# TH \*388\*01: Eastern Christianity and Islam

Loyola University Maryland

Fall 2022

*Class Meetings:*

T, Th, 4:30 PM – 5:45 PM

Humanities Center 042R

*Instructor Information:*

Instructor: John Zaleski

Email: [jazaleski@loyola.edu](mailto:jazaleski@loyola.edu)

*Office Hours*

Wednesdays 1:00 pm – 3:00 pm

Fridays 11:00 am – 12 noon, 1:00 pm – 2:00 pm

You are welcome to attend my office hours either in-person (**Humanities Center 042C**) or over Zoom (<https://loyola.zoom.us/j/9172345681>) – no need to make an appointment in advance.

I look forward to meeting each of you and getting to know you and your own interests! If you are unable to attend my set office hours, then I encourage you to email me to set up an alternative time to meet.

**Course Description**

This course examines the intertwined religious lives of Muslims and Christians in Muslim-majority lands. Students study fundamental aspects of Islamic thought and practice, from Islamic law (Shari'a) to Islamic mysticism (Sufism) and explore the heritage of Syriac and Arabic Christians and their encounters with Muslims down to the present day. Along the way, vibrant forms of artistic and musical expression that have shaped the religious lives of Christians and Muslims alike are studied.

**Diversity Justice Course**

This course is a Diversity Justice Designated course and fulfills a Diversity Justice Course requirement for graduation.

•           Diversity Justice Designated courses increase students’ awareness and critical understanding of human diversity, contributing to the university mission “to inspire students to learn, lead, and serve, in a diverse and changing world.”

•           This course specifically focuses on global religious diversity, increasing students’ understanding of how non-Western societies and cultures are shaped by specific histories, belief, and practices, as well as training students to analyze and reflect upon religious difference.

**Student Learning Aims**

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

* Describe fundamental Islamic beliefs, practices, and disciplines
* Analyze and demonstrate understanding of Islamic and eastern Christian texts.
* Articulate similarities and differences between Islamic and Christian teachings
* Understand the historical development and diversity of eastern Christian traditions
* Analyze and reflect upon the historical and contemporary encounters of Christians and Muslims in the Middle East
* Develop competency in discerning the ways in which non-Western societies and cultures embody and are shaped by specific histories, beliefs, practices, and ideologies (Diversity-course learning aim)
* Analyze and conceptualize religious difference (Diversity-course learning aim)
* Demonstrate analytic and expressive skills in written form

**Course Books**

All course material will be made available on Moodle.

**Assignments:**

In the assignments for this course, you will demonstrate your understanding of Islamic and eastern Christian beliefs and practices and reflect upon questions of religious difference. In writing the analytical and creative papers, as well as in producing your own research paper, you will come to understand and appreciate religious diversity as it has shaped Muslim-majority societies and as it continues to shape encounters between Muslims and Christians in the Middle East.

Participation: 20%

* This includes regular attendance, active participation in class discussions, and giving a presentation to lead a seminar discussion.

Paper 1 (Analytical): 20%

* Option 1: Islamic-Christian relations
  + Write an analytical essay examining early Islamic-Christian relations as attested in the Qur’an and early Islamic and Christian sources. Make sure to address the following questions. What was early Islamic attitude toward Christians and Christianity as attested in the Qur’an and Islamic law? What was the attitude of Christians toward Muslims, as attested in early Christian written sources? In what ways did reality “on the ground” conform to or not conform to the demands issued by Muslim or Christian authors? Your essay should be based on the readings from Weeks 1-3.
* Option 2: Sufism and Monasticism
  + Write an analytical essay examining Sufism and its relation to Christian monasticism and monastic spirituality. What were core ideals of Sufism as expressed in early Islamic sources, and what was the relation — and lines of influence, if any — between Sufism and Christian monasticism? Your essay should be based on the readings from Week 4.
* Approximate length: 4-5 pages (double spaced, 12 point font, 1 inch margins)
* Due Thursday, October 6 at 11:59 pm

Paper 2 (Creative): 20%

* Option 1: Reflection paper
  + Select a primary source assigned in this course. Analyze its principal ideas and/or arguments on their own terms. Then explain how this source changes, nuances, refines, and/or challenges your own religious, philosophical, or ethical views
* Option 2: Policy proposal
  + Prepare a report for the annual meeting of the United Nations World Interfaith Harmony Week, presenting Islamic and eastern Christian perspectives on the following questions:
    - What do Christians and Muslims have in common, and what have they learned from each other?
    - What challenges have stood or still stand in the way of Christian-Muslim understanding and coexistence?
    - What can or should Christian and Muslim religious leaders and political leaders do to support Christian-Muslim harmony?
* Approximate length: 4-5 pages (double spaced, 12 point font, 1 inch margins)
* Due Friday, November 11 at 11:59 pm

Research presentations: 5%

* Prepare a presentation on your research for your final paper to share with your classmates during the last two weeks of the course.

Research paper (including submission of topic proposal and prospectus): 35%

* A research paper on a topic of your choosing (subject to instructor approval) related to eastern Christianity and/or Islam.
* Approximate length: 8-12 pages (double spaced, 12 point font, 1 inch margins)
* Due Tuesday, December 13 at 11:59 pm

**Grading rubric for papers**:

A Superb, exemplary, original, incisive. Well-organized, developed, and expressed.

Carefully composed and elegantly written. Good writing style is essential for an

“A.”

A- Excellent work. Nearly a straight-A but marred by some glitches in argumentation or writing.

B+ Very good work. Very good demonstration of command of material at introductory

level. Insightful analysis, attending to significant details and questions. Less

excellent in presentation, organization, and writing style.

B Good work. A good start, reflecting patient analysis and some

thought and care with regard to organization, composition, and writing, with clear areas for improvement and further development. Paper may be stronger on summary than analysis.

B- Nearly there, but has significant flaws in argumentation or writing.

C(+/-) Adequate analysis that fulfills the assignment but is not well-written. Only

somewhat organized or developed; lacking in both clarity and composition. Overlooks significant details, attends only to the most obvious questions, and settles for banal or trite observations.

D Barely fulfills the requirements of the assignment. Work is poor in several areas

including organization, clarity, development, and attention to important issues.

F Does not fulfill the requirements of the assignment.

**Grading scale**

95–100 **A** 90–94 **A-**

87–89 **B+** 83–86 **B** 80–82 **B-**

77–79 **C+** 73–76 **C** 70–72 **C-**

66–69 **D+** 60–65 **D** 59 and below **F**

**Late Submissions**

One grade-step (e.g. from A- to B+ or from B+ to B) will be deducted for each day an assignment is submitted late (including Saturday and Sunday). Extensions are granted at the discretion of the instructor and must be requested well in advance of the due date.

**Student Athletes**

If you are a student athlete, please provide me with your travel and game schedule indicating when you will need to miss class to participate in athletic events. While travel for athletics is an excused absence, you will need to make up any missed work. It is also helpful for you to remind me by email or in person the day before you will miss class for an athletic event.

**Academic Integrity**

Writing is difficult, and original writers are generally good readers. This means that the papers we produce, although unique and reflecting our own thoughts, are often inspired and nourished by other texts. Academy integrity consists in the proper recognition of this fact, and in the acknowledgment of our sources. Plagiarism, on the contrary, is the lack of recognition thereof, and ranges from paraphrasing to copying an author without admitting it. Feel free to visit me during my office hours if you have any doubts about your paper and the way you use your sources.

Please note that in the Theology Department the standard penalty for an Honor Code violation is *failure of the course, not simply the assignment*, regardless of the student’s grades on other assignments and activities. Honor Code violations will also be reported to the Honor Council for non-academic disciplinary action. Loyola expects all university members to adhere to the Honor Code. Ignorance of the Code is not a valid reason for committing an act of academic dishonesty.

**Accommodations and Disability Support Services**

If you need academic accommodations due to a disability, you should register with Disability Support Services. For more information please contact DSS at [DSS@loyola.edu](mailto:DSS@loyola.edu) or (410) 617-2750. If you’re registered with DSS and a faculty notification email has been sent to me on your behalf, please schedule a brief meeting with me to discuss your accommodations.

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

Please note: Readings and Assignments are subject to minor revisions as the semester progresses. All readings or other activities should be completed in advance of the class session for which they are assigned.

**Week 1: Introduction / Eastern Christianity on the Eve of Islam**

Sep 6 Introduction

Sep 8 Christianity and the Middle East; first contact with Muslims

Read: Michael Penn, “The Year 630”

*Letters of Ishoyahb III*

[Professor Michael Penn on the importance of studying Eastern Christian interactions with Muslims](https://youtu.be/kzJojqPy7NQ)

Optional further reading:

*Account ad 637*

Optional background reading: Emma Loosley, “Doctrinal and Political Origins of Eastern Christianity in the Middle East”

**Week 2: The Emergence of Islam**

Sep 13 The Qur’an and the Prophet

Qur’anic passages on Moodle

Jonathan Brown, “Hadith”

[Sahih al-Bukhari, “How the Revelation to the Apostle of God Began”](https://sunnah.com/bukhari/1)

Sep 15 Qur’an and Bible, Qur’an and Jesus, Qur’an and Christianity

Read the story of the birth of Jesus in the [Qur'an, sura 19:1-40](https://quranyusufali.com/19/): Abdel Haleem pp. 191-93 / PDF pp. 236-38

Read the Qur'an on the death and crucifixion of Jesus, [sura 4:153-162](https://quranyusufali.com/4/): Abdel Haleem pp. 64-65 / PDF pp. 109-110

Read Tarif Khalidi, "The Muslim Jesus," pages 6-22

**Week 3: Islamic Law, Christian Law, and “Dhimmitude”**

\*\* Student presentations begin \*\*

Sep 20 Islamic Law and Muslim-Christian Covenants

Islamic Law packet

[Pact of Umar](https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/source/pact-umar.asp), Shafii Kitab al-Umm on Christians

Background reading to complete in preparation for Thursday’s readings

“The Coptic Tradition”

Sep 22 Christian Law and Muslims

[Ya‘qub [Jacob] of Edessa](https://gedsh.bethmardutho.org/Yaqub-of-Edessa) in *The Gorgias Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Syriac Heritage*

Jacob of Edessa, Letters

Jacob of Edessa, Scholia

Thomas of Marga, selections / Jacob of Edessa, Canonical Responsa about Conversion

[Lev Weitz on Christian monks and Muslims in Egypt](https://blogs.loc.gov/kluge/2019/06/christian-monks-and-muslim-villagers-in-medieval-egypt-a-library-of-congress-story/)

Optional further reading:

Penn, “Blurring Boundaries”

**Week 4: Mysticism: Sufis & Monks**

Sep 27 Sufism: Islamic Mysticism

Background: Schimmel, “Mystical Islam and Sufi Brotherhoods”: read pages 101-110 (PDF pages 1-10)

“Rabia: Her Words and Life in Attar’s *Memorial of the Friends of God*” in *Early Islamic Mysticism*

Sep 29 Sufism and Christian Monasticism

Bowman, “Between Temple and Tavern”

Mourad, “Christian Monks in Islamic Literature”

Treiger, “Mutual Influences and Borrowings” (196-98)

**Week 5: Visual Arts and Christians at the Islamic court**

Oct 4 Christians at the Islamic court; Christian icons and iconoclasm

Background reading: Griffith, “The Manṣūr Family and Saint John of Damascus: Christians and Muslims in Umayyad Times”: read pages 29-32

John of Damascus, *On the Divine Images*, first treatise

Oct 6 Islamic icons and aniconism

Explore: [The Met, The Nature of Islamic Art](https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/orna/hd_orna.htm)

Nasr, “The Relation between Islamic Art and Islamic Spirituality”

Grunebaum, “Byzantine Iconoclasm and the influence of the Islamic environment”

Christiane Gruber, “The Koran does not forbid images of the Prophet”

**Week 6: Religious and Theological Debate**

Background reading: “The Syriac Tradition”; “The Assyrian Church of the East”; “The Armenian Tradition”

Oct 11 Debate and Appreciation

Timothy I and the Caliph al-Mahdi, Day 2

Oct 13 A Muslim response

Ali al-Tabari, Book on Religion and Empire, chs. 1-2, 8-9

**Week 7: Philosophy, Medicine, and Science**

Oct 18 Philosophy and Ethics

Griffith, Church in Shadow of Mosque, Chapter 5

Yahya ibn Adi, *Reformation of Morals*, selection

Oct 20 Medicine

Ch. 9, “Medicine” in *Science in Medieval Islam*

[Autobiography of Hunayn ibn Ishaq](https://publishing.cdlib.org/ucpressebooks/view?docId=ft2c6004x0;chunk.id=d0e4406;doc.view=print)

Ibn Ridwan, “On the Causes of Pestilence”, “General Stratagem for Preserving Health”

**Week 8: The Crusades and their Aftermath**

Oct 25 The Crusades

“[Crusades](https://gedsh.bethmardutho.org/Crusades)” in *The Gorgias Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Syriac Heritage*

Usama ibn Munqidh, *The Book of Contemplation*, excerpts on [the Franks](https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/source/Usamah2.asp) and on [Christian piety](http://web.archive.org/web/20010410021343/http:/www.humanities.ccny.cuny.edu/history/reader/13thcpiety.htm)

MacEvitt, “Close Encounters of the Ambiguous Kind”

Oct 27 A Syriac Renaissance

Dionysius bar Salibi’s *Response to the Arabs* (selections)

[Dionysius bar Salibi and the Qur’an](https://theo.kuleuven.be/apps/press/theologyresearchnews/2022/03/02/syriac-testimonies-against-the-muslims-the-quranic-quotations-in-dionysius-bar-salibi/)

“Bar Ebroyo” in *The Gorgias Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Syriac Heritage*

Bar Hebraeus, *Laughable Stories*, selections:

“[Profitable Sayings of the Greek Philosophers](https://www.sacred-texts.com/asia/lsbh/lsbh06.htm)”

“[Profitable Sayings of Muhammadan Kings](https://www.sacred-texts.com/asia/lsbh/lsbh11.htm)”

“[Profitable Sayings of the Arab Ascetics and Old Men](https://www.sacred-texts.com/asia/lsbh/lsbh13.htm)”

“[Laughable Stories of Actors and Comedians](https://www.sacred-texts.com/asia/lsbh/lsbh20.htm)”

**Week 9: The Sword: Martyrdom and Genocide**

Background readings: “The Georgian Tradition”

Nov 1 Georgian martyr narratives

“Introduction”; *Martyrdom of Saint Shushanik; Martyrdom of Habo, the Perfumer from Baghdad* [201-231]

Nov 3 Millet System; Genocide

Paul of Aleppo on his visit to Constantinople in *The Orthodox Church in the Arab World, 700-1700*

Karavaltchev and Pavlov, “How Just was the Ottoman Millet System?”

[“Sayfo” in *The Gorgias Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Syriac Heritage*](https://gedsh.bethmardutho.org/entry/Sayfo)

“The G Word: The Armenian Massacre and the Politics of Genocide”

Optional: [PBS documentary on Armenian Genocide](https://youtu.be/VrhC6Rzd3Zs) (Note: This documentary contains very disturbing images; viewing it is entirely optional.)

**Week 10: Modernity 1: Law and Reality revisited**

Nov 8 Legal Status of Coptic Christians in contemporary Egypt

Optional background: [“Egypt’s Law: An Overview”](https://egyptjustice.com/egypt-law-an-overview)

1) US State Department: Egypt 2021 International Religious Freedom Report

2) “Discrimination in Law and Practice against the Copts in Egypt”: report of the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

Nov 10 Religious Boundaries and Marian Devotion

1) Westbrook, “Our Lady of Zeitoun”

2) Heo, “Territorial Prescence” in *The Political Lives of Saints*

*Nov 11 \*second paper due\**

**Week 11: Modernity 2: Integration and Separation**

Nov 15 How to be Christian in the Middle East?

“The Church of the East and its Chaldaean Branch” in Eastern Christianity in the Modern Middle East

* Focus on pages 47-55 [PDF pages 7-15]

Sabra, “Two Ways of Being Christian”

[Lukasik, “Modernity, Murder, and Coptic Identity”](https://publicorthodoxy.org/2018/08/27/modernity-murder-and-coptic-identity/)

Video resources:

[Rebuilding Churches after ISIL](https://youtu.be/FlMf7ceVWr8)

[Archbishop Warda of Erbil on post-ISIS challenges in Iraq](https://youtu.be/c8EZyQ3t99I)

Nov 17 How to be a Saint in the Middle East?

1) Hagga Zakiyya, pp. 415-433 [PDF pp. 4-22]

2) Tamav/Ummna Irene (“Our Mother” Irene): Life of Prayer: <https://en.wataninet.com/coptic-affairs-coptic-affairs/religious/tamav-irene-1936-2006-life-of-prayer/34093/>

3) Skim *Life of Tamav Irene*. Select a passage in this *Life* that you find interesting or curious and be prepared to discuss it in class.

\**Deadline to email brief topic proposal for research paper\**

**Week 12: Research Workshops**

Nov 22 \*Workshops with Instructor on research paper\*

*Nov 24 Thanksgiving*

**Week 13: Icons Revisited, from Egypt to Baltimore**

Nov 29 Icons, Miracles, and the State

Heo, “Public Order,” in *The Political Lives of Saints*

\**Prospectus and 1 page bibliography due\**

Dec 1 Icons, Eastern Christian and Islamic Art, and Baltimore

**\*Field Trip to Walters Art Museum\***

Admission is free, but you will need to arrange your own transportation and parking.

**Week 14: Research Presentations**

Dec 6 Student Research Presentations

* Prepare a 7-10 minute presentation on your research for the final paper. Each presentation will be followed by 5-8 minutes for questions.

Dec 8 Student Research Presentations

* Prepare a 7-10 minute presentation on your research for the final paper. Each presentation will be followed by 5-8 minutes for questions.

*Dec 13 \*Final paper due\**