

Relg. 307B Imagining Islam: Icon, Object, and Image

Professor Travis Zadeh

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Class Meeting: W. 1:30-4:00

Class location: Koshland E115

Office: 206 Link INSC



Course Description:

This course explores the diverse manners in which religion, in general, and Islam, in particular, have been conceptualized and imagined through material and visual cultures. How does vision affect the understanding and practice of religion? What can material objects and visual representations do which texts or speech cannot? How is a textual representation different than a material or visual one? Topics include: icon, iconicity, and iconoclasm; the material object as a site of charismatic power; sacred space and sacred architecture; shrine worship / book worship; bodies and objects in a world of ritual purity and impurity; medicine and physical corruption; calligraphy, painting / sign and image; talismans, charms, and incantations; visuality and materiality as religious experience; literature and the illusion of representation.

Course Design

This course serves as a forum to discuss issues raised by the material. Participation consists not only of attendance and completing the required readings, but also active involvement in discussion. There are weekly written responses to the readings (1-2 paragraphs), to be posted on Blackboard and to be due each Tuesday by 10pm. Each student will deliver one in-class presentation on an assigned topic related to material and visual cultures. There is one research paper (10-12 pages) due March 22 on individual topics assigned by the professor. Additionally, there is a final paper (18-20 pages), topics for which are to be chosen in consultation with the professor, due at the end of term.

Texts for Purchase

G.R. Hawting, *The Idea of Idolatry*.

B. Wheeler, *Mecca and Eden*.

Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *The Medicine of the Prophet*.

J. Renard, *Friends of God*.

O. Pamuk, *My Name is Red*.

Grading

Class Participation	10%
Blackboard Responses	20%
Research Paper	25%
Presentation	15%
Final Paper	30%

Readings marked with an asterisk (*) in the syllabus are to be found on Blackboard.

Course Outline

Unit One: Imagining

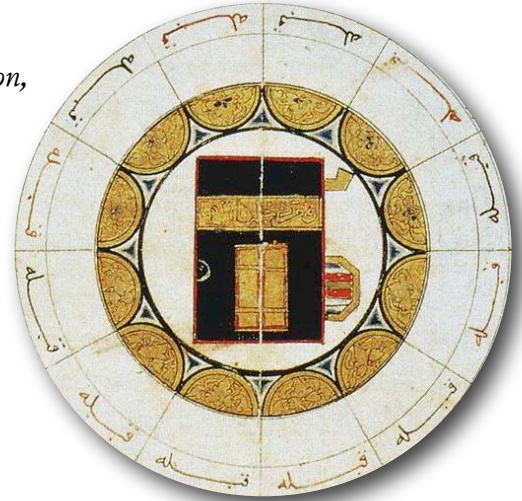
Week 1 (1/20): Phenomenology, Iconicity, and the Aniconic

Week 2 (1/27): Categories of Religion

Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion*, pp. 15-51 & 80-119.*

Clifford Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural System," pp. 87-125.*

Talal Asad, "Religion as an Anthropological Category," pp. 27-54.*



Unit Two: Icons and Idolatry

Week 3 (2/3): Idols and the Idea of Idolatry

Ibn al-Kalbī (d. 822), *The Book of Idols*, pp. 3-53.*

G. Hawting, *The Idea of Idolatry*, pp. 1-110, 150-1.

Week 4 (2/10): Iconoclasm

A. Vasiliev, "The Iconoclastic Edict of the Caliph Yazid II, A.D. 721," pp. 23-47.*

S. Griffiths, "Theodore Abu Qurrah's Arabic Tract on the Christian Practice of Venerating Images" pp. 53-73.*

G. von Grunebaum, "Byzantine Iconoclasm," pp. 1-10.*

D. Morgan, "The Violence of Seeing," pp. 115-46.*

Week 5 (2/17): The Ka'ba and the Mosque

Ibn Jubayr (d. 1217), *Travels*, pp. 69-195, 271-312.*

Brannon Wheeler, *Mecca and Eden*, pp. 1-98.



Unit Three: The Ocular and the Corporeal

Week 6 (2/24): Bodies and Relics

Ibn al-Jawziyya (d. 1350), *The Medicine of the Prophet*, 3-22, 76-9, 94-201, 230-2, 270-5, 282-8.

Brannon Wheeler, *Mecca and Eden*, pp. 99-134.

Week 7 (3/3): On Vision and Ascension

The Mi'raj of Bistāmī, pp. 242-50.*

Ash'arī (d. 936), *The Elucidation*, pp. 63-5.*

Qushayrī (d. 1074), “The Vision of the Sufis,” *Risāla*, pp. 392-403.*
Juwaynī (d. 1085), “Proof that a Vision of God is Possible,” *al-Irshād*, pp. 93-102.*
John Renard, *Friends of God*, pp. 1-89.

****SPRING BREAK****

Week 8 (3/17): Miracles

Juwaynī (d. 1085), “On Prophetic and Sainly Miracles,” *al-Irshād*, pp. 165-76.*
Qushayrī (d. 1074), “On Miracles,” *Risāla*, pp. 357-92.*
The Spiritual Feats of Aḥmad-e Jām (d. 1141), pp. 69-181, pp. 380-409.*
John Renard, *Friends of God*, pp. 90-117, 165-211, 259-81.

Week 9 (3/24): Light and (In)Corporeality

****Research Papers Due 3/22****

Suhrawardī (d. 1168), *The Shape of Light*, pp.39-100,
and *The Book of Radiance*, pp. 2-42, 79-85.*
Mullā Ṣadrā (d. 1636), *On the Hermeneutics of the Light Verse*, pp. 35-142.*



Unit Four: The Material Inscriptions

Week 10 (3/31): Charisma and the Qurʾān

Nawawī (d. 1277), *Etiquette with the Qurʾān*.
T. Zadeh, “Fire Cannot Harm It,” pp. 50-72.*

Week 11 (4/7): The Material Word

Ibn al-Nadīm (d. ca 995), “On Language and Calligraphy,” *The Index*, pp. 6-40.*
Isbahānī (d. 967), *The Book of Strangers*.
J. Pedersen, *The Arabic Book*. pp. 37-88, 101-30.*

Week 12 (4/14): Beauty and the Illuminated Page

Niẓāmī (d. 1203), *Layla wa Majnun*.
D. Roxburgh, *The Persian Album*, pp. 1-35, 149-79.*

****Paper Topics Due 4/14****

Unit Five: Historical Imaginings

Week 13 (4/21): Of Miniatures and Murderers

Orhan Pamuk, *My Name is Red*, pp. 1-205.

Week 14 (4/28): Mimesis and the Novel

Orhan Pamuk, *My Name is Red*, pp. 205-413.

****Final Papers Due 5/14****