

Syllabus

Course Syllabus

ARAB/RLST 2320 - Early Muslim World

Summer [A] 2019: June 3 - July 5

** This syllabus is provisional, course details may change at the discretion of the instructor. DO consult the version of the syllabus that will be posted on Canvas before we begin.*

NOTE: This is an online course and will be offered via Canvas. Please familiarize yourself with the minimum technical requirements for the course (see the end of this syllabus), including how to get technical help. All communication with the Instructor and Teaching Assistant will be carried out via Canvas or your colorado.edu email; messages from other email accounts will not be answered as per university policy. It is your responsibility to check your messages and keep current with course information. It is **your responsibility** to check Canvas for messages every weekday. You can set up notifications/email alerts from Canvas, and you can access Canvas via their iOS and Android app. If you are having any trouble with the course (aside from technical issues) you should contact the grader immediately.

Course Duration: The course will run from June 3 to July 5, including the final exam.

Instructor

Professor Brian A. Catlos

Brian.Catlos@Colorado.edu (<mailto:Brian.Catlos@Colorado.edu>)

Prof. Catlos will be out of the country; please use email to contact him as necessary; a phone or skype call can be arranged if desired.

Brian A. Catlos is a historian and religious scholar who specialized on Christianity, Judaism and Islam in the pre-Modern Mediterranean, and particularly on ethno-religious identity and relations between religious communities. He has received many national and international awards and distinctions, and has published numerous academic articles and books. Some of his books include [*The Victors and the Vanquished: Christians and Muslims in Catalonia and Aragon, 1050–1300*](#)

(<https://www.colorado.edu/religiousstudies/briancatlos/reviews.html>) (Cambridge University Press: 2004; translated into Spanish in 2010), [*Muslims of Medieval Latin Christendom, c. 1050–1614*](#)

(<https://www.colorado.edu/religiousstudies/briancatlos/reviews2.html>) (Cambridge University Press: 2014)

and [*Infidel Kings and Unholy Warriors: Faith, Power, and Violence in the Age of Crusade and*](#)

[Jihad](https://www.colorado.edu/religiousstudies/briancatlos/reviews3.html?ie=UTF8&qid=1384731539&sr=8-1&keywords=catlos+infidels) (<https://www.colorado.edu/religiousstudies/briancatlos/reviews3.html?ie=UTF8&qid=1384731539&sr=8-1&keywords=catlos+infidels>) (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2014) and [Kingdoms of Faith: A New History of Islamic Spain](https://www.colorado.edu/religiousstudies/briancatlos/reviews6.html) (<https://www.colorado.edu/religiousstudies/briancatlos/reviews6.html>) (Basic Books: 2018). He has also worked in documentary film and writes travel guide books. For more, see www.briancatlos.com [\(http://www.briancatlos.com/\)](http://www.briancatlos.com/).

Prof. Catlos will be delivering lectures and grading the final exam, and will be available to answer questions.

Teaching Assistant

Cindy Bishop Jonas

cynthia.howard@colorado.edu (<mailto:cynthia.howard@colorado.edu>)

Contact hours: 10 am-3 pm MST

Phone (for emergencies only): 303-807-6722

Cindy is a third year graduate student completing her master's degree in the Religious Studies department this summer. Her thesis focuses on intersections of race and religion in contemporary American Evangelical media. Her graduate work has focused on interdisciplinary analysis of American Christian culture through critical race, decolonial/postcolonial theories. She will begin a PhD program in Media Studies in the fall.

As your primary contact in the course, Cindy will oversee Discussion Groups and moderate the Discussion Board, as well as field questions.

Communications Policies

Cindy will be directing discussions and will be your first contact for all course-related matters, except for technical support. For urgent matters only, you may also contact her by phone. For reasons of confidentiality and verification of identity, all emails must be sent from your colorado.edu address or via Canvas or they will not be responded to. All non-Canvas emails should have ARAB/RLST2320 in the subject line. During business hours on weekdays responses to email will normally be within 4 hours; overnight and on weekends it may take up to 12 hours; if you do not receive a reply after 12 hours, please re-send and cc.: the Instructor. Note: if you are contacting Prof. Catlos messages sent after 3pm may be subject to slower responses due to time zone difference.

Technical Requirements & Support

Please read the Technical Requirements document carefully. It is your responsibility to have access to the minimum required equipment and internet access. Extensions to assignments will not be given for technical reasons.

For technical assistance contact (5-HELP), see [Technical Requirements & Support](https://canvas.colorado.edu/courses/26996/modules/items/1261088) (<https://canvas.colorado.edu/courses/26996/modules/items/1261088>) page for more information.

Overview and Course Objectives

This course will serve as an introduction and historical overview to the Islam and Islamic society and culture, beginning with its most remote origins in pre-Islamic Arabia, through the ninth-century "Golden Age of Islam," to the decline of the caliphates in the eleventh century. The approach will be interdisciplinary and comparative, and will include material on Christian and Jewish minorities living under Islam.

The aim is to familiarize students with the origins of Islam and the forces and traditions that shaped it over its first five centuries. We will look at different interpretations of Islam in an effort to understand how they arose, and consider the relationship between religious belief, religious institutions, and larger developments in politics, economics and society. The goal is not only to gain a better understanding of the history of Islam, but of the dynamics by which most organized religions develop and diversify.

The textbooks will provide an overall narrative framework on which topical and thematic lectures are overlaid, and which will be complimented by the primary sources we will discuss.

Student Responsibilities

Students are responsible for completing all the course assignments, tests, readings and viewing the lectures in a timely manner. You will be doing the equivalent of a full semester's work in five weeks. Between lectures, readings and assignments, you can expect to spend **three to five hours per day** on the course. **You will need to log in several times per day** during the week, particularly during discussions. Students are also responsible for having adequate internet access and equipment. The course is carried out through Canvas; therefore, if you should have equipment problems you should use another computer to access Canvas and keep up with the course. This will be your responsibility.

This is a full-credit course offered in 5 weeks; expect a full semester's workload. It may not be compatible with part-time work or other commitments. Canvas logs individual students' log-ins, locations and activities; your Instructor will know when you have logged in, for how long and what you have viewed. Students who do not log in regularly and do not view all the material will not be eligible for a passing grade at the instructor's discretion.

Course Components & Grading

The course consists of several components, detailed below. The workload will be heaviest in the two weeks of the course. Be prepared to spend a considerable amount of time on this, and do not fall behind. The various assignments are timed, and it is crucial that you complete your obligations in a timely manner.

Grading

Your grade will be assessed according to three components:

Discussion Groups and Bulletin Board	(30% + up to 10% bonus) 40%
Weekly Tests	20%
Book reports	20%
Final Exam	30%
Total	100%

Syllabus Quiz & Registration Requirements

The [syllabus quiz \(https://canvas.colorado.edu/courses/26996/assignments/449362\)](https://canvas.colorado.edu/courses/26996/assignments/449362) must be completed by **June 4** (late enrollees have up to **June 6**). A score of 100% is necessary to continue in the course. You will have access to course materials and you can take the syllabus quiz as many times as necessary.

When you complete the syllabus quiz (ie **between June 4 and 6**), you are **required** to post a short note on the [Bulletin Board \(https://canvas.colorado.edu/courses/26996/discussion_topics/247616\)](https://canvas.colorado.edu/courses/26996/discussion_topics/247616), introducing yourself: including your name, major, year of study, and a short paragraph outlining why you have chosen this course, and what your interest in the subject is.

On **June 7**, you are required to complete the [Introductory Assignment. \(https://canvas.colorado.edu/courses/26996/assignments/449364\)](https://canvas.colorado.edu/courses/26996/assignments/449364)

[Bulletin Board \(https://canvas.colorado.edu/courses/26996/discussion_topics/247616\)](https://canvas.colorado.edu/courses/26996/discussion_topics/247616)

A bulletin board has been set up for students to respond to lectures, or post queries and questions regarding any of the course content and material. The board will be moderated by Cindy, who will respond to questions as necessary, but student responses are welcome and encouraged. Regular (2 per week), thoughtful, and substantial contributions by students is not mandatory but may boost your final grade up to 10%.

Quizzes

On the day of instruction following the last day of each unit there will be a quizz consisting of twenty multiple-choice questions. Questions will be taken from the lectures. You can take the tests any time (Mountain Time Zone) on the quiz day, and you are allowed two attempts. Quizzes will be “open” for 30 minutes only once you start. Your test grade will consist of the average of your four best test scores, factored to 30% of the final. You must pass (50%) every test to get a passing grade on the course. If you

receive less than 50% on a quiz, please contact Prof. Catlos without delay.

Quiz dates:

Unit I (<https://canvas.colorado.edu/courses/26996/quizzes/65177>) - Tuesday June 11

Unit II (<https://canvas.colorado.edu/courses/26996/quizzes/65178>) - Wednesday June 19

Unit III - (<https://canvas.colorado.edu/courses/26996/quizzes/65179>) Thursday June 28

Unit IV (<https://canvas.colorado.edu/courses/26996/quizzes/65176>) - Wednesday July 3 (this quiz will remain open until 11:50pm July 5)

Readings & Book Reviews

There are two text books (see below) and the total reading for the course is about 500 pages (plus supplementary readings) most of which will be done in the first two weeks. For Supplementary Readings, see below.

After reading each book you will be required to submit a 750- to 1000-page book review (3–4 double-spaced pages). For the assignment prompts see [Book Review 1](#)

(<https://canvas.colorado.edu/courses/26996/assignments/456305>) (due June 11) and [Book Review 2](#)

(<https://canvas.colorado.edu/courses/26996/assignments/456306>) (due June 18). These may be completed ahead of the due date.

Book reviews will be submitted via email to Cindy. Format should be .doc. The file name should be your last name followed by the assignment name (e.g.: SmithBookReview1.doc). Incorrectly submitted assignments are not counted as submitted. You must pass (50%) both book reviews to get a passing grade on the course. If you receive less than 50% on a book review, please contact Prof. Catlos without delay.

Final Exam

The final exam, an “open book” test, two hours in length, will consist of an interpretive essay of 750–1000 words (3-4 double-spaced pages). Accepted formats are Word (.doc and .docx), Rich Text Format (.rtf), Text (.txt) and PDF (.pdf). Other formats may not be readable and may result in a grade of zero being assigned. You can take the final exam any time between 1am (Mountain Time Zone) and 4pm (Mountain Time Zone) on July 5. You must score at least 65% on the final to pass the course.

Required Texts

Donner, Fred McGraw. *Muhammad and the Believers : At the Origins of Islam* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010).

Ruthven, Malise. *Islam: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

Additional required readings for the online discussions will be posted online as the course is underway.

An optional reading is:

Hodgson, Marshall G. S. *The Venture of Islam. Volumes 1 & 2* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press,

1974). This is probably the best overall history of the Islamic world. It is not easy reading, but if you are really interested in Islamic history it is the book to read. You will not be responsible for it for graded assignments.

Lectures

There are approximately 22.5 hours of lecture, consisting of 25 topical lectures (usually one lecture of 40–60 minutes per day), broken into segments of between about 5 and 20 minutes. Lectures will be streamed via Canvas. The lectures for each unit will be made available at 9am on the day prior to the first day of that unit, and will remain on line for the duration of the course. You should watch the lectures attentively and take notes of major points and figures. These will appear on the weekly tests.

Schedule of Lectures

For a detailed course schedule and links to the lectures see the [Class Schedule](#) (<https://canvas.colorado.edu/courses/26996/modules/items/1261085>) document and the calendar on Canvas.

Note: Lectures are made available to registered students for class purposes only; they may not be otherwise shared, distributed, transferred or copied. (R = Thursday)

Introduction - Introductory Video

Unit I Foundations

Day 1: June 3 M • 1 - The Pre-Islamic Near East

Day 2: June 4 T • 2 - The Prophet

Day 3: June 5 W • 3 - The Message

Day 4: June 6 R • 3 - The Message/ 4 - The Qur'an

Day 5: June 7 F • 4 - The Qur'an/ 5 - The Pillars of Islam

Day 6: June 10 M • 5 - The Pillars of Islam

Unit II The World of Islam

Day 7: June 11 T • 6 - Dar al-Islam

Day 8: June 12 W • 7 - The Rashidun

Day 9: June 13 R • 8 - Conquest

Day 10: June 14 F • 9 - The Rise of the Umayyads

Day 11: June 17 M • 10 - The Caliphate

Day 12: June 18 T • 11 - The Decline and Fall of the Umayyad Caliphate

Unit III The Golden Age of Islam

Day 13: June 19 W • 12 - The Rise of the Abbasids/ 13 - The Golden Age of Islam

Day 14: June 20 R • 13 - The Golden Age of Islam/ 14 - The Decline of the Abbasids

Day 15: June 21 F • 14 - The Decline of the Abbasids/ 15 - The Islamic East

Day 16: June 24 M • 15 - The Islamic East

Day 17: June 25 T • 16 - Al-Andalus

Day 18: June 26 W • 16 - Al-Andalus/ 17 - Ifriqiya & Egypt

Unit IV Islamic Culture and Society

Day 19: June 27 R • 17 - Ifriqiya & Egypt/ 18 - Faith and Law

Day 20: June 28 F • 18 - Faith and Law

Day 21: July 1 M • 18 - Faith and Law/ 19 - Authority and Culture

Day 22: July 2 T • 19 - Authority and Culture/ 20 - A Diverse Society

Day 23: July 3 W • 21 The Coming of the Barbarians

Day 24: July 5 F • Final Exam

On-line Discussions

Formal online discussions will begin on 10 June. The class will be broken into discussion groups of eight to ten people.

Each round of discussion will be based on a set of primary source readings (historical documents) relating to a specific theme. The discussion materials and prompts are available throughout the term, and you are welcome to read and consider them ahead of time. Links to the discussions can be found in the course [schedule \(https://canvas.colorado.edu/courses/26996/modules/items/1261085\)](https://canvas.colorado.edu/courses/26996/modules/items/1261085) and below.

On the first scheduled day ("1st post") of a discussion you should have read the material and written a substantive response (150 words minimum) relating to the prompt, and referring directly and specifically to the documents. Before writing, you should review the previous responses and engage with/respond to at least one of the previous responses (unless yours is the first for response to the prompt in question). In the next 48 hours (the day of the "2nd Post") students will write a second substantive response to either of the prompts, referring to and engaging with **at least two** previous posts. Aside from the two mandatory posts, students are welcome to post subsequent responses/rebuttals of any length. Consistently posting extra, well-informed messages will make you eligible for up to 10 percentage points of bonus marks applied to your final grade. Note - the 2nd post for the last discussion group is due after 48 hours.

On-line discussion is 40% of your grade; you will be assessed on the quality and quantity of your posts, comments that are superficial and do not engage with the material or the conversation thus far will not be satisfactory. Students who do not participate satisfactorily in the discussions will not be eligible to pass this course.

All source readings will be available on Canvas throughout the course. Consult the roster to see when you will be serving as discussion leader and review the prompts. You are encouraged to prepare your interpretative statement ahead of time (although you cannot post it ahead of the due date).

Online Discussion Topics

# Topic	1st post	2nd post
1 Pre-Islamic Poetry	M June 10	W June 12

2 The Life of Muhammad (https://canvas.colorado.edu/courses/26996/discussion_topics/249895)	W June 12	F June 14
3 Selections from the Qur'an (https://canvas.colorado.edu/courses/26996/discussion_topics/249894)	M June 17	W June 19
4 Muslims & non-Muslims (https://canvas.colorado.edu/courses/26996/discussion_topics/249893)	W June 19	F June 21
5 Fitna (https://canvas.colorado.edu/courses/26996/discussion_topics/249892)	M June 24	W June 26
6 Umayyad Decline/Abbasid Rise (https://canvas.colorado.edu/courses/26996/discussion_topics/249891)	W June 26	F June 28
7 The Arabian Nights (https://canvas.colorado.edu/courses/26996/discussion_topics/249890)	M July 1	W July 3

Due Dates

Due dates and times are calculated according on Mountain Daylight Time (MDT); adjust accordingly if you are in a different time zone. Assignments can be submitted at any hour on the due date, unless noted.

Academic Integrity

All work in this course must be your own, including Discussion Group contributions. Any violations of the Honor Code or acceptable academic conduct will pursued to the maximum effect. See “Honor Code” on the last page of this syllabus.

“Netiquette”

Remember, email and discussion boards are “two dimensional” modes of communication; with no gestures, no tone of voice, and no face to see, it is easy to misinterpret statements. Irony and sarcasm are very difficult to convey; avoid them. Write clearly and with courtesy. Emoticons can help, as can abbreviations as such as “IMO” (“in my opinion”). Avoid exclamation points and all caps (WHICH LOOKS LIKE SHOUTING). Before you press “send” reread your email. Is there any way it could be

misconstrued? Even if you think a response is right and reasonable, if someone else could take it wrong (no matter how wrong they are), reconsider and rewrite. If you feel someone has “flamed” you or said something improper, consider you may have misunderstood. State this and invite them to clarify. Otherwise, contact the Grader, rather than responding with a potentially offensive, defensive, hostile, or condescending response.

We will all endeavor to maintain an atmosphere of professionalism, respect and collegial collaboration. We have a zero tolerance policy regarding personal attacks, comments that are racist, sexist or otherwise discriminatory language, or “flaming”. Violation of this may result in suspension from the course. You should address emails to students, “Dear [preferred first name]”; unless advised otherwise address your TA as “Cindy” and your Instructor as “Prof. Catlos.”

University Policies

See the [University Policies \(https://canvas.colorado.edu/courses/26996/modules/items/1261086\)](https://canvas.colorado.edu/courses/26996/modules/items/1261086) [\(https://canvas.colorado.edu/courses/27001/pages/university-policies\)](https://canvas.colorado.edu/courses/27001/pages/university-policies) page for more details.