

ISLAM TODAY

1 Introduction

The module explores a selection of contemporary themes associated with Islam and Muslims, representing a broad range of issues which form an entry point for students - from whatever background - to explore significant concerns associated with Muslims in the UK at 'grassroots' levels. 'Political Islam', in the broadest sense of the term, has been avoided in this module (a separate *Muslim Politics* MA module is available). There is an emphasis on the diverse religious and cultural dimensions associated with Islamic beliefs, and the module is particularly geared to studying Islam from a European/Western perspective, and in engaging with Muslim experiences in 'minority contexts'.

Module Aims and Objectives

The aim of the module is to provide students with an introductory overview of *some* of the key issues associated with Islam today, enabling them to acquire an understanding of contemporary agendas and beliefs as they influence the day-to-day lives of Muslims - in particular those in minority contexts. Students are encouraged and guided towards relevant sources that will facilitate access to a broad range of academic perspectives associated with Islam. No prior knowledge of the religion is assumed. Students may wish to focus on areas of the module of particular personal interest to themselves, whilst also acquiring an insight into and a holistic view of modern Muslim issues.

Structure

This module is divided into inter-related sections. Sections 1 and 2 should be read sequentially (with the material from the module pack), prior to commencing other sections of the module: on completing 1 and 2, whilst students are encouraged to read the complete module, students may wish to focus on a chapter of specific interest to themselves first.

1. Introduction
2. Muslims in the United Kingdom and Western Europe
3. Education
4. Medical Ethics
5. Gender
6. Orientalism and the Representation of Islam
7. Islam and the Internet
8. Conclusion: 9-11 and Islam Today

What shall I read?

There are many possible introductory books that you could read in relation to this module. Students on this programme have found that John Esposito's *Islam: The Straight Path* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, Revised updated 4th edition, 2010) is very useful, although it is recognised that there are many other alternative introductory works. *Islam: The Straight Path* is one of the most popular academic treatments of the subject of Islam. This book provides a useful overview of the basic principles associated with Islam and Muslim beliefs, together with sections on Interpretation, Politics, and Authority. It also discusses other relevant subjects that are not covered in this module. Students with no familiarity in the basic beliefs and

frameworks associated with Islam are requested to read this book prior to commencing this module. Students with some familiarity of Islam should read (at least) chapters 4-6 sequentially before commencing this module. Reading this book will provide a helpful introduction to Islam Today, which can then be built upon through the more specialized reading in this module. Also highly recommended is Andrew Rippin's *Muslims, their religious beliefs and practices* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012).

There are many options for supplementary reading outside of the module requirements. If you have a special subject interest, please contact Prof. Bunt if you require advice on printed resources. Many students like to build up a personal library of their own reference works, for use in their writing and research.

Students may also wish to read or refer to other general introductory books. Here are a few suggestions (Note: other editions of these works may be available):

Basic Overviews

- Yahiya Emerick, *A Complete Idiot's Guide to Understanding Islam, USA: Alpha Press, 2002*
- Ruqiyah Maqsood, *Teach Yourself Islam*. London: Teach Yourself, 1994.
- N.I. Mattar, *Islam for Beginners*, London: Writers & Readers Publishing, 1992
- Malise Ruthven, *Islam: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997

Academic Overviews

- Frederick M. Denny, *An Introduction to Islam*, London: Macmillan, 1994
- Andrew Rippin, *Muslims, their religious beliefs and practices*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2012
- Neal Robinson, *Islam, a Concise Introduction*, London: Curzon Press, 1999
- Ninian Smart, *The World's Religions*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999 [Chapters 12 & 20 provide basic introduction to Islam]
- David Waines, *An Introduction to Islam*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995
- John Renard, *Spirituality and the Religious Life of Muslims*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996
- Carl W. Ernst, *Rethinking Islam in the Contemporary World*, Edinburgh:

Edinburgh University Press, 2004

A good guide to Islamic terminology is contained in:

Gordon D. Newby, *A Concise Encyclopedia of Islam*,
Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2002

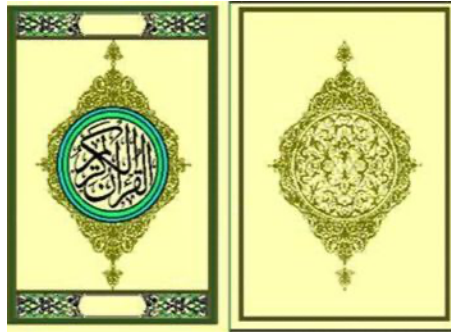
Electronic Resources

Oxford Islamic Studies Online is also highly recommended. It contains the complete *Oxford Encyclopedia of the Islamic World*, edited by John L. Esposito, the writer of *Islam: the Straight Path*. *Oxford Islamic Studies Online* also contains authoritative academic articles, and is regularly updated with topical pieces. There are Qur'an resources, academic primary sources, historical timelines, and illustrated materials. There are also many useful introductory chapters. You'll find *Oxford Islamic Studies Online* via the University library.

E. J. Brill's second edition of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* Vol. I-XII (edited by: P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel and W.P. Heinrichs) is a significant resource which - alongside the ongoing third edition (edited by Gudrun Kramer, Denis Matringe, John Nawas and Everett Rowson) - is available online to the university's students and postgraduates.

The Encyclopedia of Islam and the Muslim world (Richard C. Martin editor) (New York, New York: Macmillan Reference USA 2004) is extensive and useful. This is available online at the university library too.

Numerous other relevant electronic resources are available through the library to enhance your studies. It is strongly recommended that you take a good look at the electronic resources available to you, given that they are authoritative and peer reviewed works by established academics. They include cutting edge research in the field and are frequently updated.



The Qur'an

Whilst not 'compulsory' for completion of this module, it is advised that you have access to a printed copy of the translation of the Qur'an. This module draws upon several translations of the Qur'an, including:

The Qur'an: a new translation by M. A. S. Abdel Haleem, (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2004) [available via Oxford Islamic Studies Online]

The Holy Qur'an. Text, Translation and Commentary, Abdullah Yusuf Ali (trans.), (various editions available).

The Koran, with a parallel Arabic text, N. J. Dawood (trans.), (New York: Viking, 1990)

The Qur'an: A Modern English Version. Majid Fakhry (trans.) (Reading: Garnet Publishing, 1997).

The Koran, Mohammed Marmaduke Pickthall, (trans.). (London: Star, 1989)

The Qur'an: A New Translation, Thomas Clary (trans.), (USA: Starlatch Press, 2004)

Quotes from the Qur'an should clearly indicate the edition of a translation, as well as verse names and surah numbers.

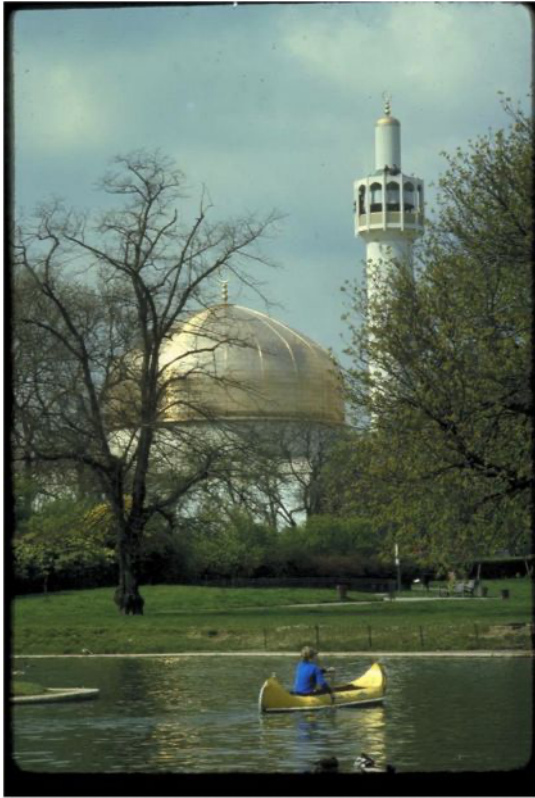
A number of translations of the meaning of the Qur'an are also available online. When using these, make sure that they come from established editions.

General Guidance about this Module

- Some of these tasks require the reading of materials linked into the module pack, taken from various sources.
- Some of the tasks relate to external resources, and you will need an Internet connection to access them. You may wish to print them out or make a digital copy for offline reading.
- Some of the discussions incorporate endnotes, which contain reference to sources and further reading. These may be particularly relevant for students 'specialising' in a particular topic, but are not 'required reading' in themselves.

Islamic Terms:

- There are often several different interpretations of one 'Islamic' word or phrase.
- You may find variations in spelling of key terms, as there is no universal standard for transcribing Arabic into Roman script [i.e. *Koran* or *Qur'an*.] This should be kept in mind when looking at sources.
- You are advised to keep your own reference notebook of words and phrases encountered, and their source.
- Many source books also contain useful lexicons.
- When writing essays, try to remain consistent when spelling a transliterated word in essays, clarify what you understand the word to mean, and ensure that you state your source (and its page number).
- At this stage, do not worry unduly about writing transliteration accents. Underlining or italicizing a transliterated word is helpful, both to the writer and reader. If Arabic script is used, a translation should be provided.



Regent's Park Mosque, London (photo: PADIA)¹

Islamic Dates:

- The Islamic calendar is based on the lunar year, rather than the solar year: this means that the Islamic calendar is approximately eleven days shorter than the Gregorian calendar (12 months of 29 and 30 days alternately, totalling 354 days).
- In your essays, the letters 'A.H.' should be placed after any Islamic years. 'A.H.' stands for *anno hegirae* - calculated from the **hijra** 'migration' year that tradition states Muhammad migrated from Mecca to Medina (622 A.D./Common Era)

¹ PADIA - Aramco Sendees Company Public Affairs Digital Image Archive, <http://www.photoarchive.saudiaramcoworld.com> All PADIA photos have been used with permission. Copyright on other photos as stated.

Islamic Calendar:

- 1) *Muharram*
- 2) *Safar*
- 3) *Rabi al-Awwal*
- 4) *Rabi al-Thani*
- 5) *Jumada al-Ula*
- 6) *Jumada al-Thani*
- 7) *Rajab*
- 8) *Sha'ban*
- 9) *Ramadan*
- 10) *Shawwal*
- 11) *Dhu al-Qa 'adah*
- 12) *Dhu al-Hijjah*

A useful online calendar converter can be found at

Islamic Finder, <http://www.islamicfinder.org/Hcal/index.php>

The URLs referred to in this module provide useful supplements to the conventional materials. They are helpful because they frequently provide alternative perspectives, or difficult to obtain material. Their content is externally generated and is not the responsibility of the author of the module or the University of Wales Trinity Saint David. URLs can change without notice: whilst all resources were checked at the time of going to press, there may be subsequent adjustments. Please advise Prof Bunt if any link is broken.

Photos

All photos contained in this pack have been used with permission of copyright holders.

Assessment (100%)

Prepare a portfolio of work, covering five significant issues associated with Islam Today. Each topic should be in the form of a briefing document (maximum 1,500 words each + references) based on the following questions:

1. Does Edward Said's model of 'Orientalism' contribute to an understanding of Islam in 'the West'?
2. In your view, how important are 'Islamic schools' for Muslims in the United Kingdom?
3. Using examples, evaluate contemporary media representation of Islam and Muslims in western contexts.
4. Discuss the impact of Islam during the past forty years in the United Kingdom.
5. Provide an overview of significant medical ethical issues associated with Muslims in the United Kingdom.
6. Evaluate the significance of the Internet as a networking tool for Muslims in the United Kingdom.
7. "9-11 damaged the status of Muslims in the United Kingdom". Discuss.



Hajj, (photo: PADIA)

Self-Test

Try this self-test before proceeding with the module:

1. What are the pillars of Islam?

2. What are the origins of the Qur'an?

3. Who was Muhammad?

4. What are the basic distinctions between Sunni, Shia and Sufi Muslims?

If you are able to provide brief answers to these questions, then proceed to the module.

Other exercises

This module also incorporates other exercises, which you are encouraged to participate in. These are designed to broaden your understanding of the subject, and stimulate further reading.

Contact details

Professor Gary R. Bunt
Faculty of Humanities & Performing Arts
University of Wales Trinity Saint David, Ceredigion, SA48 7ED, UK

Email: *g.bunt@uwtsd.ac.uk*

Academic queries should be sent to Gary Bunt by email - putting 'MA Islamic Studies' into the header of the email. Meetings can be arranged by Teams, subject to several days' notice.

