

**Islam and the West**  
**Tuesday, 6:00-9:00 pm, 3 credits**  
**Instructor: Professor Mehrdad Kia**  
**Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 3:00-5:00**  
**Office: Stone Hall 301**  
**Phone: 243-2289**  
**E-mail: [mehrdad.kia@mso.umt.edu](mailto:mehrdad.kia@mso.umt.edu)**

### **Objectives and goals**

This is a seminar on the intellectual and cultural history of the Islamic world and its long, rich, and problematic relationship with Europe and the United States. The geographical area covered is western China (Chinese Central Asia), the five former Soviet republics of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan (Russian Central Asia), Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, Turkey, the Arab Middle East and North Africa. The seminar will concentrate on topics that shaped informed and the interactions between occidental Christian and Jewish cultures and the Islamic world. We will discuss themes central to the recent history of conflicts that shaped the intellectual and cultural history of the Islamic world, including its racial, ethnic and religious identities and how these identities create tensions between the Islamic world and the West in current international relations. Among them: cultural, political and economic strategies of western colonialism; structures of multicultural empires; political theory and cultural practice of nationalism and radical political thought in the Middle East, North Africa, and Central Asia; decolonization and its reshaping of collective identities; the role of authoritarianism and religion in power-relations between states and cultures; the interaction between modern and post-modern politics, economy and religion. Lectures will alternate with discussions.

### **Expectations**

The research-oriented and constant student engagement with texts and ideas is central to this seminar. Students are expected to attend seminar sessions regularly and take notes. They should come to class having read the assigned texts closely, thought about them and prepared points of view for discussion. The participation in seminar discussions is indispensable. Cell phones should be set to buzz. The courtesy and respect of divergent opinions and ideas – including those of the authors themselves - during debate are essential.

## **Assignments**

The goal of this seminar is to make students elaborate a research project. By the last 3 weeks of the semester, they will have completed a 30-page research paper. During the last 3 weeks, students will extract the main ideas contained in their paper and present it to the class in a 15 to 20 minutes presentation.

Several steps will lead to this final result. At the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> week, students will present an abstracts of their research project, containing:

1. the topic
2. a plan of the argument
3. a bibliography of primary and secondary sources.

These abstracts will be discussed in details with the instructor, and circulated for review and discussion among participants during the 4<sup>th</sup> week of the seminar. These abstracts should take their final form by the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> week. All the students will be acquainted with all the project of the research papers so as to be able to participate in their elaborations with ideas, critiques and suggestions.

In order to be able to fully participate in the elaboration of research projects, students will regularly comment on their assigned readings. The seminar will take place once a week in order to allow plenty of time to read, and communicate notes and ideas about readings and prepare for seminar sessions. Students will comment on their readings and send these comments to all involved before each seminar meeting. These comments should not be shorter than 1 page. They should isolate an idea or a historical process or fact described in the text they are reading and its interpretation by the author, followed by their comments, observations or questions. Written comments should be sent to all the participants by email. The comments made during the seminar on assigned texts as preparation for sessions will testify to the quality and intensity of student engagement.

All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code for a definition of plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct. The Code is available for review online on the [Dean of Students website](#).

## **Attendance Policy**

There are no excused absences. Make arrangements with your instructor ahead of time to do equivalent alternative work to replace class if you must be away. Late arrival or lack of preparation for class can be considered an absence. An excess of **1** absence can lower your grade.

## **Grading**

The grade for the seminar will be the result of student preparation for each session, of student participation in the seminar discussion, and of the quality of research, writing and presentation. It will be composed as follows:

Preparation: 25%  
Participation: 25%  
Research paper: 40%  
Attendance: 10%

Research papers will be graded according to following criteria:

Content: 35%  
Structure: 35%  
Presentation of paper: 30 %

## **Reading**

Amin Maalouf. *The Crusades Through Arab Eyes*  
Ali Behdad. *Belated Travelers: Orientalism in the Age of Colonial Dissolution*  
Bernard Lewis, *What Went Wrong*  
Edward Said, *Covering Islam*  
Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*  
Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples*  
Edward Mortimer, *Faith and Power*

Available in UC Bookstore

Additional readings - articles and books chapters – will be provided by instructor

- 1- Mirza Fath Ali Akhundzade and the Call of Modernization of the Islamic World
- 2- Pan-Islamism in Nineteenth Century Iran
- 3- Nationalism and Modernization in the Writings of Talibov-i Tabrizi
- 4- Orientalism and Occidentalism

## **Schedule**

Weeks 1-2: Introductions by instructor, discussion of possible subjects for research projects

Weeks 3-5: Race, religion, colonialism, orientalism

Weeks 6-8: Theocracies and religious identities in the 20<sup>th</sup> century

Weeks 9-11: Nationalisms, authoritarianism and decolonization

Weeks 12-13: Presentations of research papers, discussions of results

Week 14: Synthesis and perspectives: The rise of political Islam and revolutions in Iran, Turkey, and the Arab world

Disability Services for Students (DSS) is The University of Montana's student affairs office, which assures program access to the University by students with disabilities. Any student with disability or special need should contact Dr. Kia and he will coordinate and provide reasonable modifications which may be required.