

## ***ISLAM: AN INTRODUCTION***

Humanities 214 Lecture

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3 BASIC TERMS: *ISLAM, ALLAH, MUSLIM*

WHERE MUSLIMS ARE TODAY

ISLAM IN WESTERN THOUGHT:

Women's Rights: A Current Issue

Contributions to W. European Medieval Culture and Learning:

Al-Andalus, for example

A BRIEF HISTORY OF ISLAM:

The Establishment of the Religion

After Mohammed: The Spread of Islam

"Islam vs. the West": A History of Prejudice and Fear

ISLAMIC BELIEF AND PRACTICE:

The Qur'an: Development, Uses, Treatment, Translations

The Practice of Islam: Major Divisions, and Different Sects

Five Pillars: Basic Elements of Worship for All Muslims

### **IMPORTANT CONCEPTS/TERMS**

Al-Andalus: Arabic name given to the Iberian Peninsula by its Muslim conquerors (ca. 750-1492), gradually regained by Christians in the long process known as the Reconquista.

Allah: God's name. In Islam God has 99 names that every Muslim should learn, along with the names of 25 Biblical prophets.

Caliph: 1. A title, "Successor to Prophet Mohammed": leader of Islamic community  
2. Refers to all humans, identifying them as the deputies, or agents, of God on earth.

Eid: Celebration at the conclusion of Ramadan (in the US, '08: Sept. 2-Oct. 2). *Eid [eed] al-Fitr*, its longer name, means "celebration at the breaking of the fast." *Eid Mubarak* means "Blessed Eid," a customary greeting for this holiday.

Eid al-Adha: "Feast of Sacrifice": celebrating Abraham's faith and willingness to sacrifice his son to God.

Fiqh: Islamic law; human efforts to translate God's will into specific rules. Its sources: the Qur'an (primary, and cannot be contradicted by other sources); Sunnah (transmitted in Hadiths); community consensus; human reason.

Hadiths: transmittals of Sunnah; written records of early oral reports, regarding the life, actions, and sayings of Prophet Mohammed and his community.

Hagar: maid-servant of Sarah, who was Prophet Abraham's wife. Abraham and Hagar had a son, Ishmael, who is the ancestor of the Arabs and of Islam.

Hijab: The modest covering of a Muslim woman; often, a headscarf.

Hijra/Hegira: Migration. The Islamic calendar starts with the year (621 AD/CE) in which the Prophet migrated from Mecca to Medina.

Ibn Sina: Muslim philosopher and scientist (11<sup>th</sup> c. CE).

Imam: A recognized leader or religious teacher. For Sunnis: the leader of Friday prayers at the mosque. For Shiites: a pious descendent of Ali recognized as leader and infallible intermediary between human and divine.

Islam: Submission to Allah.

Ismaili: A Shiite sect. Its Imam is His Highness the Aga Khan.

Jihad: Battle sinful urges within oneself, and enemies outside who coerce one to sin. It is common in Western culture to translate Jihad as "holy war."

Kaaba: The black cubic building that Muslims face when praying, and walk around during Pilgrimage (Hajj). Located in Mecca.

Khadija: Prophet Mohammed's first wife, confidante and advisor.

Mecca: Birthplace of Prophet Mohammed.

Medina: City to which Mohammed migrated (hijra), and where he founded the first mosque.

Mohammed: The prophet, or messenger; also named El-Mustafa, El-Mukhtar. Born c. 575 CE, died 632. The phrase "Peace Be Upon Him" is used by Muslims (and Jews) to refer to certain deceased people of significant importance. Practicing Muslims often say it after saying, or hearing, the name of Mohammed, or another prophet.

Mosque: Islamic place of worship and learning.

Mount Hira: The site of Prophet Mohammed's spiritual retreats, and of his revelations from God.

Muslim: Anyone or anything that submits to the will of Allah.

Pillars of Islam:

1. Shahada: "I witness that there is no God but Allah, and that Mohammed is the Messenger of Allah."
2. Salat: Communicating with Allah. An obligatory prayer five times a day.
3. Fasting in Ramadan: During the lunar month of Ramadan, Muslims fast from sunrise to sunset.
4. Zakat: Each Muslim is requested to pay 1/40 of their assets annually to support poor Muslims.
5. Hajj: A Muslim is required to make the pilgrimage to Mecca at least once, if possible.

Qur'an/Koran: The Holy Book of Islam.

Shariah: Law, or "pathway." Regulations from God concerning "the right way to walk with Allah." Comprehensive rules for a wide range of human activities .

- Sufi: Mystical order. The 12<sup>th</sup>-c. poet Rumi founded the dervishes, one Sufi group. (They turn, as they dance: hence our term “whirling dervishes.”)
- Surah: A chapter of the Qur’an. There are 114 surahs.
- Sunnah: Established practices of the Prophet Mohammed; an important source of authority, complementing (not contradicting) the Qur’an.
- Sunni, Shiite: The two major divisions of Islam.
- Sunni: Believe that Mohammed’s successors should be pious followers, elected members of the community.
- Shiite (Shiah): Believe that Ali, Prophet Mohammed’s cousin and son-in-law, was appointed to follow him as leader, and his descendents afterwards.
- Tours: City in France. Site of battle in which Charles Martel (“The Hammer.” Grandfather of Charlemagne) defeated Muslim troops (732 CE).
- Wahhabism: A strict and intolerant form of Islam, founded in the 18th century.

### **Women’s garments:**

An **abaya** is a long-sleeved, floor-length loose garment worn over other clothing when a woman leaves the protection of home. It is worn with a headscarf (**hijab**) and sometimes with a veil (**niqab**).

**Burqa:** (1) a kind of veil which is tied on the head, over a headscarf, and covers the face except for a slit at the eyes for the woman to see through; (2) a **full burqa** or an **Afghan burqa**, occasionally called a **chador**, covers the entire body and face. The eyes are covered with a 'net curtain' allowing the woman to see but preventing other people from seeing her eyes. Both kinds of burqa are used by some Muslim women, and the full burqa was compulsory under Taliban rule in Afghanistan.

Qur’an 33:59: “O Prophet, tell your wives and daughters and the believing women to draw their outer garments around them [when they go out or are among men]. That is better in order that they may be known to be Muslims and not annoyed.”

Qur’an 24:30-31: “And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their private parts [or--modesty]” (--an earlier verse instructs men to do the same. )  
 “...and that they should not display their beauty and ornaments except what must ordinarily appear thereof, that they should draw their veils over their bosoms and not display their beauty except to their husbands.”