An introduction to the history, culture, traditions, beliefs, and practices of Islam. Students will reflect on the ways in which Islamic faith and life have been shaped by historical and cultural circumstances, study the diversity of Islam both in history and in contemporary expression, and develop a deeper understanding of Islam in order to love Muslims as their neighbors and witness more effectively to them.

Learning Goals

Head (theoretical knowledge)

- To learn the basics of Islam: its history, its pillars of faith and practice, and its main branches
- To learn the basic history of Christian-Muslim relations
- To gain a theologically astute perspective on contemporary Christian-Muslim issues such as evangelism and missions, interfaith dialog, and apologetics

Heart (existential knowledge)

- To see Muslims theologically—as images of God; namely, as fellow human beings to be loved as neighbors—rather than merely as polemical opponents or political threats
- To deepen one’s passion for proclaiming the gospel wisely and winsomely to Muslims
- To walk away from this class unafraid to visit local mosques, to strike up friendships with local imams and Muslims, and to spearhead Muslim evangelism efforts at your church

Hand (practical knowledge)

- To visit a local mosque, observe a Muslim worship service, and (if possible) develop a friendship with a Muslim
- To practice basic exegesis of the Qur’an, hadiths, and fiqh

Required Texts

Recommended Texts


Course Requirements

1. **Attendance, participation, and readings.** Students are required to attend all class sessions, to participate in discussions, and to complete the weekly required readings in preparation for each class session. At the conclusion of the course students will submit a signed reading report, stating what percentage of the required readings they have completed. Please e-mail the instructor ahead of time if you will miss a class.

2. **Reading reflections.** Students will compose brief (1-page or less, single-spaced, 12-pt. font, 1-in. margins) responses to reflection questions based upon the weekly readings. Questions will be posted on the class web site one week prior to class. These assignments are designed to focus your reading and to facilitate thoughtful class discussions.

3. **Mosque visit reflection.** Students will compose a 2-page reflection paper (single-spaced, 12-pt. font, 1-in. margins) that describes what they learned about Islam, themselves, and/or Christianity by observing a Muslim worship service. The point is not merely to narrate what happened but to reflect intelligently upon what you learned: What were your preconceptions going in? Did anything about the service surprise you? How was the sermon different from or similar to a Christian sermon? What elements of the liturgy, if any, reflected elements of Christian liturgy? Etc.

4. **Midterm exam.** Students will complete a 30-min. midterm exam in the library at a time of their own choosing between October 29 and November 5.

5. **Research paper.** Students will compose a 10–15 page research paper (double-spaced, 12-pt. font, 1-in. margins, [Chicago](#) or [Turabian](#) style footnotes) on any
Christian Encounter with Islam — 3 of 17

The purpose of the paper is not merely to recapitulate data but to think critically—to present a critical argument or analysis from a Reformed perspective—about a theological theme related to Islamic faith and practice or to Christian-Muslim relations.

Grade Breakdown

- Participation & reading: 20%
- Reading reflections: 15%
- Mosque visit reflection: 15%
- Midterm exam: 10%
- Research paper: 40%

Schedule

Apart from week one (August 27th), the following assignment and lecture schedule is tentative due to several contingencies. An updated schedule will be provided at the first class meeting.

August 27 — Course introduction. Why study Islam at RTS. The pre-Islamic world. The fundamentals of Islamic faith.

Assignments:
2. Qur’an, introduction (pp. xi–xli) and Q. 1 (p. 3).

Recommended Readings:
- Geneive Abdo, Mecca and Main Street: Muslim Life in America after 9/11 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

Throughout this syllabus the recommended readings are not required but are provided as guides to key related readings on the weekly lecture topics and as bibliographical fodder for your research paper.
September 3 (Labor Day): No class.

Get a head start on step one of your research paper!

September 10 — The life of Muhammad and the founding of Islam. American Muslim identity. **Ghusl** and **wudhu** (ritual purification).

Assignments:
7. Qur’ān selections.

Recommended Readings:
- Ishāq, *The Life of Muhammad*.
Muslim? Barzegar’s piece is a good place to start for a sociological classification of contemporary American Muslim communities.


September 17 — Norms of Islamic faith and life: the Qur’ān; sunnah and hadīth (oral and written prophetic tradition). Salāt (ritual prayer).

Assignments:
2. Zaka and McDowell, Muslims and Christians, ch. 4.
5. Qur’ān selections.

Recommended Readings:

**September 24 — The expansion of Islam. The Islamic doctrine of God. Zakāt (alms).**

Assignments:
6. Qur’an selections.

Recommended Readings:

**October 1 — Islamic institutions. Dhimmitude. Fiqh (jurisprudence/ethics). Sawm (fasting).**

Assignments:

7. Qur’an selections.

Recommended Readings:
• Mark Durie, Liberty to the Captives: Freedom from Islam and Dhimmitude Through the Cross (Melbourne: Deror Books, 2010).

October 8 (Reading week): No class.
Work on your research paper!

October 15 — Islam’s dramatic development from the medieval era to the Enlightenment. The Islamic view of Jesus. Hajj.

Assignments:
6. Qur’an selections.
Recommended Readings:


October 22 — Islam and the West. Islam and the challenges of modernity. The Islamic view of sin and salvation. Sufism.

Assignments:

6. Qur’an selections.

Recommended Readings:

- Bassam Tibi, *Islamism and Islam* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012). Tibi is a major player in critical scholarship on political Islam, Islamic fundamentalism, jihad, and Islam and the West. He has authored several dozen books and countless articles on these topics.
• Abu Jade Isa Michael Tofte, Problems Muslims Face in Today’s World: Their Causes and Solutions Based on the Authentic Sunnah and the Way of Our Predecessors (Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: International Islamic Publishing House, 2011). A Muslim perspective on how to deal with the problems of modern life including topics ranging from parent-child conflicts to terrorism.

October 29 — Christianity and Islam: John of Damascus and Thomas Aquinas.

Assignments:
5. Qur’an selections.

Recommended Readings:
November 5 — Reformed theology and Islam: Luther, Calvin, Turretin, Mastricht, Kuyper, Bavinck, Van Til.

Assignments:
2. Selections from Martin Luther.
5. Selections from John Calvin.
8. Qur’an selections.

Recommended Readings:


Assignments:


7. Qur’an selections.

Recommended Readings — Zwemer:


Smith, Jane I. “Christian Missionary Views of Islam in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries.” *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 9, no. 3


Recommended Readings — J. H. Bavinck:


November 19 — Issues in contemporary North American Evangelical engagement with Islam: Do Christians and Muslims worship the same God? What are effective methods for Muslim evangelism?

Assignments:
5. Qur’an selections.

Recommended Readings:

November 26 — Islamic issues in contemporary missiology: contextualization, Bible translation, and the insider movement.

Assignments:
2. Read the “Executive Summary” (pp. 9–15) of the PCA Ad Interim Study Committee on Insider Movements, “A Call to Faithful Witness — Part One — Like Father, Like Son: Divine Familial Language in Bible Translation” (Office


5. Qur’an selections.


Recommended Readings:

December 3 — Christian-Muslim interfaith dialog, polemics, and apologetics. Tahrīf. Course wrap-up.

Assignments:
6. Qur’an selections.

Recommended Readings:


December 5 — RTS TERM PAPER DEADLINE (11 A.M.)

Assignments:
1. Research paper step 4: submit final draft.
Appendix 1: Research Paper Instructions

Four Steps to a Great Graduate Paper:

1. **The gist.** Here is where you get the ball rolling by selecting a general topic and doing your initial narrowing in search of a specific problem or question within that topic. State your topic (e.g., the historicity of Muhammad’s life), state the specific problem or question that you are researching (e.g., Are the contemporary revisionist readings of Muhammad’s biography sound?) and list at least 3–5 pertinent academic sources (encyclopedia articles, journal articles, and/or books) that you are reading. Additionally, in a sentence or two state the gist of where your idea is heading or what you think your argument/thesis will be. (E.g., “I plan on arguing in favor of the revisionist reading of the historicity of Muhammad’s life based upon the research of John Doe in his recent book *Muhammad: Another Look.*”) **Due September 24.**

2. **The formal proposal.** At this stage you need to finalize the narrowing of your topic. State your topic and the specific question or problem you are addressing. Write out a tentative state of the question (one paragraph is fine; no more than three) that describes concisely the main points of what other scholars are saying about your specific question. In light of your state of the question, state your tentative thesis and briefly describe how it relates to the scholarly conversation. You can do this in as little as one sentence. (E.g., In light of what Doe, Brown, and Smith have said, I will argue that a different approach is needed. Or: Against the extreme views of Doe and Brown, I will argue that Smith provides a more compelling analysis of the evidence.) Finally, list your working bibliography (at least 7–10 sources). **Due October 22.**

3. **The penultimate draft.** Here is your chance to receive constructive critical feedback from your peers before submitting your final draft. Using an online review system (instructions to be provided in class), students will submit a penultimate draft of their papers to be reviewed by three fellow students and vice versa. Timely completion of the submission and review process will be factored into your final paper grade. **Draft due November 19th. Three peer reviews due November 26.**

4. **The final draft.** Review the feedback you received from your peers, and then revise, revise, revise! **Due December 5th at 11 a.m.**

Suggested paper topics include (but are not limited to)—if you are interested in:

- **Biblical studies:** Do Muslims face tougher questions regarding the canon of the Qur’an than Christians do regarding the canon of the New Testament? Are the Islamic arguments regarding the corruption of the Bible valid and sound? What is the proper interpretation of the Verses of the Sword? What is the meaning of jihād according to the Qur’an? Compare and contrast the role of Satan (or angels or demons) according to the Bible and the Qur’an.
- **Historical theology:** Is the Islamic doctrine of God another form of Arianism? Is
the Islamic doctrine of salvation another form of Pelagianism? Are John of Damascus’s, Aquinas’s, or Luther’s responses to Islam sound and compelling? Are Islamic polemics against the doctrine of the trinity similar to Socinian anti-trinitarian arguments? How well-attested are the historical sources for biographies of Muhammad’s life?

- Theology proper: How are the attributes/names of God according to the Qur’an similar to or different from the same according to the Bible? Are Miroslav Volf’s arguments for his thesis that Muslims and Christians worship the same God valid and sound? What role, if any, should the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed play in our understanding of the Christian definition of God? Should Christians enthusiastically support the doctrine of God as formulated in the *A Common Word* initiative?

- Philosophical theology: Is the Muslim doctrine of human free will similar to or different from the Christian doctrine as formulated, say, by Augustine, Aquinas, Turretin, or Bavinck? Are Islamic metaphysical polemics against the doctrine of the trinity compelling? To what extent can Christians join with Muslims on social-ethical issues such as abortion, homosexuality, pornography, religious freedom, etc.?

- Practical theology: What can my church learn from the insider movement, and what about it should my church avoid? What is the best way to evangelize Muslims effectively in my city? What can Christians learn from the Muslim way of life? Develop a Muslim evangelism ministry proposal for your local church or presbytery. Analyze a Muslim sermon in light of the Christian gospel.
# Course Objectives Related to MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes

**Course:** Christian Encounter with Islam (02ST540)  
**Professor:** Laurence O'Donnell  
**Campus:** Orlando  
**Date:** Fall 2012

---

## MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes

*As the MDiv is the core degree at RTS, the MDiv rubric will be used in this syllabus.*

In order to measure the success of the MDiv curriculum, RTS has defined the following as the intended outcomes of the student learning process. Each course contributes to these overall outcomes. This rubric shows the contribution of this course to the MDiv outcomes.

---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rubric</th>
<th>Mini-Justification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>The research paper enables students to articulate a responsible understanding of the theological, historical, cultural, and global realities of Islam.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Lectures and reading assignments enable students to appreciate and articulate a scriptural response to Islam.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimal</td>
<td>Study of the Reformed tradition insofar as it informs a response to other religions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Articulation (oral &amp; written)</th>
<th>Broadly understands and articulates knowledge, both oral and written, of essential biblical, theological, historical, and cultural/global information, including details, concepts, and frameworks.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scripture</td>
<td>Significant knowledge of the original meaning of Scripture. Also, the concepts for and skill to research further into the original meaning of Scripture and to apply Scripture to a variety of modern circumstances. (Includes appropriate use of original languages and hermeneutics; and integrates theological, historical, and cultural/global perspectives.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reformed Theology</td>
<td>Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanctification</td>
<td>Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student's sanctification.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire for Worldview</td>
<td>Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winsomely Reformed</td>
<td>Embraces a winsomely Reformed ethos. (Includes an appropriate ecumenical spirit with other Christians, especially Evangelicals; a concern to present the Gospel in a God-honoring manner to non-Christians; and a truth-in-love attitude in disagreements.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preach</td>
<td>Ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worship</td>
<td>Knowledgeable of historic and modern Christian-worship forms; and ability to construct and skill to lead a worship service.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shepherd</td>
<td>Ability to shepherd the local congregation: aiding in spiritual maturity; promoting use of gifts and callings; and encouraging a concern for non-Christians, both in America and worldwide.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church/World</td>
<td>Ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The research paper enables students to articulate a responsible understanding of the theological, historical, cultural, and global realities of Islam.*

Lectures and reading assignments enable students to appreciate and articulate a scriptural response to Islam.

Study of the Reformed tradition insofar as it informs a response to other religions.

Contributes to the shaping of the Christian mind and heart and thus to the love of God and neighbor.

Lectures, reading assignments, research paper will contribute to an integrated Christian view of Islam.

Promotes a charitable (i.e., wise, fair, discerning, and winsome) approach to engaging Islam.

Lectures and assignments are aimed at equipping church leaders to foster effective Muslim evangelism and missions initiatives.

Promotes a responsible Christian engagement with Islam, one of the major cultural institutions that is shaping public discourse today.