The Shi‘i Crescent: History, Culture and Religion

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2 credits

Office hours: by appointment

Midterm: In-Class Exam – 19%

Final: Take-home Paper – 81%

General:

The Islamic Revolution in Iran and the rise of radical Jihadist movements brought sectarianism back to the center-stage of politics in the Middle East. Empowerment of the Shi‘is in Iraq following the US-led invasion of the country in 2003, further intensified the sectarian rift in the region. This course will analyse the history, culture and religion of Shi‘i world as it evolved over centuries. The aim is to assess the variants and offshoots of the Shi‘i world to demonstrate the multiple strands of Shi‘i Islam from its early times until the present.

Schedule:

1. Introduction: The Return of Sectarianism

2. Sunna and Shi‘i Historical Overview
3. Twelver Shi‘ism

4. The Mujtahids Leadership

5. The Ismaili Community
F. Daftari, “The Ismaili Da‘wa outside the Fatimid Dawla” L’Egypte fatimide: Son art et son histoire, Paris, 2000

6. The Secretive Druze Community
Anne Bennett, “Reincarnation, Sect Unity and Identity among the Druze”, Ethnology; 45:2 (Spring 2006): 87-104.

7. Alawites and their Unique Beliefs

8. The Bahai Faith

9. Twelver Shi‘is under Nation-States: The Case of Iraq

10. Shi‘i Reformism


11. Twelver Shi‘is in the Gulf Countries
Y. Nakash, Reaching for Power: The Shi'a in the Modern Arab World (2011)

12. The Islamic Revolution and its Religious Message


13. Hizbullah


14. Jihadist Movements


15. Iraq after 2003


16. The Arab Spring, Sunni and Shi'i Relations

Elishva Machlis, “The Arab State between Sectarianism, Nationalism, and Islamism” in B Friedman, B Maddy-Weitzman (eds.) Inglorious Revolutions: State Cohesion in the Middle East After the Arab Spring (Dayan Center), 1-18.