

ST 5550
Christian Encounter With Islam
Reformed Theological Seminary
Dr. N. Gray Sutanto (gsutanto@rts.edu)

Course Description

This course is an introduction to Islamic theology, faith, and practice. The course will focus on the teachings, history, and diversity of Islam, and formulating a Christian response.

Course Readings

The Qur'an, trans. M. A. S. Abdel Haleem. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), Selections (to be provided at beginning of the course).

Ayman S. Ibrahim, *A Concise Guide to the Qur'an: Answering Thirty Critical Questions* (Baker Academic, 2020), Entirety OR Ibrahim, *Concise Guide to the Life of Muhammad* (Baker Academic, 2022), Entirety.

Mona Siddiqui, *How to Read the Qur'an* (Norton, 2008), Entirety.

Daniel Brown, *A New Introduction to Islam*, 3rd ed., (Oxford: Blackwell, 2017). Entirety.

Matthew Kaemingk, *Christian Hospitality and Muslim Immigration in an Age of Fear* (Eerdmans, 2018). Entirety. (If you've read this book for Apologetics, read Daniel Strange's *Their Rock is Not Like Our Rock* instead)

Gary Corwin, "Ten Things Worth Knowing About Islam," and "Muslim Ministry in the Days Ahead: Two Fault Lines, Two Favorable Winds," in *Envisioning Effective Ministry: Evangelism in a Muslim Context*, ed. Fortunak Nichols and Gary R. Corwin (EMIS, 2010). PDF available.

Timothy C. Tennet, "Followers of Jesus (Isa) in Islamic Mosques: A Closer Examination of C-5 'High-Spectrum' Contextualization," *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 23 (2006). PDF available.

John Travis, Phil Parshall, Herbert Hoeffler, and Rebecca Lewis, "Four Responses to Tennet," *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 23 (2006). PDF available.

Course Requirements:

1. Annotated Summary *or* a Term Research Paper (30%):
 - a. Option 1: Students will write an annotated summary of either of the Ayman S. Ibrahim texts (*Concise Guide to Qur'an* or *Muhammad*). The summary will be divided in accordance with the thirty questions addressed and seek to summarize the answer of each of the thirty questions in no more than 100 words each (3000 word max). For each answer, students will footnote a complementing portion of the Ibrahim text, the Qur'an and explanation from the Brown reading to show that the student has thoughtfully digested the reading material. There should be at least one note every two sections. The footnotes will not be included in your word count. (Sample provided below).

- b. Option 2: Students will write a 3000 word (max) research paper on a particular topic related to the course of their choosing (to be approved by the professor). Students will use at least 8 scholarly sources, have a clear thesis, and cite appropriately.
 - i. Sample paper topics: (i) Al-Ghazali on the divine status of the Qur'an (ii) contemporary Christian engagement with Shari'a (iii) Jesus in contemporary Islamic polemics (iv) Abraham Kuyper on the moral teachings of Islam (v) Sin in Islam and in Christianity.
 - c. Due date will be on Canvas
2. Mosque visit/ dialogue with a Muslim (20%): Students will visit a Mosque to observe a Friday afternoon and give a brief, 1000 word report on the experience (asking critical questions such as: (i) what misconceptions did I have prior to attending this service? (ii) what were new or surprising things that you learned from this service? (iii) How is Islamic worship similar to or different from Christian worship?).
 - a. If this is not possible, you will meet a Muslim for at least an hour and write a 1000 word report on this discussion. You can ask questions like: (i) What are their views of the Qur'an and the messenger, Muhammad? (ii) What are some of the religious practices they would commit to as a Muslim? (iii) What are their views on Jesus and of Christianity?
 3. Reading Pledge (10%) – Students will report how many percent of the readings they have completed. Note that you will only be pledging to read the selections of the Qur'an, the Brown and Kaemingk texts, and the Corwin, Tennen, and Travis articles. Due date will be on Canvas.
 4. Final exam (40%): A study guide will be provided. The exam will cover both the lecture and reading material. Due date will be on Canvas.

Class Topics:

1. Islamic Life, Principles for Inter-religious Dialogue, and Overview
2. Life of Muhammad and early Islamic history
3. Early Islamic History and the Qur'an
4. Hadith and Law: Diversity in Islam pt. 1 – Sunni Schools of Law, Shi'ism, Sufism, Salafism and Modern Islam
5. Diversity in Islam pt. 2 – Hermeneutical Issues in the Qur'an and Hadith – on Jihad and Women
6. Muslim-Christian Relations pt. 1: Qur'anic Polemics and Early Dialogue
7. Muslim-Christian Relations pt. 2: Crusades, Medieval and Modern Dialogues
8. Contemporary Theological and Missiological Issues; Apologetics to Islam.

Suggested Reading Schedule

As an Intensive: Before the week of class, read Siddiqui and the Daniel Brown readings. After class, read the Ayman Ibrahim Concise Guide of your choosing, the texts on the insider movement, Kaemingk/Strange, and the Quranic Suras (in the order suggested below: Q1, 62, 112, 17, 33, 53, 96, 2, 3, 5, 4, 9, 5, 10, 12, 14, 19, 47, 71, 65, 55, 56, 72, 75-6).

Before Class: Read Siddiqui, Entirely.

Week 1:

Q1, 62, 112.

Brown, chp. 1-2.

Kaemingk, pt. 1.

Week 2:

Q17, 33, 53, 96, 2

Brown, chp. 3-5

Week 3:

Q3, 5

Brown, chp. 6-8

Week 4:

Q4, 9

Brown, chp. 9-11

Week 5:

Q5, 10, 12

Brown, chp. 12-13.

Week 6:

Q14, 19, 47, 71.

Brown, chp. 14-15.

Week 7

Kaemingk, pt. 2

Week 8:

Q65, 55-6, 72, 75-6

Brown, chps. 16.

Week 9

Brown chp. 17.

Kaemingk, pt. 3

Corwin, Tennen, and Travis.

Week 10

Brown chp. 18.

Kaemingk, pt. 4.

On the Annotated Summary:

Sample:

1. What is the Qur'an?

The Qur'an, in Islamic theology and tradition, is the authoritative revelation from God, given to the messenger Muhammad. It contains 114 chapters (*sura*) consisting of verses (*aya*), and is mostly ordered according to size.¹ Each *sura* is titled. An *aya* can also mean a supernatural wonder or sign.

2. What does Qur'an mean?

Qur'an means 'recitation' – which denotes the Islamic theological belief that the Qur'an was not written by any human being, but was directly given by God himself, recited by Muhammad. To recite the text is also central to Islamic piety and practice, as they believe that recitation of the Qur'an can bring blessings and reflects the reciter's devotion.²

On Exams:

The final exam will consist in a selection of short essays and long essay questions. Write as clearly and exhaustively as you can, with as much detail as you can, in proper paragraphs. Students will choose 5 out of 8 short essay prompts (worth 10 points each), and 2 out of 3 long essay questions (25 points each). Each of the questions will focus on Islamic theology, practice, and Christian responses to Islam. A study guide will be provided.

Sample short essay questions (answer in 1-3 paragraphs)

1. Define descriptive, juridical, and normative pluralism.
2. What do Muslims believe about the Qur'an?
3. What does the Qur'an say about Jesus, the prophet?
4. Briefly explain John of Damascus's early Christian response to Islam.

Sample long essay questions (be as exhaustive as you can).

1. Outline the central events in Muhammad's life as covered in class.
2. What is *tawhid* and *shirk*? How might a Christian respond to the claim that Trinitarianism compromises *tawhid*?

Select Bibliography

For the Qur'an, visit www.quran.com / www.studyquran.org.

For the *hadith*, visit www.sunnah.com

Bassam M. Chadid, *Islam: What Every Christian Should Know* (Evangelical Press, 2004)

J.H. Bavinck, *The Church Between the Temple and the Mosque* (Eerdmans, 1981)

J.H. Bavinck, *J.H. Bavinck Reader* (Eerdmans, 2013)

Jonathan Brown, *Hadith: Muhammad's Legacy in the Medieval and Modern World* (One World, 2009)

Colin Chapman, *Cross and Crescent: Responding to the Challenge of Islam* (IVP, 2008)

¹ The division into Suras seems to be an original feature of the text, but the numbered verses were added much later, and verse numbering systems are not uniform... Suras are ordered not according to any chronological scheme, but roughly from longest to shortest." (Brown, 78).

² As Sura 96, the first revelation to the messenger, states, Muhammad is to recite, or read, what God is revealing: "Read! In the name of your Lord who created: He created man from a clinging form. Read! Your Lord is the Most Bountiful One who taught by the pen, who taught man what he did not know." (Q 96:1-4)

John Esposito, *Islam: The Straight Path*, 4th ed. (Oxford, 2010)
 John Esposito, ed. *Oxford Encyclopedia of the Islam World* (Oxford, 2009).
 Alfred Gauillaume, trans. *The Life of Muhammad: A Translation of Ibn Ishaq's Sirat Rasul Allah* (Oxford, 1967)
 Norman Geisler and Abdul Saleeb, *Answering Islam: The Crescent in Light of the Cross* (Baker, 2002)
 Timothy George, *Is the Father of Jesus the God of Muhammad?* (Zondervan, 2002)
 C. T. R. Hewer, *Understanding Islam: An Introduction* (Fortress Press, 2006).
 Martin Lings, *Muhammad: His Life Based on His Earliest Sources* (Inner Traditions, 2006).
 Ingrid Mattson, *The Story of the Qur'an* (Blackwell, 2013).
 Fahzrul Rahman, *Islam* (University of Chicago Press, 2002).
 Fahzrul Rahman, *Major Themes of the Qur'an* (University of Chicago Press, 2009)
 Joshua Ralston, *Law and the Rule of God: Christian Engagement with Shari'a* (Cambridge, 2020)
 Peter Riddell and Peter Cotterell, *Islam in Context: Past, Present, and Future* (Baker, 2003)
 Mona Siddiqui, *Christians, Muslims, and Jesus* (Yale, 2014)
 Keith Small, *Textual Criticism and the Qur'an* (Lexington, 2011)
 Nabeel Qureeshi, *Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus; Answering Jihad; No God but One: Allah or Jesus?* (Zondervan, 2014, 2016).
 Miroslav Volf, *Allah: A Christian Response* (HarperCollins, 2011)
 James White, *What Every Christian Needs to Know About the Qur'an* (Bethany Press, 2013).

Grading System

A	(97-100)	4.00
A-	(94-96)	3.66
B+	(91-93)	3.33
B	(88-90)	3.00
B-	(86-87)	2.66
C+	(83-85)	2.33
C	(80-82)	2.00
C-	(78-79)	1.66
D+	(75-77)	1.33
D	(72-74)	1.00
D-	(70-71)	0.66
F	(below 70)	0.00
I	(incomplete)	–
W	(withdraw)	–

The grade “I” indicates that the work required for the course was not completed. It is given only when special, extenuating circumstances (such as illness) prevent the student from completing the work or taking the examination.

A written request for an extension must be submitted prior to the due date of the work concerned. If the request is granted, it remains the responsibility of the student to complete all work for the course as soon as possible. In any case, an “I” grade must be removed within the extension time granted; otherwise it will be changed to “F.”

The grade “W” indicates that a student has withdrawn from a course after the drop deadline. This grade is granted by the academic dean only in extenuating circumstances.

If a course is retaken, the original grade remains on the transcript and is included in the GPA.



Course Objectives Related to MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes

Course: ST 5550

Professor: Sutanto

Campus: Washington, D.C.

Date: Spring 2026

MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes		Rubric	Mini-Justification
<p><i>In order to measure the success of the MDiv curriculum, RTS has defined the following as the intended outcomes of the student learning process. Each course contributes to these overall outcomes. This rubric shows the contribution of this course to the MDiv outcomes.</i></p> <p><i>*As the MDiv is the core degree at RTS, the MDiv rubric will be used in this syllabus.</i></p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong • Moderate • Minimal • None 	
Articulation (oral & written)	Broadly understands and articulates knowledge, both oral and written, of essential biblical, theological, historical, and cultural/global information, including details, concepts, and frameworks. Also includes ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm.	Strong	Reading, lectures, and annotated summary, focus on content, clarity, persuasive argumentation, and logical analysis.
Scripture	Significant knowledge of the original meaning of Scripture. Also, the concepts for and skill to research further into the original meaning of Scripture and to apply Scripture to a variety of modern circumstances. (Includes appropriate use of original languages and hermeneutics; and integrates theological, historical, and cultural/global perspectives.)	Moderate	Lectures and reading will emphasize the reliability of the Scriptures in order to dialogue with Islamic theology and practice.
Reformed Theology	Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.	Moderate	Lectures and reading will show how Reformed theology impacts our understanding of other religions and Islam.
Sanctification	Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student’s sanctification.	Minimal	Lectures and reading help us patiently understand the Islamic faith for the purposes of

			dialogue and evangelism.
Worldview	Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God. Includes ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues.	Strong	Christian and Islamic worldviews are the subject matters of this course.
Winsomely Reformed	Embraces a winsomely Reformed ethos. (Includes an appropriate ecumenical spirit with other Christians, especially Evangelicals; a concern to present the Gospel in a God-honoring manner to non-Christians; and a truth-in-love attitude in disagreements.)	Strong	The course will focus on engaging with and understanding an alternative to the Christian faith for the sake of persuasion.
Pastoral Ministry	Ability to minister the Word of God to hearts and lives of both church and unchurched, to include preaching, teaching, leading in worship, leading and shepherding the local congregation, aiding in spiritual maturity, concern for non-Christians.	Moderate	Ministers should be able to aid their congregants through some of the intellectual and existential challenges against the Christian faith.