

HIST 258 S
Special Topics in History

Sufism from Rabi‘a to Rumi (c. 750-1275)

This course traces the historical development of the rich mystical dimensions of Islam. The first part provides a historical overview of the development of Sufism from 750-1100 and devotes special attention to important women mystics during this period. The second part explores the works of four Sufi masters of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries: ‘Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani, Suhrawardi, Ibn ‘Arabi, and Rumi.

Assignments: Two short papers (40%), 15-20 page research paper (50%), class participation (10%)

Books:

Addas, Claude. *Quest for Red Sulphur: The Life of Ibn ‘Arabi* (1993)
Cornell, Rkia. *Early Sufi Women* (1999)
Sells, Michael. *Early Islamic Mysticism* (1996)
Course Packet (CP)

Week 1: What is Islamic mysticism?

CP: Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, pp. 3-22

Week 2: Principles of Sufism: al-Qushayri’s *Risala*
Early Islamic Mysticism, Chapter 3

Topics: Sufi ‘technical terms’; states and stations; role of the guide

Week 3: Rabi‘a, al-Muhasibi, and Abu Yazid al-Bistami
Early Islamic Mysticism, Chapters 4, 5, 7

Topics: Sober and ecstatic mysticism; Sufi psychology

Week 4: al-Junayd and al-Hallaj

Early Islamic Mysticism, Chapters 8, 9, Epilogue

CP: Massignon, *Hallaj: Mystic and Martyr* (Abridged edition), pp. 227-92

Topics: al-Junayd’s concept of Union (*tawhid*) with God; “I am the Truth”; Iblis as hero

Week 5: al-Sulami—Women Mystics

Cornell, *Early Sufi Women*, pp. 15-260

Topics: What are the primary qualities of Sufi women, at least in the eyes of al-Sulami? Are they mystics or ascetics?

FIRST SHORT PAPER DUE

Week 6: Abu Hamid al-Ghazali

CP: al-Ghazali, *The Deliverance from Error*

al-Ghazali, *The Ninety-nine Beautiful Names of God*, pp. 49-149

al-Ghazali, *The Niche of Lights*, pp. 3-4, 15-32, 36-43

Lucas, Sufism, 2

Week 6 (cont'd.)

Topics: What were the four possible cures for al-Ghazali's doubt? What are some of the common themes found throughout the 99 names of God? How does he interpret Sura 24:35?

Week 7: The Basic Orders

CP: Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam*, Chapters 1-2

Week 8: Life in the Sufi Lodge

CP: Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam*, Chapters 6-7

PART II: Four Sufi Masters

Week 9: 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani

CP: Jilani, *Revelations of the Unseen* (excerpts)

Topics: Sufi psychology; counsel; employment of Qur'an and hadith

Week 10: Suhrawardi and the school of Illumination

CP: Razavi, *Suhrawardi and the School of Illumination*, pp. 1-6; 58-120

Suhrawardi, *The Philosophy of Illumination* (excerpts)

Topics: Knowledge by presence, philosophical Sufism, reality as light

SECOND SHORT PAPER DUE

Week 11: Ibn 'Arabi (1): His journey

Addas, *Quest for Red Sulphur*, pp. 1-44, 74-110, 153-80, 193-217, 236-93

Topics: Seal of the Saints; Sufism in al-Andalus and the Maghrib; heresy or orthodoxy?

Week 12: Ibn 'Arabi (2): Teachings

CP: *Bezels of Wisdom* (excerpts)

Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds*, pp. 1-64

Topics: Unity of being, the Perfect Man, teachings of the prophets

Week 13: Rumi (1) Life and the *Discourses*

CP: Lewis, *Rumi: Past and Present, East and West*, pp. 134-202, 271-291, 309-326

Thackston, *Signs of the Unseen: The Discourses of Rumi*, pp. 1-28, 74-94, 101-14

Topics: Shams al-Din al-Tabrizi; words/meaning, pain, idols, multiplicity/union

Week 14: Rumi (2) Poetry

CP: Arberry, *Mystical Poems of Rumi I* (excerpts)

Nicholson, *The Mathnawi of Jalalu'ddin Rumi*, II, 348-55; IV, 302-23; V, 35-41

Topics: Love; the sick man and the Prophet; lessons from Solomon and Bilqis; Why did the peacock pluck its feathers?

RESEARCH PAPER DUE EXAM WEEK