

ISLA 682
ISLAM AND POLITICS IN AFRICA
Fall 2016
Khalid Mustafa Medani

Associate Professor: Khalid M. Medani
Islamic Studies Institute, McGill University
Email: khalid.medani@mcgill.ca
Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays 2:00-3:00 in Leacock 319

Course Description

Until the recent emergence of Islamist militant mobilization in some parts of Africa, there has been little scholarship on Islam and Politics in the continent. The bulk of this academic and policy literature has focused largely on the Middle East, North Africa and South Asia. In this seminar we will examine the important debates having to do with the role of Islam and politics in Africa focusing on five main themes: the relationship between Islamist movements and the state, the policies of African states in the context of political liberalization, the tension between Sufi and modernist Islamist oriented movements and groups in civil society (including women, and youth), the role of African diasporas, race, politics and Islamism in an historical context, and the causes and consequences of militant groups including al-Shabaab and Boko Haram.

Participation in Discussion: Students will be expected to keep up with assigned readings and to come to the seminar prepared to participate in discussion. Students are expected to lead and participate in discussions based on several assignments designed to encourage a deeper understanding of the relationship between Islam and Politics in Africa.

Reading Response Paper: Each student is required to write reading response papers of the assigned readings. This is due every week. Do not summarize the week's readings, but rather focus on answering the following questions:

1. What is the author trying to convey to his/her audience?
2. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the argument or point of view he/she is presenting?
3. What is confusing or unsatisfying about the reading?
4. Are there any themes that emerge from the week's readings?
5. How do the arguments compare and contrast with the view of other authors you have read in the course or elsewhere?
6. Pose three discussion questions for the class to consider.

Each student will lead a discussion lasting no longer than 10 minutes based on his/her analysis paper.

Research Project: A major objective of this course is to have students improve their research, analytical, writing and creative skills through the development of an original research paper related to Islam and Politics in the Africa. The research question (or questions) must be narrow,

but based on offering a deeper understanding of the causes and consequences of the politicization of Islam, and it should be related to the major themes of the seminar.

Note: Each student must schedule a meeting with me to discuss his/her research interest before embarking on the research and writing of the paper. The final draft of the research project should be 20 to 25 double spaced pages and no longer. The research project is composed of 2 phases. Students will hand in an **initial draft** of the paper or project no later than the 10th week of class, and give an oral presentation of their findings to the class. The **final version** of the paper is due during the exam period on **December 10th**.

Final grades will be calculated as follows: participation and discussion (35%), reading response papers (25%), research paper (40%).

Class Policies

Policy on Research Project: Late projects will be penalized at the rate of 1/3 grade per day (e.g. an A- will be downgraded to a B+). All papers should be titled. Papers must be typed, double spaced with one-inch margins, twelve-point font, with approximately 250 words per page. Extensions will be granted **only** in cases of genuine emergency.

Office Hours: Students are strongly encouraged to come to office hours with or without specific questions. I am available at regular office hours as well as by appointment. Kindly schedule an appointment to discuss research paper proposals as soon as possible.

Final Grades: Students are required to complete all assigned course work in order to receive a passing grade. No incompletes will be given except in cases of genuine emergency.

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see www.mcgill.ca/integrity for more information).

Please Note:

“In accord with McGill University’s Charter of Students’ Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.”

“Conformément à la Charte des droits de l’étudiant de l’Université McGill, chaque étudiant a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être noté (sauf dans le cas des cours dont l’un des objets est la maîtrise d’une langue).”

About the Schedule:

Although it is my intent to cover the material outlined in the following schedule, it is possible that I will make some changes (i.e. deletions or additions) in the interest of the most salient research priorities of participants. However, I will not change due dates or the dates of the research project.

Readings

The following texts and are required. Some will be assigned selectively. They can be found on reserve in the Islamic Studies Institute's library. All other readings are online on **Mycourses**.

* Frederic Volpi, ed., *Political Islam: A Critical Reader*, Routledge, 2010.

*De Waal, Alex, ed. *Islamism and Its Enemies in the Horn of Africa*. Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2004.

*Judith Scheele, *Smugglers and Saints of the Sahara: Regional Connectivity in the Twentieth Century*, Cambridge University Press, 2015.

Behnaz A. Mirzai, Ishmael Musah Montana, and Paul E. Lovejoy, *Slavery, Islam and Diaspora*, Africa World Press, Inc, 2009.

*Leonardo A. Villalon, *Islamic Society and State Power in Senegal: Disciples and Citizens*, Cambridge University Press, 2006.

*Stig Jarle Hansen, *Al-Shabaab in Somalia: The History and Ideology of a Militant Islamist Group*, Oxford University Press, 2016.

Brandon Kendhammer (2016), *Muslims Talking Politics: Framing Islam, Democracy, and Law in Northern Nigeria*, University of Chicago Press.

• Soares, Benjamin F. and René Otayek, eds. *Islam and Muslim Politics in Africa*. New York:Palgrave/Macmillan, 2007.

*Virginia Comolli, *Boko Haram: Nigeria's Islamist Insurgency*, Hurst Publishers, 2015.

**Lamin Sanneh (2016) *Beyond Jihad: The Pacifist Tradition in West African Islam*. Oxford University Press.

Recommended for background reading:

• Tayob, Abdulkader. *Islam: A Short Introduction*. Oneworld Publications: 1999.

• Robinson, David. *Muslim Societies in African History*. Cambridge University Press, 2004.

Outline of Course Schedule and Readings

Week 1: Introduction

Discussion of course content and guidelines

Week 2: Critically Studying Islamism: Islam and Politics in Africa

* Frederic Volpi, ed., *Political Islam: A Critical Reader*, Routledge, 2010 (Introduction and Section 1 (“Modern Understandings and Explanations of Islamism”))

* Ali Mazrui (1988) “African Islam and competitive religion: between revivalism and expansion,” *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 10, no.2. p.499-518.

* Ousmane Kane (2007), “Moderate Revivalists-Islamist inroads in Sub-Saharan Africa,” *Harvard International Review*, Summer, pp. 64-67.

* Terje Ostebo (2015) “African Salafism: Religious Purity and the Politicization of Purity,” *Islamic Africa*, vol. 6, pp. 1029.

* Alex Thurston (2015) “Nigeria’s Mainstream Salafis between Boko Haram and the State,” *Islamic Africa*, vol. 6, pp. 109-134.

* Roland Marchal (2015), “Salafism in Somalia: Coping with Coercion, Civil War and its Own Contradictions,” *Islamic Africa*, vol. 6, pp. 135-163.

Week 3: Political Islam, the State and Power (Sudan, Egypt)

* Frederic Volpi, ed., *Political Islam: A Critical Reader*, Routledge, 2010 (Introduction and Section 2 (“Political Islam, the State and Political Power”))

* Ibrahim, Abdullahi Ali. “A Theology of Modernity: Hasan al-Turabi and Islamic Renewal in Sudan.” *Africa Today* 46: 3/4 (Summer/Autumn 1999), pp. 195-222.

* De Waal, Alex, ed., *Islamism and Its Enemies in the Horn of Africa*. Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2004, Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6.

* Nathan J. Brown (2012), “Contention in Religion and State in Post-revolutionary Egypt,” *Social Research: An International Quarterly*, vol. 79, no. 2, pp. 531-550.

* Khalil al-Anani and Maszlee Malik (2013) “Pious Way to Politics: The Rise of Political Salifism in Post-Mubarak Egypt,” *Digest of Middle East Studies*, vol. 22, no. 1, pp. 57-73.

Week 4: Political Islam, Democracy, and Law (Northern Nigeria)

* Frederic Volpi, ed., *Political Islam: A Critical Reader*, Routledge, 2010 (Introduction and Section 4 (“Political Islam and Democracy”))

* Brandon Kendhammer (2016), *Muslims Talking Politics: Framing Islam, Democracy, and Law in Northern Nigeria*, University of Chicago Press.

Week 5: Islamism, Sufism and Democracy (Senegal)

*Souleyman Bachir Daigne, "Religion and the Public Sphere in Senegal: The Evolution of a Project of Modernity, in *Crediting God: Sovereignty and Religion in the Age of Global Capitalism*, Migue Vatter ed., Fordham University Press, 2011.

(Also chapter 2, Abdou Filali-Ansari, "A New Form of Religious Consciousness? Religion and Politics in Contemporary Muslim Contexts").

*Leonardo A. Villalon, *Islamic Society and State Power in Senegal: Disciples and Citizens*, Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Week 6: The Globalization of Islamism: Smugglers, Saints and Militants

* Frederic Volpi, ed., *Political Islam: A Critical Reader*, Routledge, 2010 (Introduction and Section 7 ("Globalization of Islam"))

*Judith Scheele, *Smugglers and Saints of the Sahara: Regional Connectivity in the Twentieth Century*, Cambridge University Press, 2015.

Week 7: Islamism and Violence in East Africa (Somalia)

* Frederic Volpi, ed., *Political Islam: A Critical Reader*, Routledge, 2010 (Section 6 "Political Islam and Violence").

*Stig Jarle Hansen, *Al-Shabaab in Somalia: The History and Ideology of a Militant Islamist Group*, Oxford University Press, 2016.

Week 8: Islamism and Violence in West Africa (Boko Haram)

*Virginia Comolli, *Boko Haram: Nigeria's Islamist Insurgency*, Hurst Publishers, 2015.

*Additional Readings may be assigned.

Week 9: Sufis and their critics

* Frederic Volpi, ed., *Political Islam: A Critical Reader*, Routledge, 2010 (Introduction and Section 5 ("Islamic Movements in Multicultural Settings"))

• Soares, Benjamin F. and René Otayek, eds. *Islam and Muslim Politics in Africa*. New York:Palgrave/Macmillan, 2007.

*Roman Loimeier, "Patterns and Peculiarities of Islamic Reform in Africa," in *Journal of Religion in Africa* 33:3 (2003), pp. 237-262.

Week 10: Muslim Diasporas: Past and Present

*Behnaz A. Mirzai, Ishmael Musah Montana, and Paul E. Lovejoy, *“Slavery, Islam and Diaspora,”* Africa World Press, Inc, 2009.

Week 11: Family Law, Gender, Youth and Islamic Politics in Africa

*Abdoulaye Sounaye (2015) “Irwo Sunnance yan-no: Youth Claiming, Contesting and Transforming Salfism,” *Islamic Africa*, pp. 82-108.

• Alidou, Ousseina and Hassana Alidou. 2008. “Women, Religion, and the Discourses of Legal Ideology in Niger Republic.” *Africa Today* 54:3, pp. 21-36 *Muslim Identity and Social Change in sub-Saharan Africa*. 1993. pp. 154-178.

*Abdoulaye Sounaye (2007). “Instrumentalizing the Qu’ran in Niger’s Public Life,” *Journal of Islamic Studies*, vol. 27, Thematic Issue: “Islam and African Muslim Publics,” pp. 211-239.

*Abdulkadir Hashim (2005). “Muslim personal law in Kenya and Tanzania: Tradition and Innovation,” in *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, vol. 25, no. 3, pp. 449-460.

*Dorothea E. Schulz (2003). “Political Factions, Ideological Fiction: The Controversy over Family Law Reform in Democratic Mali.” *Islamic Law and Society*, vol. 10, no. 1, pp. 132-164.

Adeline Maquelier, “Negotiating Futures: Islam, Youth and the State in Niger,” in René Otayek and Benjamin F. Soares, eds. *Islam and Muslim Politics in Africa*. New York: Palgrave/Macmillan, 2007, pp. 243-262.

Adeline Maquelier, “Negotiating Futures: Islam, Youth and the State in Niger,” in René Otayek and Benjamin F. Soares, eds. *Islam and Muslim Politics in Africa*. New York: Palgrave/Macmillan, 2007, pp. 243-262.

*I will most likely substitute some readings for this section.

Week 12: The Future of Political Islam in Africa: Back to the Future?

*Lamin Sanneh (2016) *Beyond Jihad: The Pacifist Tradition in West African Islam*. Oxford University Press.

Week 13: Presentation of Draft of Research Papers

RESOURCES ON AFRICA

It is important that you follow contemporary politics in Africa on a regular basis beyond the conventional media accounts. You will find the following sources extremely helpful for your research paper and country profile paper.

News and information sources available online include the following:

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/default.stm>

<http://allafrica.com> (contains French language page)

<http://www.africanews.org>

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/world/africa/>
<http://www.afrika.no/>
<http://www.africapoliticsonline.com/>