

## From Ibn Taymiyya to the Islamic State

ASPT 5984/PSCI 4724

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**COURSE DESCRIPTION** Presently, the most radical and violent movement that attaches itself to Sunni Islam is the *Islamic State* (IS). With its excessive use of violence, the movement even alienates other movements, like al-Qaida, that promote global Jihadism. Because of its justification for an excessive use of violence, the movement is not just a severe threat to mainstream *islams* and people living in (and fleeing from) their main region of activity, but also to Western security.

The course aims at exploring the theological and ideological roots of *Islamic State Ideology*. As almost all radical movements in twentieth and twenty-first century Sunni Islam, IS considers the Hanbali theologian Ibn Taymiyya (in a radicalized reading) as one of its main intellectual sources. Other influences are mid-18th-century *Wahhabiyya*, the related *Salafiyya* movement, the Muslim Brotherhood, and (usually overlooked) Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi. In addition, the course leaves some room for exploring how Western politics has contributed to the birth and development of Muslim radicalization.

**FORMAT** The course is designed as a seminar. There will be no formal lectures, but rather the primary classroom work will be discussion of the assigned reading for the week. The professor will facilitate and direct discussion, and occasionally offer relevant background or conceptual information. Each student will be expected to contribute on a weekly basis to the debate and interchange within the class.

**REQUIREMENTS** Students are expected to be current with the reading assignments. They will be expected to make at least one presentation during the course of the semester (10%). These presentations will be a critical engagement (NOT a summary) with one of the core readings. Each student is expected to hand in two shorter essays (approximately 7-10 pages) reflecting on the previous readings (30%) and to be actively engaged in class discussion (20%). Students who are enrolled in the seminar at the 5000-level will also write a 20-25 pages research paper on some aspects of the seminar's themes (40%). Students who are enrolled in the seminar at the 4000-level will also write a 15-20 pages research paper on some aspects of the seminar's themes (40%). Possible topics will be discussed with the instructor on an individual basis.

**ACADEMIC DISHONESTY** The Undergraduate Honor Code pledge that each member of the university community agrees to abide by states:

**“As a Hokie, I will conduct myself with honor and integrity at all times. I will not lie, cheat, or steal, nor will I accept the actions of those who do.”**

Students enrolled in this course are responsible for abiding by the Honor Code. A student who has doubts about how the Honor Code applies to any assignment is responsible for obtaining specific guidance from the course instructor before submitting the assignment for evaluation. Ignorance of the rules does not exclude any member of the University community from the requirements and expectations of the Honor Code. For additional information about the Honor Code, please visit:

<https://www.honorsystem.vt.edu/>

**HONOR CODE PLEDGE FOR ASSIGNMENTS:** The Virginia Tech honor pledge for assignments is as follows: **“I have neither given nor received unauthorized assistance on this assignment.”**

The pledge is to be written out on all graded assignments and signed by the student. The honor pledge represents both an expression of the student’s support of the honor code and an unambiguous acknowledgment that the student has, on the assignment in question, abided by the obligation that the Honor Code entails. In the absence of a written honor pledge, the Honor Code still applies to an assignment.

1. All assignments submitted shall be considered "graded work" and all aspects of your coursework are covered by the Honor Code. All projects and homework assignments are to be completed individually unless otherwise specified.

2. Commission of any of the following acts shall constitute academic misconduct. This listing is not, however, exclusive of other acts that may reasonably be said to constitute academic misconduct. Clarification is provided for each definition with some examples of prohibited behaviors in the Undergraduate Honor Code Manual located at <https://www.honorsystem.vt.edu/>

**CHEATING:** may lead to an unfair academic advantage by the student violating the rule(s).

Cheating includes the intentional use of unauthorized materials, information, notes, study aids or other devices or materials in any academic exercise, or attempts thereof.

**PLAGIARISM:** Plagiarism includes the copying of the language, structure, programming, computer code, ideas, and/or thoughts of another and passing off the same as one’s own original work, or attempts thereof.

**FALSIFICATION:** Falsification includes the statement of any untruth, either verbally or in writing, with respect to any element of one’s academic work, or attempts thereof.

**FABRICATION:** Fabrication includes making up data and results, and recording or reporting them, or submitting fabricated documents, or attempts thereof.

**MULTIPLE SUBMISSION:** Multiple submission involves the submission for credit—without authorization of the instructor receiving the work—of substantial portions of any work (including oral reports) previously submitted for credit at any academic institution, or attempts thereof.

**COMPLICITY:** Complicity includes intentionally helping another to engage in an act of academic misconduct, or attempts thereof.

**VIOLATION OF UNIVERSITY, COLLEGE, DEPARTMENTAL, PROGRAM, COURSE, OR FACULTY RULES:** The violation of any University, College, Departmental, Program, Course, or Faculty Rules relating to academic matters that may lead to an unfair academic advantage by the student violating the rule(s).

**ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT SANCTIONS:** If you have questions or are unclear about what constitutes academic misconduct on an assignment, please speak with me. I take the Honor Code very seriously in this course. The normal sanction I will recommend for a violation of the Honor Code is an **F\*** sanction as your final course grade. The F represents failure in the course. The **“\*”** is intended to identify a student who has failed to uphold the values of academic integrity at Virginia Tech. A student who receives a sanction of **F\*** as their final course grade shall have it documented on their transcript with the notation **“FAILURE DUE TO ACADEMIC HONOR CODE VIOLATION.”** You would be required to complete an education program administered by the Honor System in order to have the **“\*”** and notation **“FAILURE DUE TO ACADEMIC HONOR CODE VIOLATION”** removed from your transcript. The **“F”** however would be permanently on your transcript.

**STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES** The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities must be guaranteed a

learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you need adaptation or accommodations because of a disability, if you have emergency medical information to share with me, or if you need special arrangements in the case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible.

## **COURSE SCHEDULE**

Week 1: Introduction to the course

Reading: Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad al-. "The Dawn of the Islamic State of Iraq and ash-Sham." *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology* 16 (2014): 5-15.

### **I. The Ideology of the Islamic State**

Week 2: Emergence of IS

Reading: Abdel Bari Atwan. *Islamic State: The Digital Caliphate* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015).

Week 3: IS Ideology

Reading: Al-Khanssaa Brigade. *Women of the Islamic State: A Manifesto on Women by the Al-Khanssaa Brigade*. Translation and analysis by Charlie Winter. <https://www.quilliamfoundation.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/publications/free/women-of-the-islamic-state3.pdf>: Quilliam Foundation, Feb. 2015. Cole Bunzel. *From Paper State to Caliphate: The Ideology of the Islamic State*. Analysis Paper No. 19, <http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2015/03/ideology-of-islamic-state-bunzel/the-ideology-of-the-islamic-state.pdf>: The Brookings Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World, March 2015.

### **II. Theological and Intellectual Roots: Ibn Taymiyya, Wahhabiyya, Salafiyya**

Week 4: Ibn Taymiyya—the Original

Readings: Ibn Taymiyyah. *Ibn Taymiyyah Expounds on Islam: Selected Writings of Shaykh al-Islam Taqi ad-Din Ibn Taymiyya on Islamic Faith, Life, and Society*. Compiled and trans. by Muhammad 'Abdul-Haqq Ansari. Riyadh: General Administration of Culture and Publication, 2000, selections. E-book available at [http://www.kalamullah.com/Books/ibn\\_taymiyyah\\_expounds\\_on\\_islam.pdf](http://www.kalamullah.com/Books/ibn_taymiyyah_expounds_on_islam.pdf).

Week 5: Ibn Taymiyya—Applied

Readings: Yahya Michot. *Muslims under Non-Muslim Rule: Ibn Taymiyya on Fleeing from Sin; Kinds of Emigration; the Status of Mardin: Domain of War and Peace; the Conditions of Challenging Power: Texts Translated, Annotated, and Presented in Relation to Six Modern Readings of the Mardin Fatwa*. Oxford: Interface Publications, 2006. Yahya Michot. "Ibn Taymiyya's 'New Mardin Fatwa': Is Genetically Modified Islam (GMI) Carcinogenic?" *The Muslim World*, 110 (2011): 130-181.

Week 6: Wahabiyya

Readings: 'Abd Allāh Ṣāliḥ al-'Uthaymīn. *Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb: The Man and His Works*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2009.

Week 7: Salafiyya Doctrines

Readings: Roel Meijer, ed. *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014, pp. 1-142.

Week 8: Salafiyya and Politics

Readings: Roel Meijer, ed. *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014, pp. 143-243.

Week 9: Salafiyya and (Global) Jihad

Readings: Roel Meijer, ed. *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014, pp. 244-300.

### III. Western Politics and Muslim Radicalization

Week 10: Pan-Islamism and the West

Readings: Thomas Hegghammer. *Jihad in Saudi Arabia: Violence and Pan-Islamism since 1979*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010, selections.

Week 11: War on Terror's Impact

Readings: Akbar Ahmed. *The Thistle and the Drone: How America's War on Terror Became a Global War on Tribal Islam*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2013, selections. Thomas Ruttig. "How Tribal Are the Taliban?" In *Under the Drones: Modern Lives in the Afghanistan-Pakistan Borderlands*, edited by Shahzad Bashir and Robert D. Crews. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012, pp. 102-135.

### IV. Contemporary Intellectual Influences: Muslim Brotherhood and al-Maqdisi

Week 12: Al-Banna and the Foundation of the Muslim Brotherhood

Readings: Ḥasan al-Bannā'. *Five Tracts of Ḥasan Al-Bannā' (1906-1949): A Selection from the Majmū'at Rasā'il al-Imām al-Shahīd Ḥasan al-Bannā'*. Edited by Wendell, Charles. Trans. Charles Wedell. Berkeley: University of Chicago Press, 1978. Koch, Bettina. *Patterns Legitimizing Political Violence in Trans-cultural Perspectives: Islamic and Christian Traditions and Legacies*. Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2015, pp. 158-180.

Week 13: Al-Maqdisi

Readings: Joas Wagemakers. *A Quietist Jihadi: The Ideology and Influence of Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012, pp. 1-119.

Week 14: Al-Maqdisi and al-Qaida

Readings: Joas Wagemakers. *A Quietist Jihadi: The Ideology and Influence of Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012, pp. 120-249.

## V. Al-Qaida versus the Islamic State

### Week 14: The Question of Statehood

Readings: The Isis papers: behind 'death cult' image lies a methodical bureaucracy (<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/dec/07/isis-papers-guardian-syria-iraq-bureaucracy>) 07.12.2015. The Isis papers: a masterplan for consolidating power (<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/dec/07/islamic-state-document-masterplan-for-power>) 07.12.2015. Andrew F. March and Mara Revkin. "Caliphate of Law: ISIS' Ground Rules". *Foreign Affairs Online* (April 15, 2015). <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/syria/2015-04-15/caliphate-law>.

### Week 15: Reassessing IS Ideology

Readings: Cole Bunzel. *From Paper State to Caliphate: The Ideology of the Islamic State*. Analysis Paper No. 19, <http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2015/03/ideology-of-islamic-state-bunzel/the-ideology-of-the-islamic-state.pdf>: The Brookings Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World, March 2015. Mara Revkin. "ISIS' Social Contract: What the Islamic State Offers Civilians". *Foreign Affairs Online* (January 10, 2016). <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/syria/2016-01-10/isis-social-contract>.

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- Filiu, Jean-Pierre. *From Deep State to Islamic State: The Arab Counter-Revolution and Its Jihadi Legacy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).
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The Isis papers: behind 'death cult' image lies a methodical bureaucracy (<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/dec/07/isis-papers-guardian-syria-iraq-bureaucracy>) 07.12.2015.

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