

# Islamic Studies Online

## An Instructor's Guide to Three Courses

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Over forty talented and creative participants have assisted me in developing these materials. Expert consultants from Brock, Carleton, McMaster, and Ryerson Universities, the Universities of British Columbia and Toronto, and the Aga Khan Museum, generously shared their insights and suggestions for the materials and content. Research assistants and content developers identified sources and prepared write-ups to introduce students to the fascinating world of Islam. Education specialists helped us carefully weigh our learning outcomes and brainstorm how to provide rich, engaging, student-centered experiences for learners. Media developers, music consultants, and filmmakers used art, sound, and multimedia to bring the lessons to life and reminded us that text is but one way to learn. Our research coordinators and administrative assistant kept the team engaged, motivated, and on track.

I am particularly beholden to our brilliant postdoctoral fellow, Dr. Shaftolu Gulamadov, who agreed to join our team as the Project Coordinator. An award-winning researcher, master pedagogue, and gifted leader, Dr. Gulamadov expertly helped guide our project through a pandemic and countless challenges.

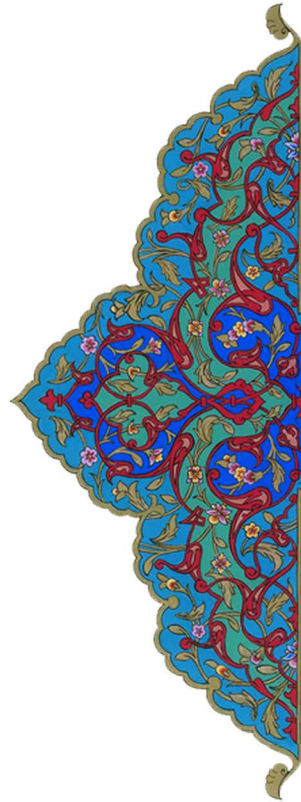
I am immensely grateful to everyone listed on the course’s acknowledgments page, and to many more, who could not be listed. I would be remiss if I didn’t acknowledge the generous funding for this initiative provided by the Government of Canada’s Youth Employment and Skills Strategy and the Government of Ontario’s eCampus initiative.

All of us hope these materials, offered freely to everyone through a Creative Commons license, will help foster a greater understanding of Islam and Muslim Civilizations.



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## I. Approach to Learning and Intended Audiences

We have developed three courses: Islam and Muslim Civilizations, Shi‘i Islam, and Researching Islam: Entering the World of Scholarly Investigation. I teach these at the introductory, intermediate, and advanced levels at the University of Toronto. However, the modular approach allows any instructor to mix and match topics from any of the three courses. Instructors may rearrange the modules according to the needs of their students and repurpose them for many environments. The modules can prove valuable for museums, undergraduate and graduate school classes, high schools, religious institutions, adult learners ranging from journalists to public servants, and many others.

Every course is structured as an adventure. Each module is called a “Caravan Journey” and units within the modules are “Serais.” In the Muslim world, Serais were bustling stopping-places that supported the flow of information, commerce, and people across trade routes through much of Asia, North Africa, and Southeast Europe. Writing about his experience at one such Caravanserai or *funduq* in China, the famous Muslim traveler Ibn Battutah observed:

China is the safest and best country for the traveler. A man travels for nine months alone with great wealth and has nothing to fear. What is responsible for this is that in every post station in their country is a *funduq* which has a director living there with a company of horse and foot.... He sends someone with the travelers to conduct them to the next post station and he brings back a certificate from the director of the *funduq* confirming that they have all arrived. If he does not do this he is answerable for them. This is the procedure in every post station in their country from Sin al-Sin to Khan Baliq. In them is everything the traveler needs by way of provisions, especially hens and geese.<sup>1</sup>

Similarly, at each of our Serais, we provide our student travelers with all they need by way of provisions, though perhaps no hens and geese. The guides and guidebooks we provide enable them to cross all their Serais to then board the next Caravan, safe and sound, certificates in hand.

Caravan Journeys include readings and multimedia, pedagogical activities, and assessments. They provide rich, engaging, student-centered experiences for learners. To the extent possible, the journey represents the dynamic pluralism of Islam and Muslim Civilizations, showcasing many facets of diversity, including the following:

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<sup>1</sup> Ibn Baṭṭūṭah, *Rihlah*, trans. Hamilton A.R. Gibb and Charles F. Beckingham, *The Travels of Ibn Battuta: A.D. 1325-1354*, 4 vols. (London: Hakluyt Society, 1994), vol. 4, 893-894.



## A. Pluralism

1. **Region:** The Muslim world is gigantic. The overwhelming majority of Muslims do not live in the Middle East, but the vast majority of Islamic Studies does. Students will be exposed to as many regions of the Muslim world as possible throughout the course, and the Caravan Journeys contribute to this.
2. **Time:** There are over 1400 years of Muslim history, and the Caravan Journeys, as a whole, try to expose students to many different periods.
3. **Schools of Interpretation:** The Caravan Journeys represent diverse communities of interpretation. Students will leave the course realizing that 1.7 billion Muslims across the world are not a monolithic bloc.

## B. Gender

Primary sources and scholarship frequently make women invisible. We make every attempt to have female voices represented in the Caravan Journeys.

## C. Multimedia

The Caravan Journeys include appropriate multimedia, including relevant images, sound, and video. Many living artists and musicians from around the world have contributed to the project.

## D. Primary and Secondary Sources

The Caravan Journeys expose students to appropriately chosen primary sources, both textual and non-textual, as well as a range of secondary sources.

Thus, the Caravan Journeys provide a rich, engaging, student-centered experience for students.





## II. Course Descriptions and Caravan Journeys

### A. Introduction to Islam and Muslim Civilizations

What does it mean to be Muslim? What is the civilizational legacy of a faith practiced by a quarter of humanity? In addressing such questions, this course explores the rich and diverse traditions of Islam and Muslim Civilizations, ranging from history, law, and scripture to artistic expressions, mysticism, philosophy, and beyond.

The Caravan Journeys in this course on Islam and Muslim Civilizations include:

1. Studying Islam
2. The Quran: Book of Signs
3. The Prophet and His Tradition
4. Prophecy
5. Muslim History: A Bird's-Eye View
6. Shi'ism and Sufism: *Walayah*
7. Ethics: Purification of the Soul
8. Shari'ah: The Path to Water
9. Heroes: Do All of Them Wear Capes?
10. Engaging with Others
11. Civil Society
12. Science







## B. Shi'i Islam

What does it mean to be a Shi'i Muslim? What is the civilizational legacy of a faith practiced by over 150 million people across the world? In this course, we explore the vibrant history, thought, and institutions of the Shi'i interpretation of Islam. We will study the early Shi'i milieu, Zaidi, Isma'ili, and Twelver schools of interpretation, and the development of Shi'ism from early to modern times.

The Caravan Journeys in this course on Shi'i Islam include:

1. Studying Shi'ism
2. Spiritual Ethos
3. Early Shi'ism
4. Shi'i History: A Bird's-Eye View
5. Revelation: Outer Form and Inner Meaning
6. People of the House
7. Devotional Traditions
8. 'Alid Devotion Beyond Shi'ism
9. Apologetics and Polemics
10. Art and Architecture
11. Rituals
12. Leadership: Modern Times
13. Civic Engagement





### C. Researching Islam: Entering the World of Scholarly Investigation

How do academics research Islam? Students in this course learn about and gain hands-on experience with essential scholarly tools for discovering and disseminating new knowledge in this field. Both individually and collaboratively, students will work on projects about academic literature, scholarly communication, and primary sources.

The Caravan Journeys in this course on Researching Islam include:

1. Studying Islam
2. Manuscripts: An Introduction
3. The Codex
4. Romanization
5. Academic Social Media: The Marketplace of Ideas
6. Academic Conferencing
7. The Dream Job: CVs and Cover Letters





### III. Learning Outcomes

Some years ago, the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AACU) issued its signature report, *College Learning for the New Global Century*. Authored by some of the world’s leading pedagogical minds with extensive input from educators and employers alike, *College Learning* argues that “college students already know that they want a degree. The challenge is to help students become highly intentional about the forms of learning and accomplishment that the degree should represent.”<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, the authors call on educators:

to help students become “intentional learners” who focus, across ascending levels of study and diverse academic programs, on achieving the essential learning outcomes. But to help students do this, educational communities will also have to become far more intentional themselves—both about the kinds of learning students need, and about effective educational practices that help students learn to integrate and apply their learning.<sup>3</sup>

Accordingly, the learning materials are highly intentional in their approach. We have crafted the Caravan Journeys’ learning resources and activities to help students achieve particular module-level learning outcomes, presented to students at the outset. In turn, these module-level outcomes serve course-level learning outcomes, listed below. We developed the course-level outcomes to contribute to the program-level and degree-level outcomes advocated by outstanding higher education institutions. The course-level learning outcomes for the three classes are as follows:

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<sup>2</sup> National Leadership Council for Liberal Education and America’s Promise, *College Learning for the New Global Century* (Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2007), 2.

<sup>3</sup> National Leadership Council for Liberal Education and America’s Promise, *College Learning for the New Global Century*, 4.





## A. Introduction to Islam and Muslim Civilizations

By the end of the **Introduction to Islam and Muslim Civilizations** course, students should be able to:

1. identify, reflect upon, and critique their own as well as others' assumptions about Islam and Muslim civilizations.
2. evaluate and judge the strengths and weaknesses of various sources of information about Islam and Muslim civilizations.
3. identify and give examples of various Muslim schools of thought, distinguish between them, and compare and contrast their guiding principles.
4. analyze how factors such as history, culture, gender, and economics influence the expression of Islam and the development of Muslim civilizations over time and in a variety of geographic regions of the world.
5. weigh, evaluate, and debate the influences that various cultures and religions have had on Muslim civilizations, and Muslim civilizations have had on other cultures and religions.
6. formulate cogent arguments related to Islam and Muslim civilizations supported by reliable information and evidence.
7. propose and defend solutions to issues encountered in Muslim civilizations that draw upon the histories, cultures, and religious assumptions present in those civilizations.
8. compose and design works that creatively engage with forms of expression that have typified many Muslim civilizations, whether through artistic design, poetry, calligraphy, architecture, or otherwise.



## B. Shi'i Islam

By the end of the **Shi'i Islam** course, students should be able to:

1. identify and define basic terms and concepts needed for the study of Shi'i Islam.
2. describe the major events, individuals, and teachings associated with the history of Shi'i Islam.
3. critically evaluate, interpret, and communicate research findings about the history, fundamental doctrines, and practices of Shi'i Islam and draw evidence-informed conclusions.
4. evaluate and judge the strengths and weaknesses of various sources of information about Shi'i Islam.
5. analyze the impact of such factors as historical and geographical contexts, gender relations, and economics on literary, ritual, and artistic expressions of Shi'i Islam.
6. identify, reflect upon, and critique their own as well as others' assumptions about Shi'i Islam.
7. formulate cogent arguments related to Shi'i Islam supported by reliable information and evidence.
8. communicate effectively in writing and orally about Shi'i Islam to both specialist and general audiences.







### C. Researching Islam: Entering the World of Scholarly Investigation

By the end of the **Researching Islam: Entering the World of Scholarly Investigation course**, students should be able to:

1. identify, evaluate, and effectively use available research resources in the field of Islamic Studies.
2. formulate cogent arguments related to Islam and Muslim civilizations supported by reliable information.
3. set goals for and manage both individual and team projects.
4. critically reflect upon their learning and the effectiveness of their goal setting.
5. analyze, interpret, and discuss a variety of primary sources for understanding Islam and Muslim Civilizations, including manuscripts, artifacts of material culture, and performance.
6. prepare effective application materials for graduate school or various careers in Islamic Studies or the Humanities more generally.
7. communicate research results effectively, whether in writing, orally, or visually to both specialist and general audiences.
8. discuss the process of research publication and other forms of scholarly dissemination.
9. outline, analyze, and critique the common structures of academia, including tenure and promotion, gender, and racial biases.





## IV. Course Structure and Learning Design: Mapping the Caravan Journey

Every Caravan Journey includes the following elements. Each one should take an average student approximately 10 hours to complete. Each section includes a recommended amount of time to spend. Naturally, this will vary by individual, but the estimate helps students allocate time efficiently.

### 1. Title

The Title for each Caravan Journey reflects its content. The Caravan Journey itself and its various components are divided into sections. These sections have what are known as “breadcrumb trails” to show students where they are in the course when using the Learning Management System. The term “breadcrumb trail” in web design comes from the famous fairy tale of Hansel and Gretel in which two children create a trail of breadcrumbs to find their way home. Here is an example of a breadcrumb trail in the course “Introduction to Islam and Muslim Civilizations”:

Heroes | Serai 2: al-Sayyidah Khadijah | Identifying Landmarks

It shows students that they are in the “Identifying Landmarks” section of the second Serai (which is about al-Sayyidah Khadijah) on the Caravan Journey about Heroes.

### 2. Welcome to the Caravan Journey

Students are welcomed to the journey and provided a map of what’s to come.







### 3. Learning Outcomes: Module-Level

As explained above, every Caravan Journey has Module-Level Learning Outcomes (known as Caravan Journey-Level Learning Outcomes) that contribute to and support the Course-Level Learning Outcomes. These describe the knowledge and skills students should gain while completing the Caravan Journey. They also help students understand how these outcomes will benefit them. We developed the learning outcomes following the guidelines of Bloom’s Taxonomy and its successors. For example, in the course on Shi’i Islam, there is a Caravan Journey on Modern Shi’i Leadership. One of the Module-Level Outcomes states:

By the end of this Caravan Journey, you should be able to:

- a. identify and differentiate between various models of leadership in modern Shi’i communities and analyze how various Shi’i leaders respond to the needs of their constituents. (1, 2, 5, 7)

Here, we have indicated that Module-Level Outcome “a” relates to Course-Level Outcomes 1, 2, 5, and 7. Note that Course-Level Outcomes are numbered 1, 2, 3, etc., while Module-Level Outcomes are lettered a, b, c, etc.

### 4. Reflection Questions

Before undertaking the Caravan Journey, students reflect on questions that will guide them as they interact with the course content, activate prior knowledge, provoke curiosity, and increase motivation to learn the answers to the questions.

### 5. Serais: Welcome

Each Caravan Journey has several Serais. Just as every Caravan Journey has a welcome, so does every Serai. These pieces engage students, inform them about the subtopics, and introduce the guides and guidebooks that will accompany them. The welcome explains the sources, their importance, their authors, and so on. It also asks questions that students should consider as they peruse the readings or engage with the multimedia. When introducing the authors or speakers, we have made special efforts to convey to students who their guides are and why their views are well-informed and deserve attention. This helps students distinguish various types of expertise and develops information literacy skills. They learn to distinguish between various “talking heads” on the news or YouTube, and understand that not all informants are equally credible.



#### Heroes | Serai 6: Heroic Patterns (10 minutes)



Having now read about a number of heroes in Muslim societies, you may have come to notice some patterns, both between the stories themselves and between these stories and others with which you may be familiar. For example, while reading the anecdote about Nasir-i Khusraw warning the old woman to seek safety prior to an apocalyptic deluge, you may have been reminded of a certain other great flood. Consciously or not, themes and motifs recur in the stories and legends we tell. One of the most well-known scholarly attempts to make sense of these uncanny resemblances is Joseph Campbell's book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. At this Serai, you will watch a short video in which Matthew Winkler explains Campbell's theory and shows us how the "hero's journey" is one such topos that is widely shared, perhaps even universal, across world literature and mythology. Matthew Winkler is the Program Manager of the Heroic Imagination Project (HIP), based in San Francisco. The Heroic Imagination Project is a non-profit organization that advances everyday heroism. As you watch Winkler's presentation, pay attention to the typical patterns that the Hero's Journey follows.

#### Guides and Guidebooks (Content Communication)

Winkler, Matthew. "What Makes A Hero." May 07, 2013. TedEd video, 4:34. <https://ed.ted.com/lessons/what-makes-a-hero-matthew-winkler>





### **a. Guides and Guidebooks**

Guides and guidebooks are citations for the multimedia or readings students will use at a particular Serai. Wherever possible, we have provided hyperlinks.

#### **Guides and Guidebooks (Content Communication)**

Mirza, Younus Y. "The Islamic Mary: Between Prophecy and Orthodoxy." *Journal of Quranic Studies* 23, no. 3 (2021): 70-86.

Hussain, Musharraf. "Basic Beliefs of Islam-Prophets," University of Nottingham, UK. YouTube video, 7:53.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r8wcZFUCSyM>



### **b. Identifying Landmarks**

Convergent learning exercises are called "Identifying Landmarks." "Convergent learning" refers to activities where students should all arrive at the same answer. The Identifying Landmarks section ensures students have understood what they've learned from the guides and guidebooks. These are often quiz-type questions that the Learning Management System can grade automatically, giving instructors time for other activities. Bloom's classification of learning and educational goals and the revised Bloom's Taxonomy serve as the bases for activity design. As the activities are mainly selected-response test items, in addition to Bloom's Taxonomy and the revised Bloom's Taxonomy, we have also used the classification of cognitive behaviors and knowledge suggested by other scholars, including Thomas Haladyna's Selected-response Test Items classification. Both the original and revised Bloom's taxonomies are hierarchical, which means that learning at the higher levels depends on having attained prerequisite knowledge and skills at lower levels. Thus, the focus in many convergent learning exercises is on knowledge comprehension and understanding, in preparation for the divergent learning exercises at the end of the Caravan Journey, which focus on higher levels of learning such as application, evaluation, analysis, and synthesis.



## 6. Your Own Adventure

Divergent learning activities at the end of every Caravan Journey are known as “Your Own Adventure.” These bring out students’ originality and creativity, activating higher-order thinking skills. Scenario-based learning is one strategy we have used in the divergent learning activities to develop empathy and critical thinking. In the courses “Introduction to Islam and Muslim Civilizations” and “Shi’i Islam,” students will choose whether to post a well-crafted 250–500-word response to the “Majlis,” or a ghazal poem of 7-12 couplets to the “Mahfil.” Detailed instructions for both are provided.

### Science | Your Own Adventure

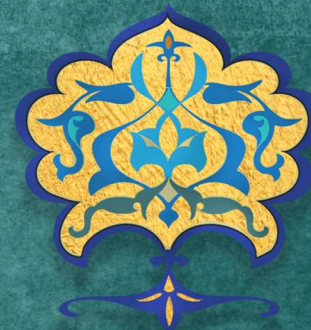


#### Your Own Adventure

You are now ready to embark on your own adventure! You can choose to contribute to either the Majlis or the Mahfil. Be sure to first read about the Majlis and its rubrics [here](#) and the Mahfil and its rubrics [here](#). After preparing your contribution, click on Majlis or Mahfil below, and post it to the discussion board. Then, read your fellow travelers' contributions and respond to them. Enjoy your adventure!

## 7. Delving Deeper

Where available, the “Delving Deeper” section in the Caravan Journeys provides a list of readings and multimedia resources for students who wish to learn more.





## V. Glossary and Conventions

We provide a glossary of important technical terms for each course in a separate section of the Learning Management System for easy student reference. Non-English words or phrases are provided in their original scripts, romanized, and defined. Romanizations follow the conventions of the American Library Association-Library of Congress (ALA-LC) but dispense with macrons and dots. Hence, we write Tabari, rather than Ṭabarī.

Citations follow the *Chicago Manual of Style* “notes and bibliography” method. Citations in notes follow the “Notes” conventions, while citations in “Guides and Guidebooks” and “Delving Deeper” use the “Bibliography” conventions.

## VI. Accessibility

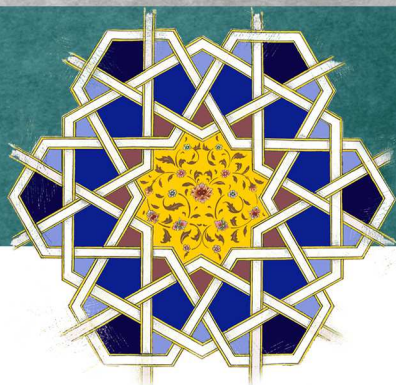
To the extent possible, we have produced all content in accessible formats in accordance with the requirements of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). For example, we describe all images using alternative text and caption all videos we produced.

## VII. Digital Standards

We have made every effort to prioritize tools and technologies that comply with appropriate conventions for openness and interoperability to support adoption and adaptation across multiple platforms that include W3C standards. We have also prioritized tools and technology that demonstrate user-centered design, continuous evaluation and improvement, effective use of data, protection of security, and privacy of personal information.

We have shared the three courses as zipped content packages in IMS Global Learning Consortium’s Common Cartridge Format exported from the Canvas Learning Management System. The course content is shared in modular format for ease of adaptation.





## VIII. Licensing and Funding Acknowledgment

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