

Max Johnson Dugan
Islam's Diverse Paths– RLST 140

Islam's Diverse Paths: An Introduction to Islamic

Tradition - RLST 140

Tuesday & Thursday 8:10 PM – 9:30 AM

Room: Ascension Hall 225

Instructor: Max Johnson Dugan (O'Connor House 208)

Office Hours: 10 AM – 12 PM Tuesday and Thursday (<https://calendly.com/max-j-dugan/office-hours>)

or by appointment

What is Islam? What are its essentials, if such essentials exist? How does Islam change, if at all, across time and place? And how does Islam interface with structures of power, like race, social class, and gender?

This course introduces students to Islam as a lived tradition. We will approach Islam as a dynamic set of discourses, institutions, ethics, relationships, aesthetics, and forms of embodiment that Muslims have enacted in various communities and contexts. Over roughly the first half of the course, we will learn about foundational texts, figures, ethics, and institutions in Islamic tradition. The second half of the course will focus on aesthetics and forms of embodiment through thematic frames that concern social justice, art, music, and consumption. Rather than use individual weeks to focus on critical foci—which effectively marginalizes those concerns—this class weaves examinations of devotion, gender, race, and social class throughout the course materials in order to clarify the omnipresence of structures of power. In terms of sources, students should expect to engage with classical, medieval, modern, and contemporary texts, as well as digital reproductions of paintings, musical performances, and audio tracks, in addition to born-digital media. This course will be especially productive for students in the social sciences or humanities working on topics related to Islam, as well as religious studies majors or minors, or students interested in Islam.

In terms of assignments, students should anticipate four types of evaluation. (1) Ongoing response questions for each week. Questions will focus students' attention to the essential components of the readings, enable students to practice their own critical thinking, and help me identify areas of difficulty. (2) A mid-term examination consisting of definitions, short answer questions, and one long-answer question. This assignment will invite students to concretize course content and practice their critical thinking skills. (3) A final exam consisting of short answer questions and two long-answer questions that will require students to critically think through overarching themes and course content. (4) Class

Max Johnson Dugan
Islam's Diverse Paths– RLST 140

attendance and presence. Further details on all assignments may be found in the “Additional Course Information” of the syllabus.

Learning Objectives

1. Students will analyze the vitality of Islamic tradition. This will involve:
 - Learning about key parts of Islamic tradition related to devotion, discourse, institution, ritual, and embodiment.
 - Grasping and distinguishing various approaches to Islamic tradition.
 - Using categories like race, gender, and social class to sharpen analysis.
2. Students will improve their reading and critical thinking in the following capacities:
 - Identifying the argument(s) of a reading.
 - Identifying the sources undergirding an argument.
 - Identifying conversations between scholars about Islamic tradition.
3. Students will practice their communication skills as they relate to:
 - Curious and open listening.
 - Clear and effective speaking.
 - Stylistically distinctive writing.

Grade Breakdown

Mid-Term Exam: 25%

Reading Response Questions: 30%

Final Exam: 25%

Participation: 20% (after one unexcused absence, each additional unexcused absence results in a loss of 4 points from your total grade, or 1/5 of your overall participation grade)

Required Texts

There are two required texts for this course:

Attar, Farid ud-Din. *The Conference of the Birds*. Translated by Dick Davis and Afkham Darbandi. New York: Penguin Books, 1984.

Sells, Michael. *Approaching the Qur'an: The Early Revelations*. 2nd ed. Ashland, OR: White Cloud Press, 2006.

Zeineddine, Ghassan. *Dearborn*. Portland, OR: Tin House, 2023.

All other readings/audiovisual materials will be available in PDF form on Moodle, through Kenyon LBIS, or online. While I am not requiring it, I encourage you to obtain a paper copy of *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* by Kate L. Turabian (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2018 or 2013). While [The Chicago Manual of Style](#) is available through Kenyon College Libraries, the paper edition is, in my experience, far more useful and navigable than the digital edition.

Max Johnson Dugan
Islam's Diverse Paths– RLST 140

Class Readings:

Week of January 16: Introductions

- January 16:
 - No readings.
- January 18:
 - Schubel, Vernon James. *Teaching Humanity: An Alternative Introduction to Islam*. New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan, 2023, ix-x, 1-7, and 39-55. **PDF on Moodle**

Week of January 23: Dearborn and Lived Islam

- January 23:
 - Zeineddine, Ghassan. *Dearborn*. Portland, OR: Tin House, 2023, 21-36 and 114-145.
 -
- January 25: **NO CLASS MEETING; ATTEND ZEINEDDINE TALK**
 - Zeineddine, Ghassan. *Dearborn*. Portland, OR: Tin House, 2023, 146-195

Week of January 30: The Qur'an

- January 30
 - Sells, Michael. *Approaching the Qur'an: The Early Revelations*. 2nd ed. Ashland, OR: White Cloud Press, 2006, 1-31 and 42-43, 78-103.
- February 1
 - Sells, Michael. *Approaching the Qur'an: The Early Revelations*. 2nd ed. Ashland, OR: White Cloud Press, 2006, 161-173
 - Abdul Basit recitations **on YouTube**:
 - [Surat al-Nas](#) (114)
 - [Surat al-Falaq](#) (113)
 - [Surat al-Ikhlās](#) (112)
 - [Dubai Quran Competition Winners](#) **on YouTube**.

Week of February 6: Muhammad

- February 6
 - Ali, Kecia. *The Lives of Muhammad*. Boston: Harvard University Press, 2014, 1-27. **PDF on Moodle**
 - Schubel, Vernon James. *Teaching Humanity: An Alternative Introduction to Islam*. New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan, 2023, 57-66. **PDF on Moodle**.
- February 8
 - Ali, Kecia. *The Lives of Muhammad*. Boston: Harvard University Press, 2014, 114-171. **PDF on Moodle**.

Week of February 13: Sufism

Max Johnson Dugan
Islam's Diverse Paths– RLST 140

- February 13
 - Sells, Michael. *Early Islamic Mysticism: Sufi, Qur'an, Mi'raj, Poetic, and Theological Writings*. Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1996, 196-231. **PDF on Moodle**
- February 15
 - Xavier, M. Shobhana. "An American Sufi Shrine, Bawa's Mazar in Coatesville, Pennsylvania." *Conversations: An Online Journal of the Center for the Study of Material and Visual Cultures of Religion* (blog), 2016, https://mavcor.yale.edu/sites/default/files/article_pdf/xavier_shobhana_american_sufi_shrine_pdf.pdf. **ONLINE**
 - Xavier, M. Shobhana. "From Illuminated Rumi to the Green Barn: The Art of Sufism in America." *Conversations: An Online Journal of the Center for the Study of Material and Visual Cultures of Religion* (blog), August 30, 2016, <https://mavcor.yale.edu/conversations/object-narratives/illuminated-rumi-green-barn-art-sufism-america>.
 - Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, "Mast Nazron Se," **on YouTube**. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GkejOgSZ8qw&t=12s>
 - Rahat Fateh Ali Khan, "Kabhi Ae Haqiqat E Muntazar," **on YouTube**. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VXA1OdWvo50>

Week of February 20: Shariah

- February 20
 - Hallaq, Wael B. *The Origins and Evolution of Islamic Law*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, 29-53 and 122-153. **PDF on Moodle**
- February 22
 - Quraishi-Landes, 'Asifa. "Rumors of the Sharia Threat Are Greatly Exaggerated: What American Judges Really Do with Islamic Family Law in Their Courtrooms." *New York Law School Review* 57, no. 2 (2012): 245–57. **PDF on Moodle**

Week of February 27: Aklaq and Adab

- February 27
 - Ayubi, Zahra. *Gendered Morality: Classical Islamic Ethics of the Self, Family, and Society*. New York City: Columbia University Press, 2019, 1-26. **PDF on Moodle**
 - Schubel, Vernon James. *Teaching Humanity: An Alternative Introduction to Islam*. New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan, 2023, 83-84. **PDF on Moodle**
- February 29
 - Bowering, Gerhard. "The Ādāb Literature of Classical Sufism: Anṣārī's Code of Conduct." In *Propriety and Authority: Sources of Moral Authority in South Asia*, edited by Barbara Daly. Metcalf, 62–87. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984. **PDF on Moodle**

Week of March 19: Conference of the Birds

Max Johnson Dugan
Islam's Diverse Paths– RLST 140

- March 19
 - Attar, Farid ud-Din. *The Conference of the Birds*. Translated by Dick Davis and Afkham Darbandi. New York: Penguin Books, 1984, 1-114.
- March 21
 - Attar, Farid ud-Din. *The Conference of the Birds*. Translated by Dick Davis and Afkham Darbandi. New York: Penguin Books, 1984, 115-229.

Week of March 26: Mid-Term

- March 26
 - Review Day
- March 28
 - **In-Class Mid-Term**

Week of April 2: Social Justice

- April 2
 - Esack, Farid. *Qur'ān, Liberation & Pluralism: An Islamic Perspective of Interreligious Solidarity Against Oppression / Farid Esack*. Oxford: Oneworld, 1997, 1-14 and 82-114. **PDF on Canvas.**
- April 4
 - Abdul-Matin, Ibrahim. *Green Deen: What Islam Teaches about Protecting the Planet*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., 2010, 1-17 and 171-183. **PDF on Moodle**
 - [Believersbailout.org](https://believersbailout.org).
 - About page: <https://believersbailout.org/about/>
 - Learn page: <https://believersbailout.org/#learn>

Week of April 9: Art & Aesthetics

- April 9
 - Rizvi, Kishwar. "Art." In *Key Themes for the Study of Islam*, edited by Elias, Jamal J. Oxford: Oneworld, 2010, 6-25.
- April 11
 - Elias, Jamal J. *On Wings of Diesel: Trucks, Identity and Culture in Pakistan*. Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2011, 11-16 and 107-131. **PDF on Moodle**

Week of April 16: Music & Sound

- April 16
 - Abdul Khabeer, Su'ad. *Muslim Cool: Race, Religion, and Hip Hop in the United States*. New York: New York University Press, 2016, 77-108
 - Jay Electronica, "The Pledge," **on YouTube**.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uq6cHsK5atk>
- April 18

Max Johnson Dugan
Islam's Diverse Paths– RLST 140

- o Hirschkind, Charles. *The Ethical Soundscape: Cassette Sermons and Islamic Counterpublics*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2006, 67-104. **PDF on Moodle**

Week of April 23: Consumption

- April 23
 - o Howe, Justine, “Da‘wa in the Neighborhood: Female Authored Muslim Students Association Publications, 1963–1980,” *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* 29, no. 3 (January 2020): 291–325. **PDF on MOODLE.**
- April 25
 - o Elijah Muhammad, *How to Eat to Live, Book I* (Phoenix: Secretarius MEMPS Publications, 1967), 1-21. **PDF on MOODLE.**
 - o Abrar Al-Heeti, “Trying Impossible Pork as a Practicing Muslim Was Super Weird,” CNET, November 4, 2021, <https://www.cnet.com/news/trying-impossible-pork-as-a-practicing-muslim-was-super-weird/>. **ONLINE and PDF on MOODLE.**

Week of April 30:

- April 30
 - o Review the final study guide.
- May 2
 - o Reflection and feedback

May 6 at 6:30 PM ET: In-Class Final Exam

Max Johnson Dugan
Islam's Diverse Paths– RLST 140

Additional Information:

Class Content

Topics that arise in readings and class discussions may sometimes be discomforting or frustrating. Attempt to critically and sympathetically engage with different perspectives during class, as if these are opportunities to sharpen your own thinking and learn about a framework different from your own. I encourage you to incorporate your emotional responses to the texts or discussions, as well as considerations of the context of the writer, the writer's audience, larger discursive constraints, and so on. If a particular topic presents extreme difficulties, please contact me and we can discuss the matter during office hours.

Important Dates

Last Day to withdraw from a course: January 23 (February 2 with a late fee)

Spring Break: March 2 to March 18

Grace Periods: March 18-19 & April 29-May 5

Mid-Term: March 28 in class

Last Day of Class: May 2

Final Exam: May 6 at 6:30 PM ET

Majors, Minors, and Concentrations

This course counts toward majors and minors in Religious Studies (RLST), the Asian and Middle East Studies (AMES) major, and/or the Islamic Civilizations and Cultures concentration. Please talk with me and/or your advisor if you have questions about how this course satisfies the requirements of your program.

Citation Style

For written assignments, please refer to the *Chicago Manual of Style* 17th ed. It is available online through Kenyon College's LBIS. You may also consult an abbreviated version that was compiled by Kenyon's Writing Center:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1KgPSOnGQJrCCAIjasIAkOiUU23sbNdyY/view?usp=sharing>

Class Participation (20%)

You are expected to attend class and participate in discussions and group activities. In advance of class, thorough engagement with and consideration of weekly assignments is vital to contributing fully to group discussions. During class, you will discuss the weekly readings, analyze primary sources, and consider overarching course questions. I expect you and your classmates to generate the bulk of classroom discussions and analysis. If you are uncomfortable speaking during class or prefer to engage in some other manner (e.g., written communication rather than verbal communication), please talk with me at your earliest convenience so that we are on the same page.

An important aspect of that engagement is grappling with complex, often challenging concepts. Rather than answer questions in a simple manner, the goal of this course is to deepen our understanding by collectively working through the complexity of Islamic tradition. So, you should bring your questions to class in order that the entire class can learn from one another. If a concept is especially difficult or you are concerned about your understanding, please stop by office hours to clarify the issue.

There are various excusable reasons for an absence. Please contact me as early as possible if you know you will miss class for a religious holiday or observance, an extracurricular conflict, or a significant life event. If you are absent because of an emergency, illness, or some other unexpected event, please keep me aware of the matter so that your absence is not unexcused. For illnesses, please visit the Cox Health and Counseling Center. If you do not communicate with me in a timely manner, you will receive an unexcused absence. Unexcused absences will negatively affect your participation grade. In general, communicate promptly and transparently at your earliest convenience to not lose points on your participation grade.

Mid-Term Exam (25%)

On March 28, you will take an in-class mid-term that will consist of **10 definitions**, **5 short answer** questions, and **one essay**. The definitions section will require students to provide a one-sentence definition of a figure, movement, or concept that we have read about in the course up to that point. The short answers will ask for two-to-four sentences describing a phenomenon or explaining a concept from our readings or class discussions. The essay will require a five-paragraph-length analysis related to the course goals outlined above. You will be provided with a study guide containing all of the *potential* definitions, short answer questions, and essay questions that may be on the test. This mid-term is an opportunity for you to review significant course information and concretize that information in preparation for your final project. You are welcome and encouraged to study in groups and collaborate with your classmates as you prepare for the mid-term.

Final Exam (25%)

On May 6 at 6:30 PM, you will take an in-class final exam that will consist of **4 short answer questions** and **2 essays**. The short answers will ask for two-to-four sentences describing a phenomenon or explaining a concept from our readings or class discussions. The essay will require a five-paragraph-length analysis related to the course goals outlined above. You will be provided with a study guide containing all of the *potential* short answer questions and essay questions that may be on the test. This final examination is an opportunity for you to review significant course information and synthesize class material that you have written about in your reading response questions. You are welcome and encouraged to study in groups and collaborate with your classmates as you prepare for the exam.

Reading Response Questions (30%)

Each week, students will respond to one set of reading questions. Students should upload their reading responses to MOODLE by 8 PM ET on Wednesday evenings. Responses should be around 300 words in total. Responses will be marked as either 100% (for excellent responses), 95% (for complete responses), or zero credit (for incomplete or missing responses). Excellent work will be distinguished by exceptionally creative writing, insightful analysis, and/or thoughtful connections from across the semester's readings and discussions. The prompts are meant to help facilitate engagement with the assigned text and connection with the broader course goals.

Late Enrollment

Any students enrolling late in the course will be expected to make up any and all missing readings and assignments. Late-enrolling students should contact me as soon as they have enrolled in order to determine the deadlines for their makeup assignments.

Communication Expectations

You can expect me to respond to emails within 24 hours between 9 AM and 5 PM during weekdays (excluding school holidays). For more involved topics, such as concepts from class, project topics, or grades, please arrange an office hour appointment rather than attempt a discussion over email. Please review the syllabus before contacting me. If you ask about a topic for which the answer is already clearly present on the syllabus, I may not reply to your inquiry, or my reply may be terse.

Academic Integrity

It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with the [Student Handbook of Kenyon College](#). If you are unsure about the validity of your attributions or references, feel free to contact me in advance of submission (with respect to my communication expectations above). In the unlikely event that concerns do arise after an assignment is submitted, I will forward all materials to the chair of the Department of Religious Studies, per [Kenyon College's current policy](#).

Use of Artificial Intelligence Tools

The ethics of using artificial intelligence (AI) tools, such as ChatGPT, in the completion of assignments is currently taking shape. I am ambivalent about the use of such tools. On one hand, AI tools will likely proliferate, and you should learn how to use them constructively. On the other hand, even the most considered use of AI tools deprives you of intellectual labor that sharpens your capacity to think and feel creatively, independently, and rigorously. My initial policy on the use of AI tools in classroom assignment is that any sentences that you take from an AI tool must be formatted *in bold and italics*. Additionally, you should be able to demonstrate the same analytic rigor during discussions in class that you are able to produce in your response writing, whether you collaborate with AI tools or not. In other words, please use these tools to improve your critical thinking related to the course materials. If, however, we find that the

Max Johnson Dugan
Islam's Diverse Paths– RLST 140

use of these AI tools inhibits the development of your critical thinking and communication skills, I will revisit this policy. We will discuss this more over the course of the semester, and I hope that we together can learn how to adapt to these new, potentially useful and potentially harmful tools.

Electronic Devices

Phones should be kept on silent at all times, and, in the case of an emergency during which you must use your phone, you should exit the room. Please, do not use your phones at all during class. I strongly encourage you to not use other electronic devices (e.g., computers, tablets). Simply put, laptops tend to distract you and your classmates, and hand-written notes have been shown to promote better retention. If you must use a laptop or tablet, please use your device for course-related matters only and turn off your wi-fi for the duration of class meetings. If use of electronic devices becomes a distraction during class, we will revisit this policy.

Late Assignments

Reading responses will receive zero credit if they are submitted after the submission deadline, unless you have contacted me in advance for an extension or are dealing with an unforeseen circumstance. Timely reading responses are essential to meeting the learning objectives in the course. It is better to submit a partially incomplete or thin response than submit a late assignment. For the short essay and final project assignments, students who turn in late assignments will lose one grade level (e.g., "A" to "A-") for every 24 hours the assignment is late.

Extension Policy

There are lots of reasons that you might need an extension. For any assignment, I will grant an extension of up to two days, no questions asked. If you need a longer extension, then please explain why you will need a longer extension. You should request an extension by email.

Regrading Policy

Students must wait 24 hours before requesting a regrade and may not request a regrade one week after receiving the grade of their assignment. Additionally, students must submit a written justification for their regrade. The written justification should include a justification for their regrade request and indicate specifically the areas which they believe warrant higher marks.

Grading Scale

A = 100% to 93%	B- = 82.5% to 80%	D+ = 69.4% to 67%
A- = 92.4% to 90%	C+ = 79.4% to 77%	D = 66.4% to 63%
B+ = 89.4% to 87%	C = 76.5% to 73%	D- = 62.4% to 60%
B = 86.5% to 83%	C- = 72.4% to 70%	F = 59.4% and below

Accessibility Accommodations

Kenyon College values diversity and recognizes disability as an aspect of diversity. Our shared goal is to create learning environments that are accessible, equitable, and inclusive. If you anticipate barriers related to the format, requirements, or assessments of this course, you are encouraged first to contact the office of Student Accessibility and Support Services (SASS) by emailing sass@kenyon.edu, then to meet with the instructor to discuss accommodation options or adaptations.

Names and Pronouns

As noted by the Office for Civil Rights, Kenyon College is committed to diversity, inclusion, equity and non-discrimination. Many people might use a name that is different from their current legal name. In all areas of campus, we refer to people by the names, in addition to the pronouns, that they use for themselves. Students are invited to share their names and the pronouns that they use. Students are also encouraged to use gender-neutral language, if they aren't sure of someone's pronouns.

For more information on Kenyon's commitment to diversity and non-discrimination, please refer to the Office for Civil Rights and/or the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

Statement on Employee Responsibility

Kenyon College seeks to provide an environment that is free of bias, discrimination, and harassment. If you have experienced any form of harassment/misconduct/assault, interpersonal violence, or stalking we encourage you to report it. If you report the incident to a faculty member, we must notify Kenyon's Civil Rights & Title IX coordinator of any information about the incident you provide. Please find more information in the following links:

Sexual Misconduct & Harassment Policy: Title IX, VAWA, Title VII:

www.kenyon.edu/directories/offices-services/title-ix/policy/

Discrimination & Discriminatory Harassment Policy:

<https://www.kenyon.edu/directories/offices-services/ocr/discrimination/>

ADA/504 Student Grievance Procedures:

www.kenyon.edu/directories/offices-services/ocr/discrimination/504-ada-grievance/student-grievance-procedure-resolving-complaints-under-ada-section-504/

Land Acknowledgement

We at Kenyon recognize that the lands on which we live, work, celebrate, and heal are the ancestral homelands of the Miami, Lenape, Wyandotte, and Shawnee peoples, among others. The disputed Treaty of Greenville (1795) and the forced removal of Indigenous peoples from this region allowed for the

Max Johnson Dugan
Islam's Diverse Paths– RLST 140

founding of the College in the early 1800s. As a community, we are committed to confronting this dark past while also embracing through education and outreach the many Indigenous communities that continue to thrive in Ohio.