

TH 533 - Introduction to Islamic Theology PRELIMINARY SYLLABUS
Hartford Seminary

Fall 2020

Online Course with Synchronous Sessions

First Meeting 09/09/2020 (and every 2 weeks thereafter): monday, 6-8 pm

Instructor: Suheil Laher

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Office Hours: TBD

Course Description

This course provides an introduction to the breadth and depth of Islamic theology, through a close reading of primary texts, supplemented by secondary literature for historical context and further analysis. The foundational Islamic beliefs and concepts (God, Prophets, Life after Death, the nature of faith, theodicy) are discussed with reference to the role of reason and scriptural texts (Qur'an and Hadith), as well as the competing methodologies of different Islamic theological schools. We also examine theology's interaction with and impact on Sufism, philosophy, law, and society, including the concept of orthodoxy, and theological developments in the modern world.

This is an **online course with synchronous sessions**. Most course activity and interaction is done online and asynchronously; lectures, readings, discussions and other assignments are provided through the Canvas platform. However, there are regular, required Zoom meetings as a way of supplementing the asynchronous content, interaction, and activities that make up the bulk of the course. Zoom session times are carefully established prior to course registration and published as part of the schedule, typically to take place once every two weeks.

Assessment

Attendance & Participation	10%
In-Class Presentations	10%
Forum Discussions	20%
Mid-Term Examination	30%
Final Examination / Paper	30%

- Attendance: You must attend class regularly and promptly. More than two absences will reduce your grade in the course, unless there are extenuating circumstances.
- Presentations: Each week, one student will be assigned to present the contents of one of the readings for that class in 10-15mins.
- Presentations: Each student will post THREE reflections per week, 100-250 words each, to the Online Forums. These reflections should show that the student has read and thought about the assigned readings(s) for that week. One of these reflections should reflect the student's own thoughts and questions, and the remaining two should be responses to other students' posts.
- Mid-Term examination: will consist of multiple choice and/or short-answer questions
- Final Exam will consist of essay questions. If a final paper is written instead, the topic must be approved by the instructor, and the paper should be 10-15 pages long.

Books (TENTATIVE; subject to change)

REQUIRED:

- Al-Ansari, Muhammad Abdul Haq. "trans. Commentary on the Creed of at-Tahawi by ibn Abi al-Izz." (2000). (Referred to below as **Tahawi**)

OPTIONAL:

- Winter, Tim, ed. *The Cambridge companion to classical Islamic theology*. Cambridge University Press, 2008. (Referred to below as **CCCIT**)
- Renard, John, ed. *Islamic theological themes: a primary source reader*. Univ of California Press, 2014. (Referred to below as **Themes**)
- Ibn al-Muṭahhar al-Ḥillī, al-Ḥasan ibn Yūsuf, et al. *Al-Bâbu 'l-ḥādī 'Ashar : a Treatise on the Principles of Shī'ite Theology*. Royal Asiatic Society, 1928. (Referred to below as **Hilli**)

Other articles and book chapters in the assigned readings will be made available to students.

LIST OF TOPICS (TENTATIVE; subject to change)

- Introduction : What Is (and Isn't) Islamic Theology?
- Early History of Islamic Theology
- Existence of God
- Attributes of God
- Angels, Messengers, Books
- Life After Death
- Theodicy
- Rationality in Theology : *Kalam*, and *Falsafa*
- Faith, Sin & Salvation
- Theology and Sufism
- Theological in Governance, Ethics and Law
- Orthodoxy, Heresy and Blasphemy
- Theology in Modernity