

# CEDAR CREST COLLEGE

## SYLLABUS

**REL 227**

**Transplanted Religions**

**Islam in America: From Roots to Rap.**

Fall 2008

Times: 7 p m to 9:30 p m

Day: Wednesday's Aug.27<sup>th</sup> to Dec 4th

Location: Curtis 110

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### Description

This course traces the trajectory of this seventh century faith as a transplanted faith in the New World. Beginning with the historical record of the surviving Muslims who came ashore as African slaves and their enduring endeavor to remain Muslim. The influx of immigrants in the 1960's from both the Arab Muslim world and also Asia, which becomes the second historical register of Islam in America. The ethno-religious movement of the Nation of Islam, (NOI), that later develops into a distinct African American Muslim community makes the third assemblage for study. This inquiry studies the narratives of each of these singular groups and their endeavor to formulate an American Muslim identity. In the course of this quest each of these groups employs stratagems of adoption in a land that is pluralistic, diverse and democratic. These adaptations include cultural productions and expressions of piety that have influenced the American cultural milieu and have in turn been influenced by it as well. The transformation of this tradition from it's genesis in the Arabian Peninsula to the shores of North America have been remarkable and these include questions of authority, the growing salience of the American Muslim women's endeavor towards what has been characterized as gender jihad, the struggle of the Muslim trans gender community to gain acceptance, institution building and the effort to formulate an American Muslim identity. The role of the musical genre of rap in formulating identity and dissemination of the tradition for the second generation Muslims will be studied. The role of Islam in prison will also be studied and its role in the rehabilitation will also be considered. This course is framed around questions how this tradition has adapted in a new land and to what degree has it been successful in becoming an American religious tradition, especially in light of the laden stereotypical images that became exacerbated in the aftermath of September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001. Also inquired will be how Muslims use Islamic paradigms to interpret America.

### Objective

To study the interplay of a transplanted faith and the cultural diversity of American Muslims that becomes the modality through which it makes distinct contribution in America. To introduce an ethnographic study of Islam that best describes the complexity of the American Muslim mosaic. To gain an understanding of the nuances of Islam as it develops in America. To understand the modes of assimilation or acculturation that has occurred in this faith community,

### Outcomes

To think critically against the essentialising tendency of interpreting Islam.

To gain cognizance of how a tradition is refracted through the prism of culture, race and ethnicity.

To become aware of critical thinking that problematizes commonly held assumptions and highlights nuances that afford a better comprehension

To understand pluralism in contemporary America and the Muslim role in it.

### **Assessment**

Each student shall complete a paper with the length of four to five double spaced pages in either the **APA or MLA** format. The topics shall be chosen by the student from among the choices presented by the instructor in class. Also each student shall make a class presentation on the topic of their choice or upon consultation with the instructor. A mid-term shall also be administered.

|                                |            |
|--------------------------------|------------|
| <b>Papers shall constitute</b> | <b>30%</b> |
| <b>Class presentation</b>      | <b>30%</b> |
| <b>Mid-term</b>                | <b>30%</b> |
| <b>Class participation</b>     | <b>10%</b> |

### **Class Schedule**

#### **Aug. 27<sup>th</sup>**

Course Introduction

Religious studies as a paradigm for the study of religion

Islam in the American Imaginary

Stereotypes of Islam.

Understanding Islamophobia

Islamophobia as cultural racism

Deconstructing Islamophobia through the comedy of Azar Usman

Terrorism and hegemony of interpretation

Mediated terrorism. Muslim representation in the media

#### **Sept 3<sup>rd</sup>**

Introduction to Islam

Understanding the five pillars

Sunni and Shi'a Islam

Modern movements and the specter of Islamism

From jihad , jihadism to jihadist.

**Reading assignment:** Muslim Faith and Practice, Chapter 1

#### **Sept 10<sup>th</sup>**

Waves of Immigration Theory

Overview of Muslim history in America

Genealogy of Muslim arrivals

Theories of Muslim settlements

Countering the canon: Challenging WOI

Legacy of Muslim slaves and settlements

**Reading assignment:** Oh Allah operate on Us Islam and the legacy of American slavery

The autobiography of Omar ibn Said

### **Sept.17<sup>th</sup>**

Overview of Muslim history in America  
The early proselytizers: The Ahmadiyya  
The enigmatic figure of Noble Drew Ali  
Nascent stages of the ethno-religious movements  
Marcus Garvey and Black Nationalism  
Detroit in the 1930's  
Beginning of the Moorish Temple Society (MTS)  
MTS as a bridge to American Islam

**Reading assignment:** Islam Comes To America, Chapter 3

### **Sept 24<sup>th</sup>**

W D Fard as progenitor of the Nation of Islam (NOI)  
Elijah Muhammad and the beginning of the NOI  
**Reading assignment:** What the Muslims Want  
The Qur'an and NOI cosmology  
Malcolm X and the establishment of NOI  
Myth making and the NOI

**Reading assignment:** Letter from Mecca

### **Oct 1<sup>st</sup>**

Splinter groups: The Five percenters

**Reading assignment:** The Five Percenters: A Teenage Nation of Gods and Earths  
Conjunction of rap and the Five Percenters.

The emergence of Louis Farrakhan  
Establishment of the African American Muslim community  
Islam and the Blackamerican.  
Awaiting the third resurrection

**Reading assignment:** Islam in the African American community Chapter 4

### **Oct 8<sup>th</sup>**

Divergence of the immigrant experience

The Arab Muslim community

Stereotypes of Arabs and Hollywood

**Reading assignment:** Ambiguous insiders: an investigation of Arab American invisibility

The South Asian Muslim community

Masala identity

**Reading assignment:** American Muslims: South Asian Contributions to the mix

Foreign influences on American Islam

Muslim American or American Muslim

American Muslim cultural productions

Hyphenated selves and identity

American Muslim economic considerations

Islamic Daw Jones index

**Reading assignment:** Living a Muslim Life in American Society

**Midterm assigned**

### **Oct.15<sup>th</sup>**

Pluralism of the American Muslims

Civic and political engagement

Diversity of American Muslims

Converting to Islam.

The role of ethnicity and race

**Reading assignment:** To be Black, Female, and Muslim: A Candid conversation about Race in the American Ummah

**Midterms to be returned**

### **Oct.22<sup>nd</sup>**

The mosque: Claiming space and changing landscapes

**Reading assignment:** Urban enclaves and Muslim identity in urban America

Architecture and sacred space

September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001 and the transformation of American Muslims

Muslim reactions to Sept.11<sup>th</sup>

**Reading assignment:** Being Muslim, Being American after 9/11

### **Oct 29<sup>th</sup>**

Submitting while incarcerated

The role of religion in prison

Converting in prison

**Reading assignment:** Prison and the struggle for dignity

Penal system and rehabilitation

A new taxonomy: Traditional, Moderates and Progressive

Trans gender challenges

**Reading assignment:** On the edge of belonging

### **Nov.7<sup>th</sup>**

Gender issues and gender jihad

Muslim cosmology and gender

The veil as metaphor and the multiple meanings

**Reading assignment:** To Veil or not to Veil

Empowered femininity and women's activism

Controversy of female led prayers

**Reading assignment:** An examination of the issue of Female Prayer Leadership

Islamic Jurisprudence, Civil Disobedience and Woman Led Prayer

Can a Woman be an Imam

Female friendly mosques

**Reading assignment:** An Islamic Bill of Rights for women in the mosque

Questioning patriarchy

## **Nov.14<sup>th</sup>**

Social issues, marriage and sexuality

**Reading assignment:** Halal, Haram and Sex and the City  
Sex and the single Shiite

Rap as a musical crossing and Muslim voices

**Reading assignment:** Rep that Islam  
Sufism

**Reading assignment:** Spiritual Consumption in the United States; the Rumi phenomenon

**Reading assignment:** Muslim marriages in America: Reflecting New Identities

## **Nov 21st**

Looking to the future

Expressions of multiple identities

Charting a course in the in between spaces.

**Class presentations.**

## **Dec 4<sup>th</sup>**

**Class presentations**

### **Cedar Crest College Honor Code**

The Honor Code policy can be found in the Customs Book. Any violation will be dealt with according to college procedure.

### **Standards for the Academic Study of Religion**

The academic study of religion is grounded in the assumption that human experience of the sacred can be studied as an intellectual and societal phenomenon without bias. Accordingly, the major disciplines for the study of religion depend upon the same objectivity that would be assumed in the humanitarian and social sciences.

### **Paper writing tips**

When writing your papers is mindful that it is going to be read by somebody else and as such be cognizant of assumptions that you would take for granted. And the same applies of the thought patterns, logic and coherence, that you formulate in the course of writing. If you need assistance please contact the staff at the **Academic Services, Curtis 109, extension 4628**

### **Use of Internet sources**

Students are asked to use on line resources for **only thirty percent of their resources. Please be aware of websites that are designated as .org, as they are not subjected to peer review.**

### **Textbook**

Islam in America by Jane I Smith

Columbia University Press, New York 1999.