

DI-514 Suffering and Struggle
Professor Mona Siddiqui and Professor David D. Grafton

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Synchronous online

May 25 (5-6:30 pm EST), 26 (11-1:00 pm EST), 27 (11-1:00 pm EST), 28 (11-1:00 pm EST);

June 1, 3, 10, 15, 17, 22 (all 6-8:00 pm EST)

Revised Syllabus April 2021

Suffering and Struggle is common to all humankind. It is part of the human condition and a constant theme in philosophy, theology and psychology. In this course we will explore how humankind finds meaning in life during times of uncertainty, especially during this period of an international pandemic. By examining the writings of Rainer Maria Rilke, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, and Sayyid Qutb, we will explore how suffering and struggle force the faithful to stretch their imagination to bring about powerful and prophetic movements for change. The moral and aesthetic impulse of their writings will stimulate inter-cultural and interdisciplinary conversations in the search for meaning in times of uncertainty.

Mona Siddiqui is Professor of Islamic and Interreligious Studies at the University of Edinburgh. She received an OBE for her comparative work and public profile. As a Muslim scholar in Christian-Muslim relations, she is unique and her book *Christians, Muslims and Jesus* (2013) received international acclaim. She is a fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh and a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

David D. Grafton is the Professor of Islamic Studies and Christian-Muslim Relations on the faculty of the Duncan Black Macdonald Center for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations at Hartford Seminary. He is the North American Section Editor for *Christian-Muslim Relations: A Biographical History 1500-1900*, vols. 11 and 16 (2016, 2020).

Course Objectives: Students will be able to reflect on the role of human suffering and provide describe how Christian and Muslim thinkers and theologians respond to crises. Students will also provide their own understanding of the role of suffering.

Teaching and Learning Strategies:

This course will be a synchronous online course. The first four sessions will be lectures and presentations by Professor Siddiqui. The following six sessions will be a seminar format with Dr. Grafton where students will take in turn to present material on one of the four authors from Professor Siddiqui's book and lead discussions on their work. Final papers will be developed from the themes of these presentations.

All lectures will draw on a number of scholars as well as key figures in the book, *Human Struggle*. The lectures will be 45 mins maximum and will be seminar style, i.e., interactive and asking questions as well as the full class discussion.

By the end of the course, it is hoped that the students will have gained a deeper understanding of the concept of struggle as a defining aspect of human life. Theological, philosophical and sociological perspectives will provide different approaches to this theme and its conceptual overlap with human suffering.

Required reading:

Siddiqui, Mona. *Human Struggle: Christian and Muslim Perspectives*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021.

Students will be required to utilize works from bibliography at the end of the syllabus for their presentations.

Course Assignments:

1. Attend all of the synchronous sessions, and actively participate in class discussions (20% of the grade). If you know you will be unable to attend a class session, please inform the professor in advance. In the case of an absence the professor will reserve the right to ask the student for a written assignment on the required reading for that session.
2. Provide a 1000-word **essay** in response to Professor Siddiqui's Bijlefeld Lecture (20% of the grade). The paper is due 1 June by 6 pm.
3. Each student will **present material** on a particular author, outlining the author's biography and issues as presented in Professor Siddiqui's book. Students will also be responsible for **presenting questions for discussion** during this class period (30% of the grade). Students should select one of the following authors for their presentation by **Friday, 28, May**.

Mohammed Arkoun
Dietrich Bonhoeffer
Khaled Abou el Fadl
Abu Hamid al-Ghazali

Sayyid Qutb
Fazler Rahman
Rainer Maria Rilke
Cornell West

4. A **final research paper** of at least 6,000 words on the themes discussed in the class. Students might select another individual. The topic should be agreed upon by the instructors. Both instructors will read and comment on the final papers (30% of the grade). The paper is due **15 July**.

Course Outline:

Tuesday, 25 May, 5:00 – 6:30 pm EST – Bijlefeld Lecture of Hartford Seminary, 'Faith and struggle in Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Sayyid Qutb.'

Students must attend the lecture and provide a 1000 word response paper dealing with one aspect of Professor Siddiqui's lecture.

Wednesday, 26 May, 11:00 – 1:00 EST – ‘The spiritual struggle in Rainer Maria Rilke and Muhammad al-Ghazali.’ 1 hour lecture + class discussion

Thursday, 27 May, 11:00 – 1:00 EST -- ‘The scholarly quest for an Islamic ethics.’ 1 hour lecture + class discussion

Friday, 28 May, 11:00 – 1:00 EST -- ‘Reflections on hope in an age of uncertainty.’

Tuesday, 1 June, 6-8:00 EST – Theodicy issues

Students should read: the Hebrew Bible book of Job 1-42; Qur’an, al-‘Anbiyya (21):83-84; al-Şad (38):41-44; and Ibn Kāthir, 92-6.

Thursday, 3 June, 6-8:00 EST -- Student Presentation on the struggle for meaning in spirituality (Rainer Maria Rilke and Abu Hamid al-Ghazali)

Thursday, 10 June, 6-8:00 EST -- Student Presentation on the struggle within a modern Islamic epistemology (Mohammed Arkoun, Fazlur Rahman and Khaled Abou el-Fadl)

Tuesday, 15 June, 6-8:00 EST – Student Presentation on social and political struggles (Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Sayyid Qutb)

Thursday, 17 June, 6-8:00 EST – Student Presentation on the struggles on racism in America (Cornell West)

Tuesday, 22 June, 6-8:00 EST – Final Wrap up session

Wednesday, 15 July – Final papers due

MA, Grading Scale

A (95-100)	Demonstrates excellent mastery of the subject matter, a superior ability to articulate this, and provides helpful connections to daily life or contemporary issues. Exceeds expectations of the course.
A- (90-94)	Demonstrates mastery of the subject matter, ability to articulate this well, and makes connections to daily life or contemporary issues. Exceeds expectations of the course.
B+(87-89)	Demonstrates a very good understanding of the subject matter, able to articulate lessons learned in the assignment well. Meets expectations of the course.
B (83-86)	Demonstrates an understanding of the subject matter and the ability to articulate lessons learned. Meets expectations of the course.
B-(80-82)	Demonstrates an understanding of the material at hand, has some difficulty articulating this, and basic connection of the material to daily life or contemporary issues/life. Meets basic expectations for the course.
C+(77-79)	Demonstrates a basic comprehension of the subject matter, weak articulation and connections. Does not meet expectations for the course.
C (70-76)	Demonstrates a minimal comprehension of the subject matter and has difficulty making connections. Does not meet expectations of the course.
F (below 70)	Unable to meet the basic requirements of the course.

- Please note: A+’s and C-’s are not part of the grading system.

DMin Grading Scale: High Pass (95-100), Pass (83-94), Low Pass (70-82), and Fail (below 70)

Other Hartford Seminary academic policies are listed at <http://www.hartsem.edu/current-students/policies/>.

Bibliography for presentations and research

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