

**5 Pillars and Social Justice**  
HRRS-4814  
Starr King School for the Ministry

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Course Description

This course will examine social justice in Islam and particularly the Five Pillars of Islam academically as well as experientially, and will draw on a variety of resources, including readings, media articles, class discussions, and field trips. Particular attention will be focused on the contributions of the Five Pillars, namely, the *Shahada* (proclamation of Oneness), *Salat* (ritual prayers), *Zakat* (almsgiving), *Sawm* (fasting during *Ramadan*), and *Hajj* (pilgrimage to Mecca) to the process of building community in Islam and promoting social justice.

Course Objectives

The purpose of this course is to investigate the foundations and expressions of social justice in Islam, and to develop an understanding of the social and communal implications of the Five Pillars both within Islam and through interfaith dialogue. The course will focus specifically on the development of consciousness towards racial, social, economic, and gender justice in Islam by demonstrating the qualities and commandments within the Five Pillars that theologically encourage Muslims to work for just and sustainable communities. It will cover historical and modern examples of social justice work that has been and continues to be promoted through the Five Pillars and Islam in general.

Course Requirements

You are expected to attend all classes and engage in class discussions, having prepared the reading materials for the week. Each week, we will look at a contemporary issue in Islam by referring to articles, film and music clips, and other multimedia examples, and then have a short lecture on the week's theme from the readings and a class discussion. It is important that you come to class having prepared the readings as we will be building on the themes of the assignments in our lectures and discussions. Excused absences must be cleared with the instructor.

Each week, you are required to write a one- to two-page (double-spaced) reflection paper on the reading. What did you learn from this reading? How did you react to it? How has it informed you about Islam, Muslim cultures, and social justice, or challenged perceptions you may have had? **You are not required to turn in reflection papers on the weeks of the quizzes, book report due date, reading week, or the final paper due date.** In

addition, we will periodically have short quizzes on Islamic terminology and key concepts to better understand major terms and themes.

For the book review, you will select either *The Autobiography of Malcom X*, by Malcolm X and Alex Haley, or *A Border Passage: From Cairo to America – A Woman’s Journey*, by Leila Ahmed. **We will read and discuss both books for the course, but you will select one for your book report.** In 500-700 words, you will summarize the book and give your own reflections on its themes and how it informs you about Muslim cultures. What have you learned? How has this book challenged or reinforced your understanding of Muslim cultures and social justice? Has it inspired you to investigate more? Each of these books is a powerful articulation of race, class, and either African-American Islam or gender in Islam; what do you think makes them so compelling?

The final paper for the course is a group research project on one of the Five Pillars of Islam in relation to social justice. The goal for this project is for you have an opportunity to do academic research on Islam and social justice as well as to meet Muslims and talk to them about their tradition and activities. After selecting one of the Five Pillars, you will create a group project that illustrates some of the ways that the pillar has been or is being practiced to further a cause within the field of social justice. As a group of 4-5 students, you will put together a 15-20 page portfolio of your research that can include academic research on your topic, interviews that you may have conducted with community members, different forms of media that you may have come across, or other areas to be discussed in class. Your group will be required to give a short presentation on your topic to the class.

The grading for the class will be based on these areas:

*Class participation and attendance – 10%*

*Reflection papers – 20%*

*Quizzes – 20%*

*Book Review – 20%*

*Final Paper and Presentation – 30%*

### GTU Policy Statement on Plagiarism

Please refer to the GTU policy statement on plagiarism for guidelines on academic research and plagiarism.

### GTU Guidelines on Disability

If you have a disability or requirement for special needs either inside or outside of the classroom, please make your needs clear both to the instructor and the GTU center for disabilities, in accordance with the GTU guidelines on disability.

## Course Readings

### *Books:*

Ahmed, Leila. *A Border Passage: From Cairo to America – A Woman's Journey*. New York: Penguin Books, 1999. (\$15.00 – ISBN #9780140291834)

Safi, Omid, ed. *Progressive Muslims: On Justice, Gender, and Pluralism*. Oxford: OneWorld, 2003. (\$25.95 – ISBN #185168316X)

X, Malcolm and Alex Haley. *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1965. (\$7.99 – ISBN #0345350685)

### *Handouts will be presented from:*

El Fadl, Khaled Abou et al. *The Place of Tolerance in Islam*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2002.

Murata, Sachiko and William C. Chittick. *The Vision of Islam*. New York: Paragon House, 1994.

Qutb, Sayyid. *Social Justice in Islam*. Translated by John B. Hardie and revised by Hamid Algar. Oneonta: Islamic Publications International, 2000.

Course Schedule

| <b>Date</b> | <b>Readings and Assignments</b>  |
|-------------|--|
| Week 1      | Class Intro – No readings due for this week  |
| Week 2      | Murata & Chittick – “Chapter 1: The Five Pillars”<br>Qutb – “Introduction,” “Chapter 2: The Nature of Social Justice in Islam”   |
| Week 3      | Qutb – “Chapter 3: The Foundations of Social Justice in Islam”<br>X – <i>The Autobiography of Malcolm X</i>  |
| Week 4      | Qutb – “Chapter 4: The Methods of Social Justice in Islam”<br>X – <i>The Autobiography of Malcolm X</i><br><b>***GROUP SELECTIONS DUE***</b>   |
| Week 5      | Safi – “Introduction: <i>The Times They Are A-Changin’</i> – A Muslim Quest for Justice, Gender Equality, and Pluralism” (Safi)<br>X – <i>The Autobiography of Malcolm X</i><br>Ahmed – <i>A Border Passage: From Cairo to America – A Woman’s Journey</i>                           |
| Week 6      | Safi - “Chapter 1: The Ugly Modern and the Modern Ugly: Reclaiming the Beautiful in Islam” (El Fadl), “Chapter 2: In Search of Progressive Islam Beyond 9/11” (Esack)<br>Ahmed – <i>A Border Passage: From Cairo to America – A Woman’s Journey</i>                                  |
| Week 7      | Safi – “Chapter 3: Islam: A Civilizational Project in Progress” (Karamustafa), “Chapter 6: Transforming Feminism: Islam, Women and Gender Justice” (Shaikh)<br>Ahmed – <i>A Border Passage: From Cairo to America – A Woman’s Journey</i><br><b>***GROUP TOPIC SELECTIONS DUE***</b> |
| Week 8      | <b>READING WEEK – NO CLASS</b>   |
| Week 9      | El Fadl – “The Place of Tolerance in Islam”<br>Safi – “Chapter 10: Muslims, Pluralism and Interfaith Dialogue” (Hussein)<br><b>***BOOK REPORTS DUE***</b>  |
| Week 10     | Safi – “Chapter 11: American Muslim Identity: Race and Ethnicity in Progressive Islam” (Wadud), “Chapter 13: How To Put the Genie Back in the Bottle? ‘Identity’ Islam and Muslim Youth Cultures in America” (Hermansen)   |
| Week 11     | Group projects   |
| Week 12     | Group projects   |
| Week 13     | <b>GROUP PRESENTATIONS</b>   |
| Week 14     | <b>GROUP PRESENTATIONS</b>   |
| Week 15     | <b>GROUP PRESENTATIONS</b>   |
| Week 16     | <b>***FINAL PAPERS DUE***</b>  |

### Supplementary Websites

[www.isna.org](http://www.isna.org) (Islamic Society of North America)

[www.islamicfinder.org](http://www.islamicfinder.org) (Information about Islam)

[www.usc.edu/dept/MSA/quran/](http://www.usc.edu/dept/MSA/quran/) (USC online translations of the Qur'an)

[www.zaytuna.org](http://www.zaytuna.org) (Zaytuna College, first accredited Muslim college in the United States)

[www.ing.org](http://www.ing.org) (Islamic Networks Group, educational presentations and dialogue about Islam)

### Supplementary Readings

Ahmed, Leila. *A Border Passage: From Cairo to America – A Woman's Journey*. New York: Penguin Books, 1999.

Ahmed, Leila. *Women and Gender in Islam*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992.

Ali, Abdullah Yusuf, trans. *The Meaning of the Holy Qur'an*. Beltsville, MD: Amana Publications, 2004.

Armstrong, Karen. *Islam: A Short History*. New York: Modern Library, 2002.

Armstrong, Karen. *Muhammad: A Biography of the Prophet*. San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1992.

Chittick, William C. *Sufism: A Short Introduction*. Oxford: OneWorld, 2000.

Dannin, Robert. *Black Pilgrimage to Islam*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Esposito, John L. *Islam: The Straight Path*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.

Esposito, John L. and Dalia Mogahed. *Who Speaks for Islam? What a Billion Muslims Really Think*. New York: Gallup Press, 2007.

Nasr, Seyyed Hossein. *Islam: Religion, History, and Civilization*. New York: HarperCollins, 2003.

Schimmel, Annemarie. *Islam: An Introduction*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992.

Turner, Richard B. *Islam in the African-American Experience*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003.

Wadud, Amina. *Qur'an and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

X, Malcolm and Alex Haley. *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1965.