

NELC 6510/RELS 6510/LAW 737

Description:

This course aims to introduce students to the academic study of Islamic law, a legal system and intellectual tradition that is widely misunderstood and frequently misrepresented. In this course we will attempt to consider many different facets of the historical, doctrinal, institutional and social complexity of Islamic law. Specific topics covered include the beginnings of legal thought in Islam, various areas of Islamic positive law (substantive law), public and private legal institutions, Islamic legal theory, and selected issues in the contemporary development and application of Islamic law, from the early modern through the colonial and up to the modern periods.

The readings selected for this course will provide insight both into the phenomenon of Islamic law itself (doctrine, theory, institutions, history) and into the various approaches that scholars have taken to the study of it. Knowledge of Arabic is not required for this course, though background knowledge about Islam will be an asset (the instructor will be happy to suggest appropriate – and manageable – background readings for those interested in acquiring a basic working knowledge of the history of Islamic societies and of the religion of Islam).

Course Requirements; Grades:

This course will be run as a seminar. Accordingly, it is absolutely vital that students read carefully, and complete, all assigned texts on time, as well as participate fully and vigorously in class discussion. Apart from regular attendance, reading, and discussion participation, students will be required to submit occasional short response papers, to present no more than two 10-minute book reports, and to prepare a 15-20 page (approximately) research paper. Paper topics and bibliographies will be developed in close consultation with the instructor. Grades will be based on a combination of class preparation, in-class participation, response papers, in-class reports, and the research paper.

Required Texts:

There are two required texts for this class:

Wael Hallaq, *Shari'a: Theory, Practice, Transformations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009);

Sami Zubaida, *Law and Power in the Islamic World* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2003).

The texts are available from the Penn Book Store (Barnes and Noble, on Walnut); supplemental readings are on the Canvas site for this course, organized by session.