ISLAM AND POLITICS (IR205)

Course duration: 54 hours lecture and class time (Over three weeks)

Summer School Programme Area: International Relations, Government and Society

LSE Teaching Department: Departments of International Relations and Government

Lead Faculty: Professor John Sidel (Dept. of International Relations/Government)

Pre-requisites: At least one introductory course in either a social science (e.g. political science, international relations, sociology, economics), or history or law. No prior specialist knowledge of Islam is required.

Course Description:

Since the turn of the 21st century, we have come to take for granted that Islam is a major force in world politics. But this state of affairs is of recent vintage and its origins and prospects for the future remain in question. Today there is still much more oversimplification and exaggeration than serious understanding and systematic analysis of when, where, how, and with what consequences Islam has become politicized and politics has become Islamicized across different parts of the world.

Against this backdrop, this course covers key questions, arguments, and debates concerning the intersection of Islam and politics today. Overall, the goal of the course is to help students to strengthen their knowledge and analytical tools to understand and explain the diverse ways in which Islam has operated as a force in politics in different parts of the world. The course focuses on a number of key questions: How can we explain the emergence of Islam as a major force in world politics in the late 20th century? How can we explain the trajectory of Islam in world politics since the turn of the 21st century? How can we explain the varying political strength and significance of Islam in different parts of the world?

The course begins by raising questions about the distinctiveness of Islam as a world religion in the public sphere and the political realm, and then briefly uses the Hajj as an example and source of insight for understanding important continuities and changes within the faith in recent history. Subsequent lectures then chronicle the shifting position of Islam in world politics from the late 19th century through the end of the Cold War era. Thereafter, the course focuses on the contemporary era stretching from the end of the Cold War to the present day.

A series of lectures provide a broad context and examine alternative perspectives on – and explanations for – the rise of Islam in world politics at the end of the 20th century. The impact of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, Saudi Arabia’s support for salafi Islam, and Sunni-Shi’a conflict and tensions are considered, as are the consequences of the end of the Cold War, globalization, and democratization. The remainder of the course focuses on the diverse intersections of Islam and politics in different parts of the world, ranging from Afghanistan and Pakistan to the Middle East, Africa, Southeast Asia, the Caucasus, and Western Europe. Successive classes will treat the trajectories of Al Qa’ida, the US-led ‘Global War on Terrorism’, the Taliban, and the ‘Islamic State’ and examine the role of Islam in the context of failed state and in struggles for new Muslim
nation-states. The final classes will treat Islamist parties and local experiments with Islamic law in democratic contexts, as well as developments and trends among Muslim immigrant communities in Europe.

Overall, the course is designed to give students a solid and sophisticated understanding of major developments and trends in the role of Islam in world politics today, grounded in historical and sociological context, comparative analysis, and specialist scholarly literature.

**Key Readings:**

There is no core textbook for the course. But the following books provide useful background knowledge and/or analytical frameworks of relevance for the study of Islam and Politics:


**Course Structure:**

- Lectures: 36 hours
- Classes: 18 hours

**Formative course work:**

- An essay plan, submitted to the class teacher by the end of the first week (Friday, August 3rd).

**Assessment:**

Course assessment consists of:

1) An essay of 1500 words, submitted as an email attachment to be sent to the class teacher by 10am on **Friday, August 10th**. The essay will count for 50% of the final mark. Students must choose a question from among those provided for class discussion.

2) A two-hour written exam on **Friday, August 17th**. Students will be asked to answer two out of eight questions. The exam will count for 50% of the final mark. The precise time and location of the exam will be circulated during the programme.
Lecture Schedule:

1. Monday, 30 July: Islam in Comparative Historical and Sociological Perspective
2. Tuesday, 31 July: The Rise and Decline of Islam in World Politics (1875-1945)
3. Wednesday, 1 August: New Nation States, the Cold War, and Rise of Islam (1945-90)
4. Thursday, 2 August: Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Sunni-Shi’a Conflict
5. Friday, 3 August: The End of the Cold War, Globalization, and Democratization
6. Monday, 6 August: The Rise, Transformation, and Decline of Al Qa’ida
7. Tuesday, 7 August: The Rise, Fall, and Resurgence of the Taliban in Afghanistan
8. Wednesday, 8 August: Islam, the US, and the ‘Global War On Terrorism’
9. Thursday, 9 August: The Rise and Fall of ‘Islamic State’?
10. Friday, 10 August: No lecture
11. Monday, 13 August: Islam in Failed States and Struggles for New Nation-States
12. Tuesday, 14 August: Islamist Parties, Democracy, and Decentralization
13. Wednesday, 15 August: Islam, Immigration, Gender, and Multiculturalism in Europe
14. Thursday, 16 August: No lecture
15. Friday, 17 August: EXAM

Seminar Schedule:

1. Monday, 30 July: Islam in Comparative Historical and Sociological Perspective

What specific features of the global context within which the Muslim world has been situated help to explain the distinctive trajectory which politics in the name of Islam has assumed in the modern world? What are the limitations of a ‘profane’ contextual approach? How have the distinctive features of Islam as a faith and as a set of practices shaped the fate of Islam as a community of believers in the modern world?

Required readings:

Additional readings:
2. **Tuesday, 31 July**: Islam in World Politics from the Age of Empire to World War II

*How did developments in world politics in the late 19th century transform the possibilities for ‘imagining’ and organizing Islam? How can we explain the trajectory of Islam as a force in world politics in the interwar era? How should we understand the activities and impact of Sayyid Jamāl ad-Dīn al-Afghānī?*

**Required reading:**


**Additional readings:**


3. **Wednesday, 1 August**: New Nation States, the Cold War, and the Rise of Islam, 1945-90

*What was the impact of the Cold War on Islam and on those forces working to mobilize under its banner? How did the rise and decline of anti-imperialist ‘Third Worldism’ reshape Islam and the possibilities for Islamist politics in the Muslim world?*

**Required reading:**


**Additional readings:**


4. **Thursday, 2 August**: Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Sunni-Shi’a Conflict

*What has been the impact of the Islamic Revolution in Iran and Saudi sponsorship of salafi Islam and anti-Shi’i sectarianism? What implications can we draw from Pakistan in the 1980s and 1990s?*

**Required reading:**

Additional readings:


5. **Friday, 3 August**: The End of the Cold War, Globalization, and Democratization

What were the consequences of the end of the Cold War for Islam? What has been the impact of globalization and democratization on Islam?

**Required reading:**


**Additional readings:**


6. **Monday, 6 August**: The Rise, Transformation, and Decline of Al-Qa’ida

How can we explain the trajectory and transformations of Al Qa’ida?

**Required readings:**


**Additional readings:**


7. **Tuesday, 7 August**: The Rise, Fall, and Resurgence of the Taliban in Afghanistan

*How can we explain the rise, fall, and resurgence of the Taliban in Afghanistan?*

**Required readings:**


**Additional readings:**


8. **Wednesday, 8 August**: Islam, the US, and the ‘Global War On Terrorism’

*What have been the consequences of the US-led ‘Global War On Terrorism’ (GWOT)?*

**Required reading:**


**Additional readings:**
9. **Thursday, 9 August**: The Rise and Fall of ‘Islamic State’?

*How can we explain the emergence and entrenchment of the ‘Islamic State’ in Iraq and Syria and elsewhere? What are the prospects for its defeat and disappearance in the years ahead?*

**Required reading:**


**Additional readings:**


10. **Friday, 10 August**: No lecture.

11. **Monday, 13 August**: Islam in Failed States and Struggles for New Muslim Nation-States

*How do failed states and struggles for new Muslim nation-states enable and impel mobilization in the name of Islam?*

**Required reading:**


**Additional readings:**


12. **Tuesday, 14 August: Islamist Parties, Democracy, and Decentralization**

*What are the consequences of democratization and decentralization for Islam and politics? How should we understand patterns of Islamist politics under conditions of democracy?*

**Required readings:**


**Additional readings:**


13. **Wednesday, 15 August: Islam, Immigration, Multiculturalism, and Gender in Europe**

*What have been the consequences of large-scale Muslim immigration and settlement in Europe for Islam and politics?*

**Required readings:**


Additional readings:


14. **Thursday, 16 August**: No seminar.

15. **Friday, 17 August**: Exam.

**Credit Transfer**: If you are hoping to earn credit by taking this course, please ensure that you confirm it is eligible for credit transfer well in advance of the start date. Please discuss this directly with your home institution or Study Abroad Advisor.

As a guide, our LSE Summer School courses are typically eligible for three or four credits within the US system and 7.5ECTS in Europe. Different institutions and countries can, and will, vary. You will receive a digital transcript and a printed certificate following your successful completion of the course in order to make arrangements for transfer of credit.

If you have any queries, please direct them to summer.school@lse.ac.uk