Religion 373: Islamic Mysticism  
Fall 2017  
Tuesday: 5-7:30 pm.  
Location: Franklin Center 028  

Instructor: Omid Safi (omid.safi@duke.edu)  

Course description:  
• This course seeks to engage the mystical interpretations of Islam (Sufism) as one of the most important historical manifestations of the Islamic experience.  
• Themes explored in this class include the tradition of love mysticism embodied by Ahmad Ghazali, Attar, and Rumi.  
• The bulk of the reading assignments in the course are from 12th and 13th century Persian Sufis. Readings are in translation.  

Instructions before emailing your esteemed instructor  
Kindly, do not email me asking what the readings for next week are, since you are just as capable as I am of looking it up on the syllabus.  

Few classroom rules (some rational, others idiosyncratic):  
*NO laptops will be used for note-taking in the class.  
*Cell phones must be turned off. No texting in class.  
*Absolutely no emailing/chatting/web-browsing/texting in the class. It will result in a massive reduction in your classroom participation grade. Texting during class will result in confiscation of the phone till end of class. It is rude and disrespectful towards your instructors, and your fellow students.  
* Here is a short summary of some policies that I find quite helpful for establishing a civil classroom: http://www.businessinsider.com/10-things-every-college-professor-hates-2014-8
*I am a firm believer in the classroom being a community, and doing everything possible to foster a sense of a learning community in and out of the classroom. We might have—and probably will have—firm disagreements, and that is fine and good. Informed opinions are always welcome. Above all else, I hold myself—and you—to the standard of creating an environment in which we can firmly and politely agree or disagree with one another without belittling one another or creating a hostile learning environment.

The Duke Community Standard:
All the assignments for this course will be conducted as a take-home, open-note, and open-book variety. That calls for an even more important observance of the honor code. Plagiarism and “collaboration” (a.k.a. cheating) on take-home assignments will result in an “F” grade on the assignment, and sanctions under the honor code. I expect all the students to abide by the honor code regulations at Duke. [http://integrity.duke.edu/new.html](http://integrity.duke.edu/new.html)

Course evaluation:
Semester-long project, 20 pages, topic to be approved by instructor: 50%
Midterm, take-home, 7 pages, 30%
Weekly participation: 20%

Grade to be based on:
This is not a class for passive listeners.
The class will be conducted in a seminar format.
Every day we will be analyzing and discussing the readings. Our aim is to decipher their rhetoric,
and understand their argument vis-à-vis other positions. It will be impossible for you to participate in the discussions if you have not done the readings before coming to class. This will hurt your class participation grade. You’ll be asked to submit reflections on the readings every week on Sakai. If you do not attend class, your participation grade will suffer. Without a strong class participation grade, it’ll be impossible for you to earn anything higher than a C.

The assignments are due on the days that have been identified, and turning them in late will lead to a deduction in your grade.

Here are the standards for each grade:

A
Superb, Excellent. You have demonstrated an ability to offer original and insightful analysis of the facts. Your essay must have a clearly identifiable thesis, the thesis must make use of scholarly points to support itself, it must take a position that can be argued for or against, anticipate objections, and respond persuasively.

B
Solid Work. The facts have been grasped, and significant moves have been made to interpret the material in an analytical fashion. The majority of “good” papers usually fall in this range.

C
The student has made a reasonable attempt to engage the readings, and has a fair grasp of the factual material presented. The analysis of these facts, and an attempt to contribute towards an original interpretation, however, is severely missing.

D
A simplistic familiarity with the subject matter can be gleamed through the assignments which have been turned in.

F
A disappointment—no attempt being shown on the behalf of the student to engage the material, to respect the parameters of the class and its schedule, or the turning in of assignments.

A note on "Talking points" and Class participation:

This course can only be successful if we have daily, active discussions. That will only happen if you have spent time before coming to class pondering over the readings. To aid you in this, you are asked to bring to every class a one page typed response to the readings, which also includes 2-3 specific questions about the readings. These readings will be gathered, and they will count towards your class participation grade.

I leave it up to you to decide how you will engage the text in your talking point. You could:

*reflect on an idea you found interesting or intriguing in the readings,
*discuss who the various readings complement or differ from one another,
*explore the implications of a particular idea,
*compare to another work we’ve studied,
*trace how the work speaks to a theme we encountered earlier.
Required Books:


2) Ozak, Sheikh Muzaffer. *Love Is the Wine: Talks of a Sufi Master in America*


4) Schimmel, Annemarie. *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*

5) Sells, Michael A. *Early Islamic Mysticism: Sufi, Qur'an, Mi'raj, Poetic and Theological Writings*

6) Losensky, Paul. Farid ad-Din ‘Attar’s *Memorial of God's Friends: Lives and Sayings of Sufis*
Schedule of Classes & Reading Assignments
(Readings to be completed before you come to class.)

Tuesday, August 29th: Orientation & Welcome
First day of classes, orientation to the course.
Javad Nurbakhsh, “Key Features of Sufism in Early Islamic Mysticism”, online.
Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, “What is Sufism?” (chapter 1)

Thursday, September 5th: In the Presence of a Teacher
Sheikh Muzaffer Ozak, *Love is the Wine*, Rest of the book

Tuesday, September 12th: Qur'an and Prophetic Experience
Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, “Man and His Perfection” (chapter 4)

Tuesday, September 19th: Qushayri, Rabi’a, Muhasibi, and Sarraj

Tuesday, September 26th: Hallaj, Bistami
Sells, *Early Islamic Mysticism*, Chapters 7, and 9
*read the relevant sections of Hallaj and Bistami from Attar’s *Memorial of God's Friends*

Tuesday, October 3rd: ‘Attar
Farid ad-Din ‘Attar’s *Memorial of God's Friends: Lives and Sayings of Sufis* (1/2)
Also read: Schimmel, “The Rose and the Nightingale: Persian and Turkish Mystical Poetry.” (chapter 7).

Tuesday, October 10th:
Farid ad-Din ‘Attar’s *Memorial of God's Friends: Lives and Sayings of Sufis* (2/2)

Tuesday, October 17th: Mystical Epic
‘Attar, *Speech of the Birds* (1/2)

Tuesday, October 24th:
‘Attar, *Speech of the Birds* (2/2)

Tuesday, October 31st: Community life
*Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, “Sufi Orders and Fraternities” (chapter 5)
Readings from Abu Sa’id Abi ‘l-Khayr (*Asrar al-tawhid*)

Tuesday, November 7th: Rumi
Rumi’s *Masnavi* (1/2)
Tuesday, November 14th:
Rumi’s *Masnavi* (2/2)

Tuesday, November 21st:  Rumi Love poetry
Thanksgiving break starts at 10:30 pm.

Tuesday, November 28th:  Criticism of Sufism (and defense of Sufism)
Wahhabism and Salafism [Muhammad Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab, Sayyid Qutb, Rashid Rida]
Abd al-Hakim Murad:  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WuQhcAS-osw
Al-Azhar on Sufism:  http://islam.uga.edu/abdhalim.html
Nuh Ha Mim Keller on accusations of Sufism being Bid‘a:
http://sunnah.org/tasawwuf/sufisnk.htm
Mevlevis on defending the Sama‘:  http://www.dar-al-masnavi.org/defense-of-sema.html

Tuesday, December 5th:  Sufism in the Modern World / Final project presentations
Shaykh Hamza Yusuf on Sufism today:  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GxX2yXCGcME
Dr. Umar Faruq Abd-Allah:  https://vimeo.com/219219850
*Casting Sufism as “apolitical Islam”*

Final Exam:  December 13th-18th.