

Contemporary Islam: Its Socio-Economic Context
(HON)SOC/ECO 5401-01, 3 credits
Behrouz Tabrizi, Economics Department
Jaskiran K. Mathur, Department of Sociology and Criminal Justice
St. Francis College
Jaskiran K. Mathur, Director

Course Description

Globalization as both an economic and social phenomenon has made us sit up and take notice of the complexity of the world we inhabit. Besides having the second largest following, Islam is the fastest growing religion in the world today, and this rate of growth holds true for the United States of America as well. The dawn of the 21st century has found us uncertain witnesses to a face off between ‘civilizations’, poised in an ‘us’ and ‘them’ polarization between ‘Modernization’ and ‘Islam.’ Are these terms mutually exclusive? Are Muslims by definition not Modern? Do Modern people practice Islam? What is Modernization? What is Islam? As educated and analytical beings we are compelled to try to answer these questions even if the scholarly community cannot yet decide what the answers are. How do we understand “Contemporary Islam”? We must begin at the beginning, thus "historiography" and “ideology /community" are the basis; "politics" the backdrop; and, the “social/cultural" and “economic” the context of this understanding.

Course Objectives:

- To enable the student to distinguish myth from reality, politics from academia, and news from propaganda in relation to Islam
- To develop an ability to understand and critically interpret the logical aspect of Islamic economics as part of Islamic world-outlook
- To learn basic economic concepts as defined by Islamic economists in contrast to neo-classical economists
- To study the economics of the contemporary Islamic countries as part of applied micro-macroeconomics of Islam
- To discern the social forces at work that nuance the interpretations of Islam in different cultures
- To examine concepts like ‘Modernization’ ‘Westernization,’ ‘Development,’ ‘Justice,’ ‘Equality,’ ‘Pluralism,’ ‘Democracy,’ ‘Secularism,’ and ‘Revolution.’
- To question ethnocentric worldviews and foster cultural relativism
- To comprehend the significance and inevitability of Social Change and to decipher the relationship between Islam and Social Movements

Required Textbooks

Islamic Economic Systems, Farhad Nomani & Ali Rahnema, Zed Books Ltd.
Islam Today: A Short Introduction to the Muslim World, Akbar S. Ahmed

Readings:

- “Islam in Modern History,” Wilfred Cartwell Smith
- “Ideals and Realities of Islam,” Seyyed Hossein Naser
- “Traditional Islam in the Modern World,” Seyyed Hossein Naser
- “Islam and the Plight of the Modern World,” Seyyed Hossein Naser
- “The Islamic Constitution, Women, and the Socioeconomic Development of Iran,” B. Tabrizi, *Women and Gender in Global Perspectives*, Volume 23, no. 2, April 2003; “Islam and the Third Universal Theory,” by Mahmoud Ayoub.
- “A Note on Microeconomics of Islam,” B. Tabrizi, *Newsletter, Union for Radical Political Economics*, summer 2004; “Iran’s Economy under the Islamic Republic,” by J. Amuzegar,
- “The Islamic Roots of Democratic Pluralism,” Abdulaziz, Joseph Montiville
- “Progressive Muslims: On Justice, God and Pluralism,” Omid Safi (ed.)
- “Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate,” Leila Ahmed
- “Speaking in God’s Name,” Khalid Abou El Fadl
- “The Crisis of Modern Islam: A Pre-industrial Culture in the Scientific Technological Age,” Bassam Tibi et al.
- “Sacred Rage: The Crusade of Modern Islam,” Robin B. Wright
- “Islam in a Modern State: Democracy and the concept of Shura,” Falhi Osman
- “Power Politics,” Arundhati Roy
- “Autobiography of Malcom X,” Malcom X
- “Non-violent soldier of Islam: Badshah Khan,” Eknath Easwaran
- “Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia,” Ahmed Rashid
- “Wahhabism: A critical Essay,” Hamid Algai
- “Good Muslim Bad Muslim: America, the Cold War, and the Roots of Terror,” Mahmood Mamdani
- “Islam,” Karen Armstrong

Outline of Major Topics

A. Historiography

1. Prophet Mohammed as the founder of Islam
2. The socio-political and the economic conditions of his era
3. The Quran as the quintessential source of all directives

B. Shari’a: Its Legal, Social and Economic Implications

1. The sources of Islamic jurisprudence
2. Rights and duties
3. The Position of Women
4. Division of Labor

C. The Economic Philosophy of Islam

1. The Islamic concept of man
2. The ideal Islamic society
3. The challenge of the economic man
4. Basic concepts in economics of Islam

5. Islamic Microeconomics
6. Islamic Macroeconomics

D. Case studies

1. Islamisation of Pakistan’s economy by the bureaucracy, military, and politicians
2. Islamic economy according to the Saudi-Wahhabi interpretation
3. Islamisation of the Iranian economy since 1979 Islamic revolution
4. The Islamic socialism of Qadhafi in Libya

E. The Crisis of Modern Islam

1. Ideal vs. real
2. Religion vs. Culture/ Law/ Education/ State
3. Islam in a secular environment
4. Militant Islam
5. Islam as a Progressive/ Retrogressive Force

F. Diversity within Islam

1. Pre- Islamic traditions and Islam
2. The Sufi Tradition
3. Wahhabism
4. Adherence in the West
5. The State Religion of Theocracies, Monarchies, Dictatorships and Democracies

Grading Policy:

| | |
|---------------------------------|-----------|
| Class participation | 20 % |
| Presentation | 20 % |
| 2 Response papers/ Book Reviews | 10 % each |
| Term-paper | 40 % |

- The presentation is a persuasive, well-researched country profile, subject to peer review and assessment.
- The response paper pertains to a current event, an audio-visual input, or a Field Trip undertaken to compliment and enrich the seminar experience.
- If so assigned, the student reviews a book pertaining to the Seminar. The book may be selected from the given reading list or be approved by the instructors if it is the student’s choice
- The term paper is on a topic selected in consultation with the instructors reflecting the student’s interest and relevance to the issues under consideration

Contact person: Jaskiran K, Mathur, jmathur@stfranciscollege.edu