

College of the Humanities: Religion Program
RELI 5850Y
Reading Hadiths: Old and New Approaches

Instructor: Prof. Ash Geissinger

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 9-11 am (online)

Classes: Mondays 11:35 am-2:25 pm (online, synchronous)

Course Description

This seminar course examines the Hadith literature as a case study of religious communities' constructions of sacred pasts as ways to address issues or debates of concern in their presents. Topics examined include: the origins, transmission, and compilation of hadiths, historical-critical approaches to reading hadiths, internal Muslim debates about their authority and application, the multiple roles played by hadiths in constructing and questioning cosmic order, identity, communal boundaries, and social hierarchies, as well as the ramifications of this for public life.

NOTE: The purpose of this course is not confessional—so, it is not intended to persuade you to adopt or reject a particular religious viewpoint. This course presupposes that all students accept that the Hadith will be studied using critical methods that are employed in a modern research university when examining any texts, whether religious or otherwise.

Course Learning Objectives

Students who complete this course successfully will:

- gain a clearer appreciation of the various ways that religious communities memorialize the past to address issues in the present, and the real-world implications of these for public life
- further develop their understanding of the historical development of the Hadith literature and its continuing importance to many Muslim communities
- be able to read hadiths from a historical-critical perspective
- formulate positions consistent with the academic study of religion, which stresses outsider discourse, methodological atheism, and the ability to differentiate between advocacy and the critical study of religion
- strengthen their ability to formulate and articulate academic arguments supported by evidence, and express them in written form
- strengthen their ability to engage with the viewpoints of others constructively and critically
- improve their ability to communicate their research findings to others

Course Evaluation

- Regular, active, and informed class participation—20%
- Reading responses (2-3 pages; **due by 9 am on Mondays**)—40%
- Two short class presentations on assigned readings (5% each)—10%
- Research project/paper (see below for detailed mark breakdown)—30%

Privacy and intellectual property

All course content is protected by copyright. Course discussions, presentations, written assignments, and other teaching and learning materials or activities whether by instructors or students are the intellectual property of their respective author(s). Recording the class without prior consent of the instructor and all other participants is prohibited. Posting any recording of the class online without the prior consent of the instructor and all other participants is also prohibited. Either of these acts violate Canadian privacy laws.

Class Participation

As this is a seminar course, doing the assigned readings before class and attending class prepared to discuss these is vitally important and is therefore expected of all students, as is regular class attendance. A student who does not come to class regularly, or who routinely comes unprepared, cannot be regarded as having taken the course. Missing more than 3 classes will result in an F. Class attendance will be taken, and participation will be graded. If you are absent, participation marks cannot be made up in any way.

Course Readings

There is no textbook in this course. Links to all the assigned readings are available through the course webpage on Brightspace. These are mostly library resources—therefore, for the links to work, you need to be either on campus, or signed into the library website.

Reading Responses

There will be 10 reading responses (2-3 pages each). There is an assigned reading response for the classes on the following dates: Jan. 17, Jan. 24, Jan. 31, Feb. 7, Feb. 14, Feb. 28, March 7, March 14, March 21, and March 28. Each reading response is to answer questions based on the assigned readings for that class, which will be posted on Brightspace. Responses are due by 9 am on the Monday for which they are assigned and will not be accepted after that time. Each response is worth 5 marks. The two lowest scores will be dropped. More details about what is expected will be given at the first class meeting.

Presentations on Assigned Readings

At the beginning of the semester, students will sign up for two classes for which they will give a short (10 min.) presentation on one of the readings assigned. One of the presentations must

be for a secondary source, and the other for a primary source. More detailed instructions will be provided in class.

Research Project/Paper

All students will research a topic directly related to the content of this course. A list of recommended topics will be posted on Brightspace; anyone who wishes to select another topic may do so only after receiving the permission of the instructor. Students can choose whether to write a traditional academic research paper (14-18 pages; standard essay format), or to present their findings in the form of a podcast or video (approx. 20 min; a complete script must be submitted). Regardless of the format, all papers and podcast or video scripts **MUST** use proper citation and contain a bibliography, following the Chicago style.

The final mark for the research project/paper is made up of the following elements. Note that the proposal, annotated bibliography and outline must be submitted by the deadlines indicated for the final submission to be accepted:

- **Proposal**—5% of the paper/project mark (**due Feb. 14** by 11:59 pm Ottawa time)
The proposal must have a working title and one paragraph briefly outlining the scope of the project or paper.
- **Annotated bibliography**—10% of the paper/project mark (**due March 7**)
This must contain at least seven sources (not including encyclopedia articles or the like) which will be used in the project or paper. Complete citation of each source must be provided, following the Chicago Style (see the style guide on Brightspace). Each source is to be followed by several sentences which explain why it was selected and how it will be used. Students are expected to make extensive use of academic, peer-reviewed secondary sources in their research projects/papers, and to use all primary source materials analytically.
- **Class presentation of project or paper**—10% of the paper/project mark (**in class on April 11**)
Each student will give a short presentation (10 minutes maximum, with 2 minutes for questions) about their project/paper, which briefly and clearly gives an overview their research, sums up their conclusions, and responds thoughtfully to audience questions.
- **Final submission of project or paper**—75% (**due April 18**)
Regardless of the format, all projects or papers must include footnotes and a complete bibliography listing all sources used, following the Chicago Style. Any papers or projects which do not follow the instructions given in class will be returned ungraded for revision and resubmission. Late penalties (5% per day, including weekends) will accrue from the due date, regardless of when the problem was discovered.

Email communication

Please be aware that in order to ensure compliance with the federal privacy act known as FIPPA, Carleton communications policy states that faculty may only communicate with students through their Carleton Connect accounts. Therefore, ensure that any emails you may send me are from your Carleton Connect account. Otherwise, your email will not receive a response.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Jan 10—What are hadiths, and how do we read them in a Religious Studies course?

Readings:

- Scott Lucas, “Major Topics of the Hadith,” *Religion Compass* 2.2 (2008), pp. 226-239.
- Su’ad Abdul Khabeer, “Africa as Tradition in U.S. African American Muslim Identity,” *Journal of Africana Religions*, 5.1 (2017), pp. 26-49.

Jan 17—The origins and development of the Hadith literature: traditional Muslim perspectives and historical questions

Readings:

- J. Fueck, “The Role of Traditionalism in Islam,” in *Hadith: Origins and Developments*, ed. Harald Motzki (Ashgate, 2004), pp. 3-24.
- Muslim, *Sahih*, Chapter 47 (“The Book of Knowledge”); Tabarsi, *Mishkat*, Section 3, Chapter 8, hadiths #676-732 (“On Science”).
- Ulrike Mitter, “‘The Majority of the Dwellers of Hell-fire are Women’: A Short Analysis of a Much Discussed Hadith,” in *The Transmission and Dynamics of the Textual Sources of Islam: Essays in Honour of Harald Motzki*, eds. Nicolet Boekhoff-Van der Voort et al. (Brill, 2011), pp. 443-473.

Jan 24—Hadith transmission as a devotional practice

Readings:

- *Riyad as-Salihin*, Chapter 12 (“The Book of Knowledge”).
- Asma Sayeed, *Women and the Transmission of Religious Knowledge in Islam* (Cambridge University Press, 2013), Chapter 3 (pp. 108-143).
- Sayeed, *Women and the Transmission of Religious Knowledge*, Chapter 2.

Jan 31—World-construction through hadiths

Readings:

- Bukhari, *Sahih*, Chapter 59 (“Beginning of Creation”).
- Amina Inloes, “How Did Eve Get Married? Two Twelver Shi’i Hadith Reports,” in *Islamic Interpretive Tradition and Gender Justice: Processes of Canonization, Subversion, and Change*, eds. Nevin Reda and Yasmin Amin (McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2020), pp. 127-150.

Feb 7—Popular practice, hadiths, and death rites

Readings:

- Muslim, *Sahih*, Chapter 11 (“The Book of Funerals”).
- Leor Halevi, “Wailing for the Dead: The Role of Women in Early Islamic Funerals,” *Past & Present* 183.1 (2004), pp. 3-39.

Feb 14—Hadiths and constructions of sacred space

***paper/project proposal due**

Readings:

- *Sunan an-Nasa’i*, vol. 1, pp. 406-438 (“The Book of the Masjids”).
- Bukhari, *Sahih*, Chapter 10 (“Call to prayers”), sub-chapters 157-166.
- Marion Holmes Katz, *Women in the Mosque: A History of Legal Thought and Social Practice* (Columbia University Press, 2014), pp. 111-128, 17-27, 38-48.

Feb 21—WINTER BREAK (no class)

Feb 28—Hadiths, healing, and magic

Readings:

- Tirmidhi, *Jami’*, vol. 4, pp. 117-155 (“Chapters on Medicine”).
- Wouter J. Hanegraaff, “How Magic Survived the Disenchantment of the World,” *Religion* 33.4 (2003), pp. 357-380.

March 7—Food, communal boundaries, and hadiths

***annotated bibliography due**

Readings:

- Abu Dawud, *Sunan*, vol. 4, pp. 253-303 (“The Book of Food”).
- David Freidenreich, *Foreigners and Their Food: Constructing Otherness in Jewish, Christian, and Islamic Law* (University of California Press, 2011), Chapters 10 and 11 (pp. 140-168).

March 14—Memories of past battlefields and social order

Readings:

- *Sunan an-Nasa’i*, vol. 4, pp. 15-81 (“The Book of Jihad”).
- Asma Afsaruddin, “Reconstituting Women’s Lives: Gender and the Poetics of Narrative in Medieval Biographical Collections,” *Muslim World* 92.3/4 (2002), pp. 461-480.
- Christian Sahner, “‘The Monasticism of My Community is Jihad’: A Debate on Asceticism, Sex, and Warfare in Early Islam,” *Arabica* 64 (2017), pp. 149-183.

March 21—Hadiths, behavioural ideals, and alternate modernities

Readings:

- *Sunan Ibn Maja*, vol. 5, pp. 11-94 (“Chapters on Etiquette”).
- Hem Borker, *Madrasas and the Making of Islamic Womanhood* (Oxford University Press, 2018), Chapter Six.
- Usamah Ansari, “Producing the Conjugal Patriarchal Family in Maulana Thanvi’s *Heavenly Ornaments: Biopolitics, ‘Shariatic Modernity’ and Managing Women,*” *Comparative Islamic Studies* 5.1 (2009), pp. 93-110.

March 28—Hadiths and dream interpretation

Readings:

- Bukhari, *Sahih*, Chapter 91 (“Interpretation of Dreams”).
- Amira Mittermaier, *Dreams that Matter: Egyptian Landscapes of the Imagination* (University of California Press, 2011), Chapter 2 (pp. 54-83).
- Elizabeth Sirriyeh, “Dreams of the Holy Dead: Traditional Islamic Oneirocriticism Verses Salafi Skepticism,” *Journal of Semitic Studies* XLV/1 (Spring 2000), pp. 115-130.

April 4—Apocalyptic hadiths, constructions of time, and catastrophes

Readings:

- Abu Dawud, *Sunan*, vol. 4, Chapter 34 (“The Book of Tribulations”), pp. 482-505; Chapter 35 (“The Book of the Mahdi”), pp. 506-511; Chapter 36 (“The Book of the Great Battles”, starting at sub-chapter 12, “Signs of the Hour”), pp. 522-544.
- Claudia Merli, “Context-bound Islamic Theodicies: The Tsunami as Supernatural Retribution vs. Natural Catastrophe in Southern Thailand,” *Religion* 40.2 (2010), pp. 104-111.

April 11—Project/paper presentations; course conclusion



Humanities

University Regulations for All College of the Humanities Courses

Academic Dates and Deadlines

[This schedule](#) contains the dates prescribed by the University Senate for academic activities. Dates relating to fee payment, cancellation of course selections, late charges, and other fees or charges will be published in the [Important Dates and Deadlines section](#) of the Registration Website.

Online Learning Resources

While online courses offer flexibility and convenience, they also present unique challenges that traditional face-to-face courses do not. [On this page](#), you will find resources collected by Carleton Online to help you succeed in your online courses; Learning Strategies and Best Practices, Study Skills, Technology and Online Interaction and Engagement.

Copies of Written Work Submitted

Always retain for yourself a copy of all essays, term papers, written assignments or take-home tests submitted in your courses.

Academic Integrity Policy (updated June 2021)

Plagiarism is presenting, whether intentionally or not, the ideas, expression of ideas, or work of others as one's own.

Plagiarism includes reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else's published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one's own without proper citation or reference to the original source. Examples of sources from which the ideas, expressions of ideas or works of others may be drawn from include but are not limited to: books, articles, papers, literary compositions and phrases, performance compositions, chemical compounds, art works, laboratory reports, research results, calculations and the results of calculations, diagrams, constructions, computer reports, computer code/software, material on the internet and/or conversations.

Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to:

- any submission prepared in whole or in part, by someone else;
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, paraphrased material, algorithms,

formulae, scientific or mathematical concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;

- using another's data or research findings without appropriate acknowledgement;
- submitting a computer program developed in whole or in part by someone else, with or without modifications, as one's own; and
- failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another's work and/or failing to use quotations marks.

Plagiarism is a serious offence that cannot be resolved directly by the course's instructor. The Associate Dean of the Faculty conducts a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student, when an instructor suspects a piece of work has been plagiarized. Penalties are not trivial. They can include a final grade of "F" for the course.

[Academic Integrity Policy](#)

[Academic Integrity Process](#)

Academic Accommodation Policy

Carleton University is committed to providing access to the educational experience in order to promote academic accessibility for all individuals.

Academic accommodation refers to educational practices, systems and support mechanisms designed to accommodate diversity and difference. The purpose of accommodation is to enable students to perform the essential requirements of their academic programs. At no time does academic accommodation undermine or compromise the learning objectives that are established by the academic authorities of the University.

Addressing Human Rights Concerns

The University and all members of the University community share responsibility for ensuring that the University's educational, work and living environments are free from discrimination and harassment. Should you have concerns about harassment or discrimination relating to your age, ancestry, citizenship, colour, creed (religion), disability, ethnic origin, family status, gender expression, gender identity, marital status, place of origin, race, sex (including pregnancy), or sexual orientation, please contact the [Department of Equity and Inclusive Communities](#).

Requests for Academic Accommodation

You may need special arrangements to meet your [academic obligations](#) during the term. For an accommodation request, the processes are as follows:

Religious Accommodation

Please contact your instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details, please review the [Student Guide to Academic Accommodation](#).

Pregnancy Accommodation

Please contact your instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of

class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. . For more details, please review the [Student Guide to Academic Accommodation](#).

Survivors of Sexual Violence

As a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated, and where survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy. For more information about the services available at the university and to obtain information about sexual violence and/or support, visit the [Equity and Inclusive Communities website](#).

Accommodation for Student Activities

Carleton University recognizes the substantial benefits, both to the individual student and for the university, that result from a student participating in activities beyond the classroom experience. Reasonable accommodation must be provided to students who compete or perform at the national or international level. Please contact your instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details, see the [Senate Policy on Accommodation for Student Activities](#).

Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If you have a documented disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) at 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation or contact your PMC coordinator to send your instructor your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term. You must also contact the PMC no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (if applicable). After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with your instructor as soon as possible to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. For more details, visit the [Paul Menton Centre website](#).

Grading System at Carleton University

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor, subject to the approval of the faculty Dean. Standing in courses will be shown by alphabetical grades. The system of grades used, with corresponding grade points and the percentage conversion can be found [here](#). Grade points indicated are for courses with 1.0 credit value. Where the course credit is greater or less than one credit, the grade points are adjusted proportionately.

Course Sharing Websites and Copyright

Classroom teaching and learning activities, including lectures, discussions, presentations, etc., by both instructors and students, are copy protected and remain the intellectual property of their respective author(s). All course materials, including PowerPoint presentations, outlines, and other materials, are also protected by copyright and remain the intellectual property of their respective author(s).

Students registered in the course may take notes and make copies of course materials for their own educational use only. Students are not permitted to reproduce or

distribute lecture notes and course materials publicly for commercial or non-commercial purposes without express written consent from the copyright holder(s).
[More information](#)

Student Rights and Responsibilities at Carleton

Carleton University strives to provide a safe environment conducive to personal and intellectual growth, free of injustice and characterized by understanding respect, peace, trust, and fairness.

The [Student Rights and Responsibilities Policy](#) governs the non-academic behaviour of students. Carleton University is committed to building a campus that promotes personal growth through the establishment and promotion of transparent and fair academic and non-academic responsibilities.

Deferred Term Work

In some situations, students are unable to complete term work because of illness or other circumstances beyond their control, which forces them to delay submission of the work.

1. Students who claim illness, injury or other extraordinary circumstances beyond their control as a reason for missed term work are held responsible for immediately informing the **instructor** concerned and for making alternate arrangements with the instructor and in all cases this must occur **no later than three (3) working days after the term work was due**. The alternate arrangement must be made before the last day of classes in the term as published in the academic schedule. Normally, any deferred term work will be completed by the last day of term. In all cases, formative evaluations providing feedback to the student should be replaced with formative evaluations. In the event the altered due date must extend beyond the last day of classes in the term, the instructor will assign a grade of zero for the work not submitted and submit the student's earned grade accordingly; the instructor may submit a change of grade at a later date. Term work cannot be deferred by the Registrar.
2. In cases where a student is not able to complete term work due to illness or injury for a significant period of time/or long term, the instructor and/or student may elect to consult with the Registrar's Office (undergraduate courses) or Graduate Registrar (graduate courses) to determine appropriate action.
3. If a student is concerned the instructor did not respond to the request for academic accommodation or did not provide reasonable accommodation, the student should consult with the department/school/institute chair/director. If a mutually agreeable accommodation to complete course requirements prior to the course grade submission deadline cannot be achieved, the Associate Dean will become involved. If academic accommodation is not granted, and the student receives word **after** the academic withdrawal deadline, the student may submit a petition to the Registrar's Office (undergraduate courses)/Graduate Registrar (graduate courses) for a final grade of WDN (Withdrawn) in the course(s). If academic

accommodation is not granted, and the student receives word **prior** to the academic withdrawal deadline, the student may elect to withdraw from the course(s).

4. Furthermore, if academic accommodation is granted, but the student is unable to complete the accommodation according to the terms set out by the instructor as a result of further illness, injury or extraordinary circumstances beyond their control, the student may submit a petition to the Registrar's Office (undergraduate courses)/Graduate Registrar (graduate courses). Please note, however, that the course instructor will be required to submit an earned final grade and further consideration will only be reviewed according to established precedents and deadlines. [More information of deferred Term Work](#)

Deferred Final Exams

Students who are unable to write a final examination because of a serious illness/emergency or other circumstances beyond their control may apply for accommodation. Normally, the accommodation for a missed final examination will be granting the student the opportunity to write a deferred examination. In specific cases when it is not possible to offer a deferred examination, and with the approval of the Dean, an alternate accommodation may be made.

The application for a deferral must:

1. be made in writing to the Registrar's Office **no later than three working days after the original final examination or the due date of the take-home examination**; and,
2. be fully supported by appropriate documentation and, in cases of illness, by a medical certificate dated no later than one working day after the examination, or by appropriate documents in other cases. Medical documents must specify the date of the onset of the illness, the (expected) date of recovery, and the extent to which the student was/is incapacitated during the time of the examination. The University's preferred medical form can be found at the Registrar's Office [here](#).

[More information on Final Exam Deferrals Registrar's Office "Defer an Exam" page](#)

Financial vs. Academic Withdrawal

Make sure that you are aware of the separate deadlines for Financial and Academic withdrawal!

Making registration decisions in Carleton Central involves making a financial and academic commitment for the courses you choose, regardless of attendance. If you do not attend, you must withdraw in [Carleton Central](#) within the published deadlines to cancel your registration. A fee adjustment is dependent on registration being canceled within the published [fee deadlines](#) and dependent on your course load. A course dropped after the deadline for financial withdrawal will receive a grade of Withdrawn (WDN), which appears on your official transcript.

Even if you miss the deadline for financial withdrawal, you might decide to drop a course to avoid a failure or a poor grade showing up on your student record and bringing down your CGPA. It is your responsibility to drop the course via Carleton Central within the published [deadlines](#) (see Academic Withdrawal).

If you are considering withdrawing from a course, you may want to talk to an advisor first. Course withdrawal may affect your student status, as well as your eligibility for student funding, immigration status, residence accommodation and participation in varsity sports, etc. Additionally, remember that once you choose your courses, you must use the “Calculate amount to pay” button to determine the correct amount of fees to pay.

Carleton Central is your one-stop shop for registration activities. If you are interested in taking a course, make sure to complete your registration. Simply attending a course does not mean you are registered in it, nor is it grounds for petition or appeal.

Department Contact Information

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