Jonathan Brown, *Misquoting Muhammad: The Challenge and Choices of Interpreting the Prophet's Legacy* (London: Oneworld, 2014), pps. 1-68.

**Week 12: Nov. 24: The Canon**

Jonathan Brown, *Misquoting Muhammad: The Challenge and Choices of Interpreting the Prophet's Legacy* (London: Oneworld, 2014), pps. 69-160.

**Week 13: Dec. 1: Reform*****Final paper due today.***

Jonathan Brown, *Misquoting Muhammad: The Challenge and Choices of Interpreting the Prophet's Legacy* (London: Oneworld, 2014), pps. 161-215; 267-290.

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