**Course Description:**

Although recent years have seen a significant scholarly—and policy—interest in the political and social dynamics of the Muslim world, the literature on “Islam and Politics” has paid relatively little attention to Muslim societies in sub-Saharan Africa. This omission is particularly striking given the importance of Islam on the continent: 9 predominantly Muslim countries, another 10 with Muslim populations of near or over 50%, and at least 12 more with significant Muslim minorities.

This seminar will examine the range of political dynamics of Islam in the region, with attention to both Muslim majority and Muslim minority countries. Rather than a straightforward country by country survey, the course will be thematically focused, and organized around several primary arenas of Islam and political action:

1. **Intra-Muslim political debates:** including the tensions between Sufi Islam and “reformist” movements, the politics of competing authority to speak for Islam in the modern context, and the role of Muslim women’s voices.

2. **Muslims and the state:** including state efforts to structure Muslim politics, debates on family law and personal issues, Muslim politics in newly democratized contexts, and Islam in the politics of weakened or collapsed states.

3. **Inter-confessional politics:** Muslim—non-Muslim relations and the politics of Islam in multi-religious countries.

4. **The politics of Islamism or Jihadism,** and the question of terrorism

The goal of this course is to allow you to understand and analyze complex current political dynamics in little-known regions of the world. Given the number of countries and movements involved, the materials for this course can be challenging. It will thus require serious commitment from you as a student to invest the time needed to master the materials we will read.

This is a course is comparative politics and African Studies, and is open to students in Political Science as well as to interested students from various fields of African Studies.

**Readings: required materials**

The following books will be assigned in their entirety or extensively, and you are encouraged to
purchase them if possible. They will also be available on reserve in the Smathers Library.

In addition, a significant package of articles and selected other readings will be available for purchase.


**Recommended book:** Another recent book in English specifically on the politics of Islam in Africa, and that you might also want to consult, is the following:


**NOTE:** A bibliographic resource: The African Studies Center of Leiden University has a very useful on-line searchable database of citations on “Islam in Contemporary sub-Saharan Africa.” It is available at: [http://www.ascleiden.nl/Publications/Bibliographies/IslamInAfrica/](http://www.ascleiden.nl/Publications/Bibliographies/IslamInAfrica/)

**Course Requirements:**

1. The first and very important requirement for this course is to attend class regularly, having done all required readings, and to be prepared to ask questions and engage critically in our discussions. Attendance will be taken at each class period, and any unexcused absences will reduce your attendance grade. You may request an excused absence only for legitimate academic reasons, via requests made in writing in advance, or in cases of emergency by written request with documentation presented as soon afterwards as possible.

2. You will be asked to sign up as a discussion leader for one week of the course. Discussion leaders will be required to come to class with the following prepared materials to facilitate our discussions and to serve as “study guides” for that week’s materials:

   1. A list of at least 6-10 significant names, terms, organizations or events from the readings, with a brief identification and/or discussion of these items that you will prepare to help
guide us. Since much of the material in this course will be unfamiliar to many of you, the idea here is to help us compile a list of key organizations/individuals/terms with which we should all be familiar in mastering this subject.

2. Two analytical questions for general discussion. You should think carefully about what are the interesting issues raised by the readings that week, and work on carefully crafting these questions in an interesting and provocative format.

• You are encouraged to coordinate with other discussion leaders for the same week so as to get better coverage of the materials, perhaps by agreeing to divide the readings from which you will draw the terms and names for identification.

• You are required to come to class with sufficient copies of these materials to be distributed to everyone in the class. If you would like, you can email me the material by noon on the Monday before class, and I will be happy to make the copies. Otherwise, you should bring the copies to class yourself. NOTE: You will be graded here not only on doing this exercise, but on the quality of the materials you prepare.

3. Two exams, of two hours each. The first of these will be held in class on 3 March, and the second at the scheduled time for the final exam: 10-12 AM, Tuesday 28 April. These exams will be a combination of identification-type questions and essays, and you will have a study guide in advance to help you prepare. These study guides will be composed largely of the materials prepared by the discussion group leaders, although I may add or edit these as necessary. There will be no make-up exams, and an exam can only be rescheduled in case of a fully documented real emergency.

Your final grade for the course will be calculated on the following basis:

- Class attendance and discussion leader role: 30%
- Exam #1: 30%
- Exam #2: 40%

**Academic honesty:**

Academic dishonesty, notably plagiarism, will not be tolerated. Any student engaging in such activities will be dealt with in accordance with University policy. It is your responsibility to know what constitutes plagiarism, and what the university policies are. If you have doubts, I would be happy to discuss with you.

**Students with disabilities:**

If you have a disability that may affect your performance in this class, you should contact the Dean of Students Office (www.dso.ufl.edu/drp/) so that special arrangements can be made to accommodate you. It is your responsibility to do so at the very beginning of the semester.

**Course schedule:**

**Week 1: 1/06**  
Course introduction:
**PART I: Contexts**

**Week 2: 1/13**

**Background: Islam as religion; perspectives on religion and politics**

*Readings:*

**Week 3: 1/20**

**The context: Islam in Africa.**

*Readings:*
- David Robinson: *Muslim Societies in African History*, chapters: 1-6, 8, 10, 12, and 13.

**PART II: Muslim politics: authority and the community**

**Week 4: 1/27**

**Sufis and their critics**

*Readings:*
Week 5: 2/3 Professor out of town: no class

Week 6: 2/10 Who speaks for Islam? The politics of authority and modernity
Readings:

Week 7: 2/17 Education and social change in Muslim society
Readings:

Week 8: 2/24 The emergence of gendered politics: women’s voices
Readings:
Week 9: 3/3 Exam #1

Week 10: 3/10 Spring break, no class

PART III: Muslims and the state in Africa

Week 11: 3/17 The Era of democratization: Muslim voices in liberalized arenas

Readings:
- Brégand, Denise, “Muslim Reformists and the State in Benin, in Soares and Otayek, eds.
- Villalón, Leonardo. “Negotiating Democracy in Muslim Contexts: Sahelian experiments.” Ms. 2008. [not in reading package; to be distributed in class]

Week 12 3/24 The politics of person: family law, public morality, human rights

Readings:
Affairs, 25 (3), 449-460. [not in reading package; available electronically via UF library site]


Talk: 3/30  Prof. Lamin Sanneh, Yale University: “The return of religion in Africa” time and place TBA


Readings:

- Ostien, Nasir and Kogelman, eds: Comparative perspectives on Shari‘ah in Nigeria. Read: Introduction: (pp. ix-xli) Tayob, Alli, Elaigun (pp. 27-73) Durham, Gaiyu, Šada (pp. 144-177) Sanusi, Danfulani, Oloyade (p. 251-302) An-Naim, Ahmad, Walls (p. 327-382)

Talk: 4/3:  Prof. Philip Ostien, “Implementing Shari’a in Northern Nigeria.” 3:30 PM in 404 Grinter

PART IV: Inter-confessional politics: Muslim--non-Muslim relations

Week 14: 4/7  The politics of numbers: Minorities and Majorities

Readings:

PART V: The transnational politics of Islamism/Jihadism/Terrorism

Week 15 4/14  Resurgent religion and weakened states: Focus on the Horn, part I
Readings:  • De Waal, Alex, ed. Islamism and Its Enemies in the Horn of Africa. Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2004, chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6


Week 16 4/21  US Policy in Muslim Africa: The question of “terrorism”

Final Exam: 10-12 AM, Tuesday 28 April