Political Islam in a Tumultuous Era
INTL 290-1

Instructor: Dr. Ali Demirdas
Class Schedule: Monday- Wednesday; 4:00 pm-6:45 pm.
Location: Robert Scott Small Building 103.
Office Hours: Monday-Wednesday 1:30pm-2:30pm
Contact information: demirdasa@cofc.edu

Course description and objectives:

The course is concerned with understanding why and how Islam, a monotheistic religion has transformed into Islamism thus a political movement, whether this is an exception when compared to other religions and whether the relationship between religions and politics is a contemporary phenomenon. In order to explore these topics in depth, participants will be offered a basic knowledge of Islam, its historical trajectory and a historical overview of politics in the Muslim world where political Islam has become an active political force. The course will also scrutinize the diversity of contemporary political Islamist thinking and practice and the symbolic scope of Islamism for its followers. In addition, it will shed light on the transnational aspect of Political Islam, its presence in the Western countries, notably the United States (US) and various EU ones, its interaction with predominantly non-Muslim societies and the challenges that this interaction brings. Finally, it will be the aim of this course to try to find answers to three main questions about Political Islam today:

1) has it emerged as a reaction to the perceived ‘Westernization’ and/or ‘forced modernization’ of Muslim societies ? And/Or
2) has it developed as a strategy in response to the shifting terrain of internal politics and external geopolitics And/Or
3) is it just another by-product of the modern era like any other –isms.

Learning outcomes:

At the end of the course students should be able to:

- have a clear understanding of the origins of the political dimension of Islam.

- be familiar with links between modernity, post-modernity and the rise of political Islam

- be able to make a distinction between Islamism ‘from above’, Islamism from ‘bottom-up’ and radical Islam and also identify their interaction

- analyze and evaluate political Islam within the context of globalization and its interaction with the West
- demonstrate critical independent and reflective thought in discussions about political Islam

- drawing upon their knowledge about political Islam, search ways for a more fruitful theoretical analysis about the topic.

**Assessment:**

- **Attendance/ participation (%20):** Any undocumented absence will result in a 2 point deduction from the year-end grade. Therefore, it is vital that you come to class prepared. It is impossible to get an A from this class without an active and meaningful participation!

- **Research Paper (%20):** You are to write a research paper on a topic involving the political Islam. It will be 10-11 page long, single space and in the APA style. Please consult with me in regards to the topic before starting your paper.

  Academic integrity: The learning community at the College of Charleston depends on mutual respect between instructors and students. Your attention is drawn to the College of Charleston’s Honor Code ([http://studentaffairs.cofc.edu/honor-system/faqs.php](http://studentaffairs.cofc.edu/honor-system/faqs.php)), especially the sections that forbid cheating, attempted cheating, plagiarism and disruptive classroom behavior. A student found guilty of any of these offenses will face penalties in accordance with CofC regulations. Compliance with these policies is an important part of your learning process in this introductory course and, hence, is your responsibility.

  If you have special learning needs and require accommodations, e.g. regarding exams (SNAP related), please let me know well in advance and contact the Center for Disability Services to find suitable ways to accommodate your individual needs.

- **Presentation of Research Paper (10%):** Using power point or overhead projection, you will present the **outline** of your research paper. Each of you will have 10-15 minutes, 10 of which ideally will be devoted to the actual presentation and the remaining 5 min. for Q&A. Some of the questions in the final exams may come from the presentations, so I recommend taking notes during the presentations.

- **Midterm Exam (%20):**

- **Final Exam (%30) December 8 Friday, 4-7pm.** The Final exam will be cumulative.
Course Content

- **Introduction to Course/ What is Islam?**

  Further readings will be posted on OAKS.

- **Origins of Political Islam**


- **Modern-State Formation and Political Islam**


- **Political Islam “from above”**


- **Islamism from ‘bottom-up’**


The Milli Gorus Movement


- **Islamism for a lack of a strong political system**


Globalized and Transnational Political Islam


Political Islam and the West


Modernity, Post-modernity and Political Islam

10b. Required Reading:


• **What future for Political Islam?**


**NOTA:** The instructor reserves the right to change the course content at any time during the semester, depending on the needs of the specific students taking the course.