

Christianity and Islam: 600–1100 AD/493 AH

Syllabus

Overview

In the year 610, according to the Christian calendar, one of the more momentous events in Christianity's history took place, even though not a Christian was present to witness it. In an isolated cave outside of Mecca, a city of the Arabian peninsula that few Christians had reason to know, a caravan trader by the name of Muhammad began receiving visits from an entity he knew as the archangel Gabriel. This visitor had a new revelation from God, he said, and Muhammad was to be the new prophet. Moreover, he was to be God's final prophet.

Barely a half-century later, Christians everywhere had become all too aware of this new faith: Islam. Muslim forces had toppled the last incarnation of the Persian Empire, shocked the Eastern Roman Empire with several defeats, and occupied the most revered of Christianity's historical sites: Jerusalem, Alexandria, Damascus, Antioch. And the peril only grew throughout the seventh century: Spain was invaded and occupied, France threatened, Rome itself raided, and Constantinople besieged multiple times. One question dominated the minds of Christians as they tried to deal with this new force, a question still in Christian minds even if now phrased more politely: who were these devils, and why had they come to plague Christendom? For five centuries, even while they slowly stemmed the Islamic momentum and began themselves to push against now-Islamic heartlands, Christians tried to understand this rival faith. Simultaneously, and especially after it became clear that Christians and Jews were not going to enter wholesale the Islamic fold, Muslim thinkers spent much time explaining the relationship of their faith to the other heirs of Abraham's covenant.

This 500-year period will be our focus. We will start with an overview of Christendom—the organization of the Church in both East and West along with a look at the important role played by both coenobite and anchorite monasticism. As the church's primary thinkers and writers, the presuppositions of these men toward the world and toward Islam will be critical. Our scene will then shift to the Arabian peninsula for an examination of the conditions out of which came Islam, including the question of Jewish and Christian influences on Muhammad. Of course, the heart of the course really comes with the expansion of Islam and its collision with Christianity. At that point, we will begin to examine how each faith formed its image of the other, the distortion of those images, occasional clarifying of such pictures, and we will track how some of these ideas still inform/twist dialogue between Christian and Muslim to this day. Our study will conclude with the First Crusade: its genesis, course, and immediate aftermath, but especially its continuing legacy.

Texts and Reading:

- Lewis, Bernard. *Islam from the Prophet Muhammad to the Capture of Constantinople*
Busse, Heribert. *Islam, Judaism, and Christianity*.
Cragg, Kenneth and R. Marston Speight. *The House of Islam*.
Hinson, E. Glenn. *The Church Triumphant*.

We will have a large amount of reading besides the above texts. Every week a select few among you will be responsible for reading certain monographs or articles. Besides preparing a written review for your classmates, you will also lead the class for a brief period in a presentation of the author’s argument and how it fits in—or not—with other interpretations of the historical record. Thus, you may count on reading an additional two or three works for this course, plus the occasional handout.

Let me stress that while I will be presenting a good bit of material in lectures, we will give time in every class period to discussion. Since informed participation will be part of your final grade, come to class prepared to discuss the reading assignments.

Week	Lecture/Discussion Topics	Reading Schedule
1	W: Course Introduction; 1 st Assignments	Busse, 1-8; Cragg, 1-18
	F: Byzantium and Persia	Hinson: 117-25, 185-203
2	M: Eastern Spirituality	Hinson: 216-8, 226-7, 245-56
	W: Western Christendom	Hinson: 218-21, 228-33, 257-80, 293-303
	F: The Church Evangelical	Hinson: 216-25, 283-292
3	M: Mecca before <i>Lailat al-Qadar</i> and The Person of the Prophet	Busse, 9-25; Cragg, 19-21; Kennedy Handout: “Birth of the Islamic State”, 15-30
	W: Mecca: Revelation and Resistance (Christian Influences?)	Busse, 26-8; Cragg, 21-28; “Birth,” 30-33
	F: Medina: Implementing Islam (Jewish Influences?)	“Birth,” 33-49; Busse, 29-49
4	M: Expansion I: In the Political Arena	Lewis, I:209-241; Donner Handout: “Foundations,” 75-90
	W: Expansion II: Religious Offensives	Peters, 22-34, 161-5; Busse, 49-55, 113-137
	F: Expansion III: Dividing a Heritage	Cragg, 72-81; Lewis, I:20-22; Peters, 122-131
5	M: Mid-term Exam	
	W: Christendom Reacts: Introspection	Hinson, 304-319
	F: Christendom Reacts: Villifying the Saracen dog/pagan/infidel	“The Death of Vivien” from <i>Four French Epics</i> ; Selections from <i>Roland</i> and <i>The Chronicle of Theophanes</i> .

6	M: <i>Dar al-Islam</i> and <i>Dar al-harb</i> : Dealing with People of the Book	Busse, 55-62, 139-147; Cragg, 81-85; Peters, 154-157, Lewis, II: 217-228
	W: Thanksgiving Break	
	F: Thanksgiving Break (still!)	☺ Go buy Dr. Isaac's Christmas Gifts ☺
7	M: Islam's heritage: Qu'ran, <i>hadith</i> and Muhammad's life	Cragg, 29-37, 42-49; Lewis, II: 1-3, 33-35; Peters, 193-195, 198-201, 212-226
	W: Umayyads, Abbasids, and Culture	Cragg, 86-91; Lewis, II: 177-181, 261-278
	F: Western Sunrise: the Cordoba Caliphate and Irish "civilization"	Cragg, 91-94; Marnell handout
8	M: Recovery in the West: Cluny, the Papacy, and Surplus Feudal Energy	Hinson, 320-323, 358-370
	W: The First Crusade	Hinson, 383-388; Maalouf, "Excerpt"
	F: The Echoes of Conflict	Busse: 147-173

FINAL EXAM: Wednesday, 15 December @ 2:00 p.m.

Supplemental Reading List

- Blanks, David, editor. *Western Views of Islam in Medieval and Early Modern Europe: Perception of Other*. St. Martin's Press, 1999.
- Christopher, John B. "Islamic Contributions to Science and Mathematics," in *The Spread of Islam*. San Diego: Greenhaven Press, 1999.
- Crone, Patricia and Michael Cook. *Hagarism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977.
- Durant, Will. "The Western Extent of Islam in Spain and France," in *The Spread of Islam*. San Diego: Greenhaven Press, 1999.
- Fulcher of Chartres. *A History of the Expedition to Jerusalem*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1969.
- Gil, Moshe. *A History of Palestine, 634-1099*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992. (Selected chapters)
- Haldon, John F. *Byzantium in the Seventh Century: The Transformation of a Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

- ibn Ishaq. *The Life of Muhammad: A Translation of Ishaq's Sirat Rasul Allah*. Alfred Guillaume, translator. London: Oxford University Press, 1955.
- Jenkins, Romilly. "Iconoclasm" in *Byzantium: The Imperial Centuries*. New York: Vintage Books, 1966.
- ———. "The Schism of 1054" in *idem*.
- Lazarus-Yafeh. *Intertwined Worlds: Medieval Islam and Bible Criticism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992.
- Maalouf, Amin. *The Crusades through Arab Eyes*. Schocken Books, 1989.
- McAuliffe, Jane Dammen. *Quranic Christians: An Analysis of Classical and Modern Exegesis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.
- Mortimer, Edward. "The Historical Development of Islamic Sects," in *The Spread of Islam*. San Diego: Greenhaven Press, 1999.
- Munir, Muhammad. "The Birth of Islam in the Arabian Desert," in *The Spread of Islam*. San Diego: Greenhaven Press, 1999.
- Palmer, Andrew, editor. *The Seventh Century in the West-Syrian Chronicles*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1993.
- Peters, Rudolph. *Jihad in Classical and Modern Islam*. Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1996.
- Pirenne, Henri. *Muhammad and Charlemagne*. New York: Barnes & Noble, 1992.
- Rodinson, Maxime. *Mohammed*. A. Carter, translator. London: 1971.
- Sachedina, A.A. *Islamic Messianism: the Idea of the Mahdi in Twelver Shi'ism*. Albany: 1981.
- Thomas, David, editor and translator. *Anti-Christian Polemic in Early Islam: Abu Isa al-Warraq's "Against the Trinity."* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.
- Tolan, John, editor. *Medieval Christian Perceptions of Islam*. Garland: 1996.
- von Grunebaum, Gustave E. *Medieval Islam*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954. (First two chapters)
- von der Mehden, Fred R. "American Perceptions of Islamic Resurgence," in *The Spread of Islam*. San Diego: Greenhaven Press, 1999.
- Watt, William Montgomery. "Idealizing Muhammad and Early Islam," in *The Spread of Islam*. San Diego: Greenhaven Press, 1999.
- ———. *Muhammad at Mecca*. Oxford: 1953.
- ———. *Muhammad at Medina*. Oxford: 1956.