

# Fundamentalism and Islam

Aun Hasan Ali  
aun.ali@colorado.edu

Spring 2017 RLST 3060-001  
TTh 11:00-12:15 STAD 135

Office Hours: F 5:00-6:00 HUMN 288

## Course Description

The course is divided into three parts. In the first part of the course, we will explore three sets of questions: (1) “What are the local, regional and global contexts for, and triggers of, the emergence of fiercely antimodernist and antiseccular movements from within virtually every major world religion in the twentieth century? Under what conditions have such movements grown and gained momentum? What factors precipitate their hibernation, decline, or disappearance?” (2) “What characteristics do these movements share across religious, cultural, and political borders? ...[Is] it possible, and appropriate, to understand fundamentalism as a singular phenomenon?” and (3) “[Are] fundamentalist movements, whatever their places of origin and everyday activity, capable of extending their influence transnationally?”

In the second part of the course, we will examine a significant Muslim scholar’s diagnosis of the problem in contemporary Islam. Abou El Fadl uses the case of an American Muslim basketball player who refused to stand for the national anthem to examine, “the disintegration of the Islamic juristic tradition, and the prevalence of authoritarianism in contemporary Muslim discourses.” He, “analyzes the rise of what he describes as puritan and despotic trends in modern Islam, and asserts that such trends nullify the richness and diversity of the Islamic tradition... Ultimately, the author asserts that in order to respect the integrity of the Divine Law, it is necessary to adopt rigorous analytical methodologies of interpretation, and to re-investigate the place of morality in modern Islam.”

In the third part of the course, we will return to the question of the relationship between modernity and fundamentalism. We will read an essay in which the author, a notable scholar of European thought, argues that the terrorist organization al-Qaeda and others like it are actually by-products of modernization. In other words, the principal cause of al-Qaeda is the phenomenon we call modernization, not Islam. Throughout the course, we will engage with our authors’ theses in a critical manner.

## Learning Goals

In terms of skills, students who take this course will improve their ability to analyze primary sources, and to glean important facts, main ideas, and central arguments from a large amount of material. Students will improve their expository writing. This includes the ability to construct a cogent argument and support it with evidence. Students will learn to evaluate different kinds of evidence and use it appropriately. Students will learn how to use important resources in the fields of Islamic and Religious Studies, and to cite different sources correctly. Finally, students will improve their ability to express themselves orally.

In terms of content, students will be able to express an informed opinion about what Fundamentalism is. Furthermore, students will be able to identify and discuss important causes of Fundamentalism, especially Islamic Fundamentalism. Students will also demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between modernity and Fundamentalism.

## Evaluation

**Essay:** 20% of your final grade will be determined on the basis of a short essay. I will provide you with guidelines for the essay. The essay should be 2 pages in length and written in 12-point Times New Roman font, 1.5 spacing with 1 inch margins. Your grade will be based on the following criteria:

1. In order to get an A (100%), your essay should be polished. This means citing sources correctly in footnotes. *For the purposes of this class, you must use Turabian's method.*<sup>1</sup> It also means following the instructions I have given you with regard to formatting, and having very few grammatical, spelling and stylistic mistakes.
2. Excellent unpolished essays will get a B (85%). An excellent essay is one in which the author presents a cogent, well-organized argument. The author uses examples *from assigned readings* to illustrate her points, and these examples are accompanied by explanation or analysis. An excellent essay also exhibits an awareness of its own limitations or implications, and considers counterevidence and counterarguments when appropriate.
3. Satisfactory essays will get a C (75%). A satisfactory essay is one that meets the criteria for a B except that the examples cited are accompanied by poor explanation or analysis. A satisfactory essay does not exhibit an awareness of its own limitations or implications, and does not consider counterevidence and counterarguments.
4. Below-average essays will get a D (65%). A below-average essay is disorganized, lacks a cogent argument, does not cite examples from assigned readings, and does not provide explanation or analysis of examples.

**Bibliography:** 15% of your final grade will be determined on the basis of a bibliography.

**Attendance and Participation:** 15% of your final grade will be determined on the basis of attendance. In order to receive credit for attending class, you must submit a colored notecard with your name and the answer to two questions: what was the most important thing you learned today? and what question still remains in your mind?<sup>2</sup> *Print legibly.* You can miss one class without incurring a penalty. Thereafter, your attendance grade will drop one letter grade for each class you miss (A-, B+, B, B-, etc.). The success of this course depends on your participation. If you have a legitimate reason such as a personal or family emergency, contact me (preferably prior to missing class). I can be reached by email. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to find out what you missed, including any changes in the syllabus, and to schedule a meeting with me to review what you missed. *Please note that, in addition to attendance, you are required to be present.* Indications that you are present include: eye contact with your professor and classmates, sharing your ideas, asking questions, taking notes, and responsive facial expressions. Indications that you are not present include: lack of preparation, repeatedly glancing at the clock, sleeping, and distracting the class.

**Midterm Exam:** 25% of your final grade will be determined on the basis of a midterm exam.

**Final Exam:** 25% of your final grade will be determined on the basis of a final exam.

Final grades will be based on the university's standard grading system: 93% = A, 90% = A-, 87% = B+, 83% = B, 80% = B-, 77% = C+, 73% = C, 70% = C-, 67% = D+, 60% = D.

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<sup>1</sup> For examples, see "Turabian Quick Guide" Kate L. Turabian 8th Edition: A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations, accessed May 12, 2016, <[http://www.press.uchicago.edu/books/turabian/turabian\\_citationguide.html](http://www.press.uchicago.edu/books/turabian/turabian_citationguide.html)>.

<sup>2</sup> In the field of pedagogy, this is a tried-and-true technique made famous by Thomas A. Angelo and K. Patricia Cross in their book *Classroom Assessment Techniques: A Handbook for College Teachers*, 2nd ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1993).

## Readings

You are required to purchase the following books:

Abou El Fadl, Khaled M. *And God Knows the Soldiers: The Authoritative and Authoritarian in Islamic Discourse*. Lanham: University Press of America, Inc., 2001.

Almond, Gabriel A., R. Scott Appleby, and Emmanuel Sivan. *Strong Religion: The Rise of Fundamentalisms around the World*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003.

Gray, John. *Al Qaeda and What It Means to Be Modern*. New York: The New Press, 2003.

These books are available for purchase at the CU Bookstore.

## Rules

**Cell phones should be turned off before class begins and laptops are banned unless you have a compelling reason.<sup>3</sup>**

I will not accept late work without prior arrangement. If you have an emergency that may jeopardize your ability to complete your work on time, please contact me ASAP so we can try to work something out.

For the purposes of this class, email should be treated as a formal means of communication. When replying to or sending emails, write in proper English and do not use phonetic language, such as abbreviated words and symbols that are commonly used in text messages. Check spelling, punctuation, and grammar. Address me in email and in person as "Professor Ali." Always include a greeting and sign your name. You are responsible for regularly checking your university email and D2L. Consistent inattention to email etiquette may affect your grade. Remember that email, like your other interactions with me, is an opportunity for you to demonstrate your competency. Lastly, the subject of your email must be "RLST 3060-001: the issue you wish to discuss." **I will not read unprofessional emails or emails the subject of which is not "RLST 3060-001: the issue you wish to discuss."**

## FAQs

Q: I missed class. Did you cover anything important?

A: Yes. If I didn't have anything important to cover, I would have cancelled class.

Q: I tried really hard in this class; why didn't I get a good grade?

A: Trying hard doesn't always help. Earning a good grade results from any number of strategies, including efficient time management, adhering to instructions, and seeking help when you need it.

Q: I need to pass this class in order to graduate. It's *really* important to me. What can I do?

A: You should have this conversation with me at the beginning of the semester, not the end.

Q: I'd like to discuss a grade I received on my paper, but I haven't reviewed the instructions for the assignment or the paper itself since I submitted it; will we be able to have a productive conversation?

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<sup>3</sup> A study published in *Psychological Science* indicates that laptop note taking is less effective than longhand note taking for learning. See Cindi May, "A Learning Secret: Don't Take Notes with a Laptop: Students who used longhand remembered more and had a deeper understanding of the material," *Scientific American*, accessed May 12, 2016, <<http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/a-learning-secret-don-t-take-notes-with-a-laptop/>>.

A: No. If you want to discuss your grade, you need to review your work, my feedback, and the assignment itself before we talk.

Q: Can you tell when I'm on my phone in class?

A: Yes.

Q: Really?

A: Yes.

## **Tentative Schedule<sup>4</sup>**

T Jan. 17: Introduction to the course.

Th Jan. 19: *Strong Religion*, 1-21.

T Jan. 24: *The Myth of the Secular*, Part One

(<http://www.davidcayley.com/podcasts/?category=Myth+of+the+Secular>).

Th Jan. 26: K. Armstrong, "The myth of religious violence"

(<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/sep/25/-sp-karen-armstrong-religious-violence-myth-secular>) and D. A. Yerxa, "The Myth of Religious Violence: An Interview with William Cavanaugh" (D2L).

T Jan. 31: *On Violence and Religion*, Parts One and Two

(<http://www.davidcayley.com/podcasts?category=Ren%C3%A9+Girard>).

Th Feb. 2: *Strong Religion*, 23-46.

T Feb. 7: *Strong Religion*, 46-75.

Th Feb. 9: *Strong Religion*, 75-89.

T Feb. 14: *Strong Religion*, 90-115.

Th Feb. 16: *Strong Religion*, 116-144.

T Feb. 21: *Strong Religion*, 145-168.

Th Feb. 23: *Strong Religion*, 168-190.

T Feb. 28: *Strong Religion*, 191-209.

Th March 2: *Strong Religion*, 209-219.

T March 7: *Strong Religion*, 220-243.

Th March 9: **Midterm Exam. Bibliography is due.**

T March 14: *And God Knows The Soldiers*, 1-36.

Th March 16: *By The Dawn's Early Light: Chris Jackson's Journey to Islam* (in-class) and Z. Grewal, "Limits On Muslims' Sportswear Or Political Speech? Between Olympic Ideals And The Protest Legacies Of Muhammad Ali and Mahmoud Abdul-Rauf"

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<sup>4</sup> I reserve the right to make changes to the schedule, including due dates.

([http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/limits-on-muslims-sportswear-or-limits-on-muslims\\_us\\_57bdea2de4b06384eb3decb6](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/limits-on-muslims-sportswear-or-limits-on-muslims_us_57bdea2de4b06384eb3decb6)).

T March 21: *And God Knows The Soldiers*, 37-53,

Th March 23: *And God Knows The Soldiers*, 54-82.

### **T March 28 and Th March 30: No Class**

T April 4: *And God Knows The Soldiers*, 83-91. **Writing Workshop.**

Th April 6: *And God Knows The Soldiers*, 93-108.

T April 11: *And God Knows The Soldiers*, 108-127.

Th April 13: *And God Knows The Soldiers*, 128-156.

T April 18: *Al Qaeda and What It Means to Be Modern*, 1-26.

Th April 20: *Al Qaeda and What It Means to Be Modern*, 27-58.

T April 25: *Al Qaeda and What It Means to Be Modern*, 59-84.

Th April 27: *Al Qaeda and What It Means to Be Modern*, 85-100. **Writing Workshop.**

T May 2: *Al Qaeda and What It Means to Be Modern*, 101-119.

Th May 4: Conclusions. **Essays are due.**

**Final Exam: Monday, May 8, 4:30 – 7:00 pm.**

### **Accommodation for Disabilities**

If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit to your professor a letter from Disability Services in a timely manner (for exam accommodations provide your letter at least one week prior to the exam) so that your needs can be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities. Contact Disability Services at 303-492-8671 or by e-mail at [dsinfo@colorado.edu](mailto:dsinfo@colorado.edu). If you have a temporary medical condition or injury, see [Temporary Injuries guidelines](#) under the Quick Links at the [Disability Services website](#) and discuss your needs with your professor.

### **Religious Holidays**

Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to deal reasonably and fairly with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. Please submit requests for such exemptions in writing at least one week before the date in question. See [campus policy regarding religious observances](#) for full details.

### **Classroom Behavior**

Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Those who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, color, culture, religion, creed, politics, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender,

gender identity and gender expression, age, disability, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. For more information, see the [policies on classroom behavior](#) and [the student code](#).

### **Discrimination and Harassment**

The University of Colorado Boulder (CU-Boulder) is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working, and living environment. CU-Boulder will not tolerate acts of sexual misconduct, discrimination, harassment or related retaliation against or by any employee or student. CU's Sexual Misconduct Policy prohibits sexual assault, sexual exploitation, sexual harassment, intimate partner abuse (dating or domestic violence), stalking or related retaliation. CU-Boulder's Discrimination and Harassment Policy prohibits discrimination, harassment or related retaliation based on race, color, national origin, sex, pregnancy, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, veteran status, political affiliation or political philosophy. Individuals who believe they have been subject to misconduct under either policy should contact the Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance (OIEC) at 303-492-2127. Information about the OIEC, the above referenced policies, and the campus resources available to assist individuals regarding sexual misconduct, discrimination, harassment or related retaliation can be found at the [OIEC website](#).

### **Honor Code**

All students enrolled in a University of Colorado Boulder course are responsible for knowing and adhering to [the academic integrity policy](#) of the institution. Violations of the policy may include: plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, lying, bribery, threat, unauthorized access, clicker fraud, resubmission, and aiding academic dishonesty. All incidents of academic misconduct will be reported to the Honor Code Council ([honor@colorado.edu](mailto:honor@colorado.edu); 303-735-2273). Students who are found responsible of violating the academic integrity policy will be subject to nonacademic sanctions from the Honor Code Council as well as academic sanctions from the faculty member. Additional information regarding the academic integrity policy can be found at <http://honorcode.colorado.edu>.