

RELI 3320 • ISLAM SYLLABUS

Instructor: Jae Jerkins
University of Texas at Tyler

Course Syllabus
Spring 2026 Edition

INSTRUCTOR INFO

Email: jjerkins@uttyler.edu

Office: Online Only

Office Hours: Over Zoom, Weekday Evenings, by appointment only

COURSE OVERVIEW | RELI3320

- This is an introductory course that studies the origins, content, and meaning of the religion of Islam by looking at the primary literature of Islam — including the Qur'an and Hadith, as well as secondary texts to explain their meaning in a scholarly context.
- Prerequisites: None

REQUIRED TEXTS | RELI 3320

The Quran (Oxford University Press), 2016 | ISBN 0199535957

No god but God, 2011 | ISBN 0812982444

Destiny Interrupted, 2010 | ISBN 9781586488130

Understanding the Quran, 2016 | ISBN 1845117891

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES | RELI 3320

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to...

1. Read and analyze religious (Islamic) texts.
2. Demonstrate knowledge of the beliefs, practices, values, and terminology of Islam.
3. Trace the historical developments and cultural expressions of Islam.
4. Articulate key conceptual distinctions in Islam.
5. Communicate an understanding of Islam in writing.
6. Communicate ways of living responsibly in a world where people have diverse religious beliefs

EVALUATION METHODS | RELI 3320

- There are 4 Modules:
 - The Rise of Islam (I), The Quran (II), The Golden Age (III), & Islam & Modernity (IV).
- Instructions for assignments can be found by clicking their respective links on the Modules page
- Due dates for all assignments can be found on the Course Homepage & Course Calendar
- For each of the four modules, there will be an assigned paper of at least 750 words (3-4 pages)
 - The lowest grade of these four papers will be dropped from your final course grade
- At the end of the course, you will also have a Cultural Experience paper (250 words)
 - This grade cannot be dropped
- There are 15 assigned quizzes, each worth 3% of your course grade, and a Research and Writing quiz worth 5% of your course grade

These policies are a guide for the course and are subject to change with advance notice.

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- Your final course grade is the sum of your 15 Quizzes (45%), 3 Module Papers (45%), your Cultural Experience Paper (5%), and your Research & Writing quiz (5%)
- As your lowest Module Paper grade is dropped from your course grade, this course does not offer extra credit and only offers assignment extensions for very rare, bonafide, valid emergencies.

ASSIGNMENTS for RELI 3320

Quizzes: Each quiz is worth 3% of your overall course grade. Quizzes will cover key terms from the readings assigned for each section. These quizzes will include multiple choice, true/false, and/or matching questions. Section Quizzes include 10 questions and are open book/open note. You will have two attempts to take quizzes, with the highest score being kept.

Quizzes must be completed, not merely begun, before the deadline. Starting a quiz before the deadline does not satisfy the requirement: every attempt you want counted must be fully completed and submitted before the deadline passes.

Quiz questions are presented one at a time, and you are permitted to go back and revisit earlier questions within the same attempt. Quizzes are time-limited at an average of about one minute per question — quizzes move quickly, so plan to know the material rather than look it up as you go.

AI use is prohibited on all quizzes.

Papers: Each paper (750 words minimum) will be worth 15% of your overall course grade and the lowest paper grade will be dropped. The purpose of each paper will be to illustrate a thorough understanding of concepts from the course. To earn an A, papers should primarily engage course material, but will also require some outside research. Paper must use proper citations and include a Works Cited that conforms to MLA format.

Cultural Experience Paper: Students will select one of the following two cultural experiences to complete. The Cultural Experience Paper will be worth 5% of your overall course grade. The Cultural Experience Paper should be at least 250 words and should be a personal reflection of one of the two following experiences.

Option 1: Visit a mosque (Tyler has two) and write a personal reflection of your experience.

Option 2: Watch a movie from the provided list and write a reflection of the film.

Movies authorized for Option 2 include:

- The Message, 1976
- Malcolm X, 1992
- Children of Heaven, 1997
- Syriana, 2005
- Persepolis, 2007
- Traitor, 2008
- The Light in Her Eyes, 2011
- The Reluctant Fundamentalist, 2012
- Wadjda, 2012
- He Named Me Malala, 2015
- The Breadwinner, 2017
- Hala, 2019

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If you have another movie you would like to review, you must contact me *at least three weeks before the due date* to ask permission for your choice for the Cultural Experience Paper. Your email should include a clear argument for your movie of choice, specifically highlighting the ways in which it relates to the course.

Grading Scale | A: 90-100; B: 80-89; C: 70-79; D: 60-69; F: below 60.

No extra credit is offered, but one Research Paper is dropped from the final course grade.

GENERAL COMPUTER USE STANDARDS

- Online coursework requires a webcam and daily access to high-speed Internet & Google Chrome
- Students are responsible for maintaining access to all required tools, technology, and materials.
 - Deadline extensions will not be granted due to technical issues or loss of Internet access
 - See Distance Education Standards for details
- My Email Hours are 9am – 3pm, Monday through Friday (excluding holidays)
- Emails sent after 3pm or on weekends will not receive a response until the next business day.
 - Note: I will not be available at night (when assignments are due) to answer emails. Plan to work—and ask questions—well ahead of deadlines.
- Online correspondence must be respectful and professional, akin to a business or legal communication. Inappropriate behavior will result in immediate disciplinary action.
- Students must use their official school email to verify their identity. Please include the course and section number in the subject line to indicate which grade book you're in.
- Students must maintain the necessary technical skills, equipment, and Internet access to complete this online course.
- Internet outages are a risk for anyone working online. Plan to work well ahead of deadlines to mitigate this risk.

DISTANCE EDUCATION STANDARDS

- UT Tyler requires daily access to a computer with high-speed Internet for online courses.
- Students are responsible for meeting all course requirements, including submitting assignments on time, regardless of location. No exceptions will be made due to travel, residence, or technical issues, as Internet access is fundamental to this course.
- If your location prevents you from meeting all course expectations due to limited Internet access, travel disruptions, paperwork delays, or technical problems such as power or Internet outages, I recommend withdrawing and retaking the course when you can offer the course your full participation. Extensions will not be granted for these issues.
- For technical concerns related to Canvas or other online issues, promptly contact the appropriate support service before assignment deadlines. You may email itsupport@uttyler.edu or go by the University Service Center, USC 118 (3410 Varsity Dr) for technical assistance.
- Enrollment in this course confirms your ability to meet all online requirements—including participating in scheduled Zoom meetings (which require high-speed Internet) if deemed necessary by your instructor.

LATE GRADING POLICY

These policies are a guide for the course and are subject to change with advance notice.

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All assignment deadlines are listed on the Course Homepage and the Course Calendar. Due dates for all assignments are firm. Quizzes must be completed before their deadlines and are ineligible for credit after the deadline has passed. Writing assignments may be accepted late with a 10% grade reduction per hour. That is, if an assignment is due before 11pm and it's turned in between 11pm and 11:59, it loses 10%. (Yes, submitting at 11:00:00 pm CST is late.) Midnight to 12:59 is an additional 10%, and so on. Assignments turned in more than ten hours late (without a valid excuse) are not eligible for credit.

Be aware that successfully managing your time and digital life are significant parts of your grade. If you choose to wait until the last day to submit an assignment, then you risk something occurring that prevents you from submitting it successfully. This is your choice and your risk to manage. But please know when you're deciding how to spend your time that a last-minute emergency will not grant you an extension. Again, the due dates for all assignments are firm.

GRANTING LATE WORK EXTENSIONS

While rare, excused absences for an online course must be negotiated with the instructor the *first weekday* you are available. Valid reasons for excused absences include an **unscheduled emergency hospital visit** for you or a dependent, a documented **childcare emergency**, lifecycle events (eg. weddings and funerals), **a crime or vehicular collision** (eg. robbery, assault, car wreck), **jury duty**, or mandatory **military service**. *This is the level of emergency that will be excused for missing a deadline.*

- All absences require an official note of absence, if requested, to be excused (eg. a hospital note or police report)
- Official college functions are excusable *before* due dates with a college sponsor's email
- Make-up work *must* be completed within 7 days of a student's absence
- All make-up work must be completed before Finals Week begins
- Unexcused absences include traveling, vacations, business trips, mission trips, or extending your travel plans into Final Exams. You will also not be given an extension due to poor planning, general transportation issues (eg. missed ride/flat tire/dead battery/other non-emergency vehicle concerns), computer problems, legal action, an illness for which you don't have a doctor's note, or changes in responsibilities at home, work, or school. Extensions will also not be granted due to work schedules, lack of technical knowledge, lack of research or writing ability, lack of good judgment, or because you found the course materials confusing — come by office hours or email me before a deadline to clear up any confusion. These policies aim to keep our course fair and consistent for everyone.

GENERAL SCHEDULE | RELI 3320

See the Course Homepage for an updated, detailed schedule

Module 1: The Rise of Islam

Week 1: Normativity & Religion: A Primer on Method

Week 2: Pre-Islamic Arabia & Muhammad (Aslan ch.1-2)

Week 3: Jihad & the Holy City of Medina (Aslan ch.3-4)

Week 4: After Muhammad (Aslan ch.5, Ansary ch.4)

Week 5: Kalam & Shia Islam (Aslan ch.6-7)

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Module 2: The Qur'an

Week 6: Philosophy & the Qur'an (Haleem ch.1-3)

Week 7: Qur'anic Ethics: War & Tolerance (Haleem ch.5-6)

Week 8: Qur'anic Ontology: Evil & the Afterlife (Haleem ch.7-8)

Module 3: The Golden Age

Week 9: Umayyads & Abbasids (Ansary ch.5-6)

Week 10: Islamic Intellectualism & Mysticism (Ansary ch.7, Aslan ch.8)

Week 11: Invasions East & West (Ansary ch.8-9)

Module 4: Islam & Modernity

Week 12: Europe & the Three Empires (1300–1850) (Ansary ch.10-12)

Week 13: Philosophical Responses to Modernity (Ansary ch.13-14)

Week 14: The Islamic World Today (Ansary ch.15-17 & Afterword)

COURSE AI POLICY

UT Tyler is committed to exploring and using artificial intelligence (AI) tools as appropriate for the discipline and task undertaken. We encourage discussing AI tools' ethical, societal, philosophical, and disciplinary implications. All uses of AI should be acknowledged as this aligns with our commitment to honor and integrity, as noted in UT Tyler's Honor Code. Faculty and students must not use protected information, data, or copyrighted materials when using any AI tool. Additionally, users should be aware that AI tools rely on predictive models to generate content that may appear correct but is sometimes shown to be incomplete, inaccurate, taken without attribution from other sources, and/or biased. Consequently, an AI tool should not be considered a substitute for traditional approaches to research. You are ultimately responsible for the quality and content of the information you submit. Misusing AI tools that violate the guidelines specified for this course (see below) is considered a breach of academic integrity. The student will be subject to disciplinary actions as outlined in UT Tyler's Academic Integrity Policy.

AI is permitted only for specific assignments or situations, and appropriate acknowledgment is required. This course has specific assignments where artificial intelligence (AI) tools (such as ChatGPT or Copilot) are permitted and encouraged. When AI use is permissible, it will be clearly stated in the assignment directions, and all use of AI must be appropriately acknowledged and cited. *Otherwise, the default is that AI is not allowed during any stage of an assignment.*

RELIGION in PUBLIC SCHOOL

This course does not seek to establish, reproduce, or legitimize any particular sectarian view of religion (cf. [Abington v. Schempp, 1963](#)). Rather, **we will aim for an academically rich, religiously neutral, nonsectarian view of religion.** This course will explore religion broadly — for its historical and cultural value, not in a devotional, celebratory, or doctrinal manner (cf. [Doe v. Human, 1989](#)). Our course lectures aim for objective, non-sectarian, research-based analysis. *Your class comments and written assignments are expected to reflect these scholarly ideals.* Rest assured, I will not evaluate your work based on your personal beliefs or lack thereof.

ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

A first case of academic dishonesty (eg. plagiarism, group work, inappropriate use of AI) will earn you a zero for the assignment. A second case earns you an automatic "F" for the course. Plagiarized posts may be sent to *UT Tyler Judicial Affairs* to receive additional consequences. In short, do your own work, and be careful to give credit to the original author when you quote or paraphrase. You may use A.I. to study in this course, but you cannot use it to write your post for you. You must be the sole author of your posts.