

An Introduction to Islam in Central Asia

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(Historical and Anthropological Perspectives)

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Form of major course assessment:

Essay or presentation.

Content of the teaching programme:

The course offers a historical and anthropological outline of Islam in Central Asia. On the basis of historical works and contemporary ethnographic accounts the fields of main characteristics, local context and global influences in “Islamic Central Asia” will be discussed. While paying special attention to the examples of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan a wider geographic range will be taken into consideration for the analysis of religion within a regional framework

An overview of lectures:

1. Historical Background on Islam in Central Asia: From Colonial Times to the Soviet Period
2. Ritual of Change: State Intervention and the Cost of Death
3. Experiencing Modernity: In Search for New Models
4. Religious Others: Non-Mainstream Islam in Central Asia
5. Pursuing Muslimness: Moralities vs. Politics / Final Discussion

Expected results:

The participants are expected to gain knowledge of Islam in Central Asia on an introductory level. Awareness of historical developments and recent approaches to the study of Islam in the region will be raised. Furthermore, skills in the analysis of religion in a “post-Soviet” context will be improved.

1. Historical Background on Islam in Central Asia: From Colonial Times to the Soviet Period

a) Questions/tasks for seminary discussion:

- Outline the historical development of Islam in Central Asia
- Does history matter? Argue on the basis of Khalid's opinion.
- Which major historical changes have shaped Islam in Central Asia during the past 150 years?

b) Compulsory reading:

Adeeb Khalid, *Islam after Communism*, Berkeley 2007, 1-83.

c) Additional literature:

Daniel Brower. *Turkestan and the Fate of the Russian Empire*, London 2003.

Devin DeWeese. "Islam and the Legacy of Sovietology: a Review Essay on Yaacov Ro'i's *Islam in the Soviet Union*", *Journal of Islamic Studies* (13/3) 2002, 298-330.

Yaacov Ro'i. *Islam in the Soviet Union: from the Second World War to Gorbachev*, London 2000.

2. Ritual of Change: Transformation and State Intervention

a) Questions for seminary discussion:

- How have funeral rites in Kyrgyzstan changed during the Soviet period and after?
- Analyse the state's role in shaping religion.
- What does Jacquesson mean by "the state as cultural project"? And what are such a state's implications for religion?

b) Compulsory reading:

Svetlana Jacquesson. "The Sore Zones of Identity: Past and Present Debates on Funerals in Kyrgyzstan", *Inner Asia* 10/2 2008, 281-303.

c) Additional literature:

David Gulette. "A State of Passion: The Use of Ethnogenesis in Kyrgyzstan",
Inner Asia 10/2 2008, 261-279.

3. Experiencing Modernity: In Search for New Models

a) Questions for seminary discussion:

- How does McBrien situate modernity in everyday life?
- Does modernity relate to religion? If yes: how?
- What role plays the veil in a Kyrgyzstani context?

b) Compulsory reading:

Julie McBrien. "Mukadas' Struggle : Veils and Modernity in Kyrgyzstan", *JRAI* 2009,
127-144.

c) Additional literature:

Caroline Humphrey, Magnus Marsden, and Vera Skvirskaja. "Cosmopolitanism and the City.
Interaction and Coexistence in Bukhara", in: Shail Mayaram (ed.), *The Other Global
City*, New York 2009, 202-231.

Julie McBrien, *The Fruit of Devotion: Islam and Modernity in Kyrgyzstan*, PhD thesis,
Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg 2008.

4. Religious Others: Non-Mainstream Muslims in Central Asia

a) Questions for seminary discussion:

- How do the Ismailis along the Pamir Highway conceptualise diaspora?
- What could be implications of the Sunni-Shia divide in Central Asia?
- How do ethnic, religious, and political identities connect in the case of Eastern Tajikistan?

b) Compulsory reading:

Till Mostowlansky, "Paving the Way: Isma'ili Genealogy and Mobility along Tajikistan's
Pamir Highway", *Journal of Persianate Studies* (forthcoming).

c) Additional literature:

Julie McBrien and Mathijs Pelkmans. „Turning Marx on his Head: Missionaries, ‘Extremists’ and Archaic Secularists in Post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan”, *Critique of Anthropology* (28/1) 2008, 87-103.

Jonah Steinberg, *Isma’ili Modern: Globalization and Identity in a Muslim Community*, Chapel Hill 2011.

5. Pursuing Muslimness: Moralities vs. Politics

a) Questions for seminary discussion:

- What is the meaning of the term “Muslimness” according to Louw?
- How are pilgrimage sites related to politics?
- Analyse the article from a critical “Study-of-Religions” point of view.

b) Compulsory reading:

Maria Louw. “Pursuing ‘Muslimness’: Shrines as Sites for Moralities in the Making in Post-Soviet Bukara”, *Central Asian Survey* (25/3) 2006, 319-339.

c) Additional literature:

Manja Stephan. “Education, Youth, and Islam: The Growing Popularity of Private Religious Lessons in Dushanbe, Tajikistan”, *Central Asian Survey* (29/4) 2010, 469-483.

Johan Rasanayagam. “‘I am not a Wahhabi’: State Power and Muslim Orthodoxy in Uzbekistan”, in: Chris Hann (ed). *The Postsocialist Religious Question: Faith and Power in Central Asia and East-Central Europe*, Berlin 2006, 99-124