

ISLAMIC SPIRITUALITY (WS-639)
Summer 2026
Hartford International University for Religion and Peace

Instructor:

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Course Description

This course offers a comprehensive exploration of the development of Islamic spirituality from the formative period of Islam to its classical and later expressions. The course seeks to introduce students to the rich diversity of Islamic spiritual traditions and to examine the historical, theological, and social contexts in which Muslim spiritual paths, practices, and communities emerged and evolved.

Students will engage both primary sources in English translation and selected secondary scholarship, reflecting on the teachings of a wide range of Muslim spiritual masters across time and geography. Particular attention will be given to Sufism as a significant manifestation of Islamic spirituality, while also considering diverse Muslim perspectives on spiritual practices, authority, and ethical formation.

The course includes readings from English translations of some of the most influential works of Arabic and Persian Sufi literature—texts that have inspired generations of Muslim practitioners and continue to resonate with spiritual seekers across religious traditions. Through close reading, discussion, and reflection, students will examine how the spiritual dimension of Islam, in its many forms, animates Muslim religious life and nurtures the universal human quest for closeness to the Divine.

Curricular Requirements Fulfilled

This course fulfills the following curricular requirements:

- **Master of Arts in Interreligious Studies (MAIRS)**
 - Interreligious Studies: Elective
 - Islamic Studies: Beliefs and Practices
- **Master of Arts in Chaplaincy (MAC)**
 - Islamic Chaplaincy: Elective

Course Learning Objectives

These course learning objectives are designed to support the academic learning outcomes of the Master of Arts in Interreligious Studies (MAIRS)—including the Islamic Studies: Beliefs and Practices specialization—and the professional competencies of the Master of Arts in Chaplaincy (MAC), particularly within the Islamic Chaplaincy pathway.

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

1. **Locate and explain the roots of the spiritual dimension of Islam** in the Qur'an and the life of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), situating Islamic spirituality within its historical, theological, and ethical contexts.
2. **Demonstrate understanding of virtue, ethical development, and character formation** as central aspects of Islamic spirituality, drawing on Qur'anic teachings, Prophetic exemplarity, and classical Sufi approaches.
3. **Identify key figures, texts, and practices in Muslim spiritual thought** and explain their significance for theology, ethics, spiritual formation, and communal religious life.
4. **Demonstrate familiarity with the core principles and practices of Sufism**, including repentance (tawba), sincerity (ikhlāṣ), remembrance (dhikr), spiritual struggle (mujāhada), companionship (ṣuhba), and spiritual authority.
5. **Appreciate Sufi poetry, symbolism, and narrative** as forms of spiritual inspiration, ethical teaching, and theological reflection.
6. **Apply knowledge of one's own religious tradition while engaging respectfully with other religious and spiritual traditions**, demonstrating interreligious sensitivity, mutual recognition (te'āruf), and ethical responsiveness.
7. **Develop foundational skills for spiritual care in multi-faith settings**, including attentive listening, reflective analysis, ethical discernment, appropriate use of prayer and ritual, and professional presence, cultivated both in classroom practice and supervised fieldwork.

Course Texts and Reading Policy

All required readings for this course will be drawn from the books listed below. **Assigned chapters and excerpts will be organized by module and uploaded as PDF files on Canvas prior to each class session.** Students are **not expected to purchase all books**, though doing so is encouraged for those with a strong interest in Islamic spirituality or Sufism.

Core Texts (Read Throughout the Course)

The following books form the **intellectual and spiritual backbone** of the course. **Substantial portions of these texts will be read across multiple modules.**

1. **Martin Lings.** *What Is Sufism?*
Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 1995.
→ Read extensively across Modules 1–6 as a foundational overview of Sufi origins, doctrine, method, and historical development.
2. **Michael Sells.** *Early Islamic Mysticism: Sufi, Qur'an, Mi'rāj, Poetic and Theological Writings.*
New York: Paulist Press, 1996.
→ Used throughout the course for primary mystical texts and early Sufi figures (e.g., Junayd, al-Bistāmī, Rābi'a, al-Muḥāsibī, al-Qushayrī, al-Hallāj).
3. **Fethullah Gülen.** *Key Concepts in the Practice of Sufism (Emerald Hills of the Heart).*
Fairfax: The Fountain, 1999.
→ Short thematic readings assigned throughout the course to introduce and deepen

understanding of core Sufi concepts (e.g., tawba, ikhlas, dhikr, futuwwa, walāya, mujāhada, ‘ilm ladun).

Selective and Module-Based Texts

The following books will be used **selectively**, with **specific chapters or sections assigned for particular modules**.

4. **Carl W. Ernst.** *Sufism: An Introduction to the Mystical Tradition of Islam.*
Available through the Digital Theological Library.
→ Key chapters assigned in Modules 6, 8, and 9 (Sufi orders, aesthetics, and contemporary Sufism).
5. **Farid al-Din ‘Attār.** *The Conference of the Birds.*
Trans. Dick Davis & Afkham Darbandi.
Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1984.
PDF (online):
<https://sufipathoflove.files.wordpress.com/2019/10/the-conference-of-the-birds.pdf>
→ Introduction and selected passages assigned in Module 8 (Sufi symbolism, poetry, and spiritual journey).
6. **Imām Mawlūd.** *Maṭharat al-Qulūb (Signs, Symptoms, and Cures of the Spiritual Diseases of the Heart).*
Trans. Hamza Yusuf. PDF.
→ Introduction assigned in Module 8 for ethical and spiritual refinement of the heart.

Additional Required and Recommended Scholarly Texts

7. **Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī.** *The Niche of Lights (Mishkāt al-Anwār).*
Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1998.
→ Selected excerpts may be assigned in Modules 3 and 4 (light symbolism, knowledge, and spiritual perception).
8. **William C. Chittick.** *Faith and Practice of Islam.*
Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992.
→ Recommended for students seeking conceptual clarity on Islamic belief, practice, and spirituality.
9. **Camille Adams Helminski (ed.).** *Women of Sufism: A Hidden Treasure.*
Boston: Shambhala, 2003.
→ Selected readings assigned in Modules 3 and 8, especially in relation to Rābi‘a al-‘Adawiyya and women’s spiritual authority.
10. **Zeki Saritoprak.** *Islamic Spirituality: Theology and Practice for the Modern World.*
New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017.
→ Core readings assigned in Modules 4 and 5 (al-Ghazālī, Said Nursi, prayer, asceticism, and modern spirituality).

Reading Expectations and Guidance

- All assigned readings will be provided on Canvas as PDFs, organized by module and clearly labeled.
- Students are encouraged to read **thoughtfully and selectively**, focusing on key arguments, themes, and concepts rather than every detail.

- Some texts are **theoretically dense**; students are not expected to master all metaphysical systems but to grasp their **spiritual, ethical, and experiential implications**.
- Repeated exposure to core texts and concepts is intentional and designed to reinforce learning across modules.

MODULE 1: Introduction to Islamic Spirituality

This module introduces students to the concept of spirituality across religious traditions, with a particular focus on Islamic spirituality and Sufism. Students will explore how Islam responds to fundamental human questions of meaning, purpose, and spiritual transformation. Foundational texts and key concepts will provide the framework for understanding Sufism as Islam's inner, spiritual dimension.

Topics Covered:

- Spirituality and Spiritual Traditions
- How Islam and Muslim thinkers respond to central questions of spirituality and meaning
- The Hadith of Jibril (Gabriel) and the foundations of Islamic spirituality
- What is Sufism?
- Who is a Sufi?

Required Reading Assignments

1. **Chapter 1: “The Originality of Sufism”**
Chapter 2: “The Universality of Sufism”
In: Martin Lings, *What Is Sufism?*
Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 1995.
2. **“Sufism and Its Origin.”**
In: Fethullah Gülen, *Key Concepts in the Practice of Sufism (Emerald Hills of the Heart)*
Fairfax: The Fountain, 1999.

Class Session

Date: Monday, June 8, 2026

Time: 6:00–9:00 PM

Class Structure and Flow

1. **Lecture and Discussion:**
Instructor-led lecture and guided discussion based on the assigned readings.
2. **Student Presentations – Early Islamic Mysticism:**
Students will be assigned individual Sufi figures from Michael Sells, *Early Islamic Mysticism: Sufi, Qur'an, Mi'raj, Poetic and Theological Writings*. Paulist Press, 1996.
Each student will present on their assigned figures in later class sessions, with attention to both spiritual significance and historical background.
3. **Introduction to Core Sufi Concepts:**
An overview of key Sufi terms and concepts will be provided.
Students will then be assigned essential Sufi concepts for short in-class presentations to deepen collective understanding and engagement.

MODULE 2: The Qur'an and the Prophet as Sources of Sufi Spirituality

This module examines the Qur'an and the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ as the primary spiritual sources of Sufism. Students will explore how the Qur'anic revelation functions as the foundation of mystical experience in Islam and how the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ serves as both the ultimate spiritual exemplar and the central object of love and devotion in Sufi thought. The module also introduces early Sufi interpretations of the Qur'an and key spiritual concepts essential to the Sufi path.

Topics Covered:

- The Sacred Sources of Sufism
- The Qur'anic Event as the Matrix of Mystical Experience
- Mystical Themes of the Qur'an
- The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ as Mystical Exemplar and Object of Devotion

Required Reading Assignments

1. **Chapter 3: “The Book.”**
Chapter 4: “The Messenger”
Chapter 5: “The Heart”
In: Martin Lings, *What Is Sufism?*
Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 1995.
2. **Chapter 1: “Sources of Islamic Mysticism.”**
Chapter 2: “Early Sufi Qur'an Interpretation”
In: Michael Sells, *Early Islamic Mysticism: Sufi, Qur'an, Mi'raj, Poetic and Theological Writings*
Paulist Press, 1996.

Suggested Readings for Understanding Student Presentations

These readings are optional but recommended to help students better follow and contribute to their peers' presentations. Reviewing them before class will enhance comprehension and enable meaningful questions and comments.

- **“Imam al-Qushayri: Interpreting Mystical Expressions from the Treatise.”**
In: Michael Sells, *Early Islamic Mysticism*
Paulist Press, 1996.
- **“Tawba, Awba, Inaba (Repentance, Penitence, Contrition).”**
In: Fethullah Gülen, *Key Concepts in the Practice of Sufism (Emerald Hills of the Heart)*
Fairfax: The Fountain, 1999.

Additional Optional Resource

- Shaykh Abdal Hakim Murad (Dr. Timothy Winter),
“Is Orthodox Islam Possible Without Sufism?”
<https://youtu.be/uQWNeGyRu0k?si=SaHBWpI5iBKG1CX>

Class Session

Date: Wednesday, June 10, 2026

Time: 6:00–9:00 PM

Class Structure and Flow

1. Lecture and Discussion:

Instructor-led lecture and guided discussion based on the assigned readings, focusing on the Qur'an and the Prophetic model as foundations of Sufi spirituality.

2. Student Presentation – Imam al-Qushayri:

A student presentation on “**Imam al-Qushayri: Interpreting Mystical Expressions from the Treatise.**”

The primary source will be Michael Sells, *Early Islamic Mysticism*, though presenters are encouraged to draw on additional scholarly sources.

3. Student Presentation – Key Sufi Concepts:

A focused presentation on “**Tawba, Awba, and Inaba (Repentance, Penitence, Contrition)**” based on Fethullah Gülen’s *Key Concepts in the Practice of Sufism (Emerald Hills of the Heart)*, emphasizing their spiritual significance and practical implications.

MODULE 3: From Knowing to Being — Tawhīd Across the Classical Sufi Tradition

This module explores *tawhīd* (the Oneness of God) not only as a theological doctrine but as a lived spiritual reality within the classical Sufi tradition. Students will examine how major Sufi thinkers articulated the relationship between knowledge (‘ilm), spiritual witnessing, and embodied experience. Special attention will be given to differing yet complementary frameworks of unity, including *Wahdat al-Wujūd* and *Wahdat al-Shuhūd*, and their implications for spiritual practice.

Topics Covered

- **Tawhīd: The Unity of God**
Understanding the intellectual, theological, and experiential dimensions of God's oneness.
- **Wujūd: The Reality of Being (Muhyiddīn Ibn 'Arabī)**
Exploring *Wahdat al-Wujūd* (the Unity of Being), the metaphysical vision of existence, and the absolute presence of God in all that exists.
- **Wahdat al-Shuhūd: The Oneness of Witnessing (Imām Rabbānī)**
Examining *Wahdat al-Shuhūd* as a spiritual framework that emphasizes witnessing God in creation while preserving the distinction between Creator and creation.
- **Integrating Knowledge and Being**
Applying classical Sufi insights to bridge intellectual understanding with lived spiritual experience and ethical transformation.

Required Reading Assignments

1. Chapter 6: “The Doctrine.”

In: Martin Lings, *What Is Sufism?*
Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 1995.

2. “Wahdat al-Wujūd in Sufi Thought: Bridging Metaphysical Unity and Mystical Devotion.”

By: Syed Hamid Farooq Bukhari.

3. **Exploring the Intersection of Shari‘a and Sufism in Imām Rabbānī Ahmad Sirhīdī’s Maktūbāt Rabbānī: A Critical Analysis**
By: Saeyd Rashed Hasan Chowdury.

Suggested Readings for Understanding Student Presentations

These readings are optional but recommended to help students better follow and contribute to their peers’ presentations. Reviewing them before class will enhance comprehension and enable meaningful questions and comments.

- **“Rabia... Her Words and Life in ‘Attar’s Memorial of the Friends of God”**
In: Michael Sells, *Early Islamic Mysticism*
Paulist Press, 1996.
- **“‘Ibāda, ‘Ubūdiyya, and ‘Ubāda (Worship, Servanthood, and Deep Devotion)”**
In: Fethullah Gülen, *Key Concepts in the Practice of Sufism (Emerald Hills of the Heart)*.

Additional Recommended Readings:

- Camille Adams Helminski (ed. and introd.), *A Doorkeeper of the Heart: Rābi‘a al-‘Adawiyya*, in *Women of Sufism: A Hidden Treasure—Writings and Stories of Mystic Poets, Scholars, and Saints*.
- Albert Frolov, “Bediuzzaman Said Nursī’s Critique of the Concept of Wahdat al-Wujūd (The Unity of Being).”
- Fethullah Gülen, *Key Concepts in the Practice of Sufism – Volume 2 (Emerald Hills of the Heart)*, “Tawhīd (Unity).” Fairfax: The Fountain, 1999.
- Fethullah Gülen, *Key Concepts in the Practice of Sufism – Volume 2 (Emerald Hills of the Heart)*, “Wujūd (Finding and Existence).” Fairfax: The Fountain, 1999.

Class Session

Date: Friday, June 12, 2026

Time: 6:00–9:00 PM

Class Structure and Flow

1. **Lecture and Discussion:**
Instructor-led lecture and guided discussion based on the assigned readings, focusing on *tawhīd* as a transformative spiritual reality that moves from conceptual understanding to lived experience. The session will examine classical Sufi approaches to unity—particularly *Wahdat al-Wujūd* and *Wahdat al-Shuhūd*—and explore how differing models of divine unity shape spiritual perception, ethical consciousness, and the integration of knowing and being.
2. **Student Presentation – Rābi‘a al-‘Adawiyya:**
A student presentation on Rābi‘a’s life and teachings, focusing on her words and spiritual legacy as presented in *‘Attār’s Memorial of the Friends of God*.
The primary source will be Michael Sells, *Early Islamic Mysticism*, though presenters are encouraged to engage additional scholarly sources.
3. **Student Presentation – Key Sufi Concepts:**
A focused presentation on **‘Ibāda, ‘Ubūdiyya, and ‘Ubāda** (Worship, Servanthood, and Deep Devotion), based on Fethullah Gülen’s *Key Concepts in the Practice of Sufism (Emerald Hills of the Heart)*.

The presentation should highlight both the spiritual meanings and practical implications of these concepts.

MODULE 4: Paths of the Heart — Spirituality in al-Ghazali, Rumi, and Said Nursi

This module explores three major figures who shaped Islamic spirituality across different historical and intellectual contexts: al-Ghazali, Jalaluddin Rumi, and Bediuzzaman Said Nursi. Through their writings and spiritual visions, students will examine diverse pathways of the heart, including ethical self-purification, love-centered mysticism, and faith-based spirituality in the modern age. The module emphasizes how classical Sufi insights continue to inform contemporary spiritual life.

Topics Covered:

- Al-Ghazali: Purification of the Heart and Intellectual Sufism
- Rumi: Love, Ecstasy, and the Path of the Heart
- Said Nursi: Faith, Divine Light, and Contemporary Islamic Spirituality

Required Reading Assignments

1. **Chapter 5: “Al-Ghazali.”**
In: Zeki Saritoprak, *Islamic Spirituality: Theology and Practice for the Modern World*
New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017.
2. **“Sufi and Philosophical Heritage of Jalaluddin Rumi.”**
Kilicheva, K., & Kilicheva, G. (2022).
International Journal of Humanities, Literature & Arts, 5(1), 1–4.
3. **“Rumi: The Sufi Mystic Poet of the Persian Language.”**
By: Zulfikar Ali Ansari.
4. **Chapter 6: “Bediuzzaman Said Nursi.”**
In: Zeki Saritoprak, *Islamic Spirituality: Theology and Practice for the Modern World*
New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017.

Suggested Readings for Understanding Student Presentations

These readings are optional but recommended to help students better follow and contribute to their peers' presentations. Reviewing them before class will enhance comprehension and enable meaningful questions and comments.

- **“al-Muhasibi and Moral Psychology.”**
In: Michael Sells, *Early Islamic Mysticism*
Paulist Press, 1996.
- **“Ikhlas (Sincerity or Purity of Intention).”**
In: Fethullah Gülen, *Key Concepts in the Practice of Sufism (Emerald Hills of the Heart)*.

Additional Optional Readings:

- Yasir Bilgin, *Islamic Spirituality, Cognition, and Coping* (Unpublished PhD Dissertation)
 - Chapter 2: “Said Nursi and His Spirituality.”
 - Chapter 3: “Cornerstones of Nursi’s Spirituality.”

- William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Doctrine of Rumi: Illustrated Edition*
 - Students are encouraged to read at least the **Introduction**

Class Session

Date: Monday, June 15, 2026

Time: 6:00–9:00 PM

Class Structure and Flow

1. Lecture and Discussion:

Instructor-led lecture and guided discussion based on the assigned readings, focusing on differing spiritual methodologies and shared ethical concerns among al-Ghazali, Rumi, and Said Nursi.

2. Student Presentation – al-Muhasibi:

A student presentation on **al-Muhasibi**'s life and teachings, with particular attention to his contribution to **moral psychology** and self-accountability (*muhasaba*).

The primary source will be Michael Sells, *Early Islamic Mysticism*, though presenters are encouraged to consult additional scholarly sources.

3. Student Presentation – Key Sufi Concept:

A focused presentation on **Ikhlas (Sincerity or Purity of Intention)**, based on Fethullah Gülen's *Key Concepts in the Practice of Sufism (Emerald Hills of the Heart)*.

The presentation should explore both the spiritual depth and practical implications of *ikhlas* in personal and communal life.

MODULE 5: The Method of Sufism: The Names of God, Dhikr, and Spiritual Practices

This module examines the practical and methodological aspects of Sufism, including devotional practices, remembrance of God (dhikr), and the balance between solitary and communal spiritual life. Students will explore how Sufi practices deepen the pillars of Islam and foster spiritual transformation.

Topics Covered:

- Obligatory and Voluntary Worship: Deepening the Pillars of Islam
- The Divine Names and Dhikr (Remembrance of God)
- Khalwah and Jalwah: Solitude and Communal Practice

Required Reading Assignments

1. Chapter 7: “The Method.”

Chapter 8: “The Exclusiveness of Sufism”

In: Martin Lings, *What Is Sufism?*

Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 1995.

2. Chapter 8: “Prayer, Asceticism, and Spirituality.”

In: Zeki Saritoprak, *Islamic Spirituality: Theology and Practice for the Modern World*

New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017.

3. “**Dhikr (Recitation of God’s Names).**”

In: Fethullah Gülen, *Key Concepts in the Practice of Sufism (Emerald Hills of the Heart)* Fairfax: The Fountain, 1999.

Suggested Readings for Understanding Student Presentations

These readings are optional but recommended to help students better follow and contribute to their peers’ presentations. Reviewing them before class will enhance comprehension and enable meaningful questions and comments.

- “**SARRAJ... The Seven Stations from The Book of Flashes (Kitāb al-Luma’)**”
In: Michael Sells, *Early Islamic Mysticism*
Paulist Press, 1996.
- “**Futuwwa (Youth and Chivalry)**”
In: Fethullah Gülen, *Key Concepts in the Practice of Sufism (Emerald Hills of the Heart)*.

Additional Optional Resources

- *Collection of Authentic Invocations* compiled by Shaykh Muhammad ibn Hasan Ali al-Albani
- Selected Prayers of Prophet Muhammad and Great Muslim Saints, compiled by Fethullah Gülen
- *Imploring Hearts (al-Qulubu ’d-Daria)*, a collection of prayers compiled by Fethullah Gülen from Ottoman scholar Sheikh Ziyaeddin Gümüşhanevi (1813–1893)
- Sami Yusuf – *The 99 Names* (أسماء الله الحسنى)
<https://youtu.be/tTao6LY05zw?si=Zonszbd40b3Nszt>
- *99 Names of Allah – Best Recitation with English Meaning & Explanation and Quran References* <https://youtu.be/g3yG6rU9Uys?si=l-jd1k6yiTvsp8Rv>

Class Session

Date: Wednesday, June 17, 2026

Time: 6:00–9:00 PM

Class Structure and Flow

1. **Lecture and Discussion:**

Instructor-led lecture and guided discussion based on the assigned readings. The session focuses on devotional practices, remembrance of God (dhikr), the use of the Divine Names, and the balance between solitary (khalwah) and communal (jawwalah) spiritual life.

2. **Student Presentation – SARRAJ:**

A student presentation on SARRAJ’s life and teachings, with particular focus on “The Seven Stations from The Book of Flashes (Kitāb al-Luma’).” Presenters should primarily consult Michael Sells, *Early Islamic Mysticism*, but additional scholarly sources are encouraged.

3. **Student Presentation – Key Sufi Concept:**

A focused presentation on “Futuwwa (Youth and Chivalry),” based on Fethullah Gülen’s *Key Concepts in the Practice of Sufism*. The presentation should explore both the spiritual depth and practical implications of Futuwwa in personal and communal life.

MODULE 6: The Sufi Orders — Mastery, Discipleship, and Initiation

This module examines the historical development of Sufi orders (*turuq*) and their role in shaping Islamic spiritual life. Students will explore the structured systems of spiritual mastery, discipleship, and initiation within Sufism, with particular attention to the stages of spiritual training (*sayr u sulūk*) and the transformative relationship between the spiritual guide (*shaykh*) and the disciple (*murīd*).

Topics Covered:

- Historical development of Sufi orders
- The emergence of organized Sufi lineages (*turuq*)
- Spiritual authority, mastery, and guidance
- Discipleship (*murīdīyah*) and the role of the shaykh
- Stages of initiation and spiritual training (*sayr u sulūk*)

Required Reading Assignments

1. **Chapter 9: “Sufism throughout the Centuries.”**
In: Martin Lings, *What Is Sufism?*
Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 1995.
2. **Chapter 5: “The Sufi Orders: Mastery, Discipleship, and Initiation” (pp. 115–134)**
In: Carl W. Ernst, *Sufism: An Introduction to the Mystical Tradition of Islam*.
3. **“Sayr u Sulūk (Journeying and Initiation)”**
In: Fethullah Gülen, *Key Concepts in the Practice of Sufism (Emerald Hills of the Heart)*
Fairfax: The Fountain, 1999.

Additional Optional Resources

- Fethullah Gülen, *Key Concepts in the Practice of Sufism (Emerald Hills of the Heart)*.
Fairfax: The Fountain, 1999.
 - “Dervish”
 - “Sālik (Initiate).”

Course Schedule Note

No Class: Friday, June 19, 2026 (Juneteenth)

MODULE 7: Spiritual Stations, States, Sainthood, and Wonders

This module explores advanced concepts in Islamic spirituality, focusing on the seeker's inner journey and the spiritual hierarchy in Sufism. Students will examine the meanings of spiritual stations and states, the concept of sainthood (friendship with God), and the distinctions between inspiration and revelation. The module also addresses the nature of miracles and wonders (*karāmāt*) within the Sufi tradition, emphasizing ethical integrity and spiritual responsibility.

Topics Covered:

- Spiritual Stations (*Maqāmāt*) and Spiritual States (*Aḥwāl*)
- Friends of God (*Awliyā' Allāh*)

- Inspiration and Revelation (Ilhām and Wahy)
- Miracles and Wonders (Karāmāt)

Required Reading Assignments

- “Hāl and Maqām (State and Station)” — Volume 1
- “Walāya (Sainthood)” — Volume 2
- “Walī and Awliyā’ Allāh” — Volume 3
- “Wahy and Ilhām (Revelation and Inspiration)” — Volume 3
- “Karāma (Wonder)” — Volume 3

In: Fethullah Gülen, *Key Concepts in the Practice of Sufism (Emerald Hills of the Heart)* Fairfax: The Fountain, 1999.

Suggested Readings for Understanding Student Presentations

These readings are optional but recommended to help students better follow and contribute to their peers’ presentations. Reviewing them before class will enhance comprehension and enable meaningful questions and comments.

- “Bistami: His Biographies and Mystical Utterances”
In: Michael Sells, *Early Islamic Mysticism*
Paulist Press, 1996.
- “Hurriyya (Freedom)”
In: Fethullah Gülen, *Key Concepts in the Practice of Sufism (Emerald Hills of the Heart)*
Fairfax: The Fountain, 1999.

Class Session

Date: Monday, June 22, 2026

Time: 6:00–9:00 PM

Class Structure and Flow

1. **Lecture and Discussion:**
The session will begin with a brief question-and-answer segment reviewing the previous module, which will be skipped due to the Juneteenth holiday. This will be followed by an instructor-led lecture and guided discussion based on the assigned readings for Module 7.
2. **Student Presentation – al-Bistāmī:**
A student presentation on the life and teachings of Abū Yazīd al-Bistāmī, with particular emphasis on his biographies and mystical utterances. Presenters should primarily consult Michael Sells’s *Early Islamic Mysticism*, though additional scholarly sources are encouraged.
3. **Student Presentation – Key Sufi Concept:**
A focused student presentation on “Hurriyya (Freedom)”, based on Fethullah Gülen’s *Key Concepts in the Practice of Sufism*. The presentation should explore both the spiritual depth of the concept and its practical implications for personal and communal life.

MODULE 8: Sufi Aesthetics and Spiritual Practice — Poetry, Music, and the Arts

This module explores the aesthetic and experiential dimensions of Sufi spirituality, focusing on poetry, music, ritual, and the visual arts as pathways to spiritual realization. Students will examine how Sufis employ metaphor, rhythm, movement, and artistic expression to articulate inner transformation, love of the Divine, and the purification of the heart.

Topics Covered:

- Sufi Poetry and Literature
- Major Sufi Figures: 'Attār, Rūmī, Ḥāfiẓ, and Rābi'a al-Adawiyya
- Spiritual themes and metaphorical language in Sufi texts
- Music, *Samā'*, and ritual practice
- How rhythm, sound, and movement facilitate spiritual states
- Sufi art, architecture, and calligraphy

Required Reading Assignments

1. **Chapter 6: “Sufi Poetry.”**
Chapter 7: “Sufi Music and Dance”
In: Carl W. Ernst, *Sufism: An Introduction to the Mystical Tradition of Islam*.
2. **“Music and dance: The role of Samā’ in Sufi spirituality.”**
Memon et al. (2025). *Policy Research Journal*, 3(3), 700–706.
3. **“The influence of Sufi cosmology on spatial design in Islamic architecture.”**
Kutty, Bilal A. (2025).
International Journal of Research and Scientific Innovation (IJRSI).
<https://doi.org/10.51244/IJRSI.2025.120700079>
4. **“The mysticism of Arabic calligraphy.”**
Zenhom & Al-Daghistani (2020).
Mediterranean Journal of Architecture and Fine Arts, 5(1).
<https://doi.org/10.21608/mjaf.2020.24502.1523>
5. **Introduction**
Farid ud-Din 'Attār, *The Conference of the Birds*
Trans. Darbandi & Davis.
6. **Introduction**
Hamza Yusuf, *Maṭharat al-Qulūb* by Imām Mawlūd.

Suggested Readings for Understanding Student Presentations

These readings are optional but recommended to help students better follow and contribute to their peers' presentations. Reviewing them before class will enhance comprehension and enable meaningful questions and comments.

- **“Junayd and On the Affirmation of Unity (Tawḥīd).”**

In: Michael Sells, *Early Islamic Mysticism: Sufi, Qur'an, Mi'raj, Poetic and Theological Writings*. Paulist Press, 1996.

- “**Mujāhada (Striving).**”

In: Fethullah Gülen, Key Concepts in the Practice of Sufism (Emerald Hills of the Heart). Fairfax: The Fountain, 1999.

Additional Optional Resources

- *The World of Rumi*:
 - *Rumi: The Wings of Love*, Part 1 <https://dai.ly/xp0bdf>
 - *Come to Life – Al-Mahyā*, Part 2 <https://dai.ly/xp0bdc>
- **Medieval Sourcebook:**
 - Omar Khayyam, *The Wisdom of the Supreme* (c. 1120)
<https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/source/omarkhayyam-wisdom.asp>
 - Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, selections from *The Mathnawī* (c. 1250)
<https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/source/1250rumi-masnavi.asp>
- **Al-Būṣīrī**, *Qaṣīdat al-Burda* https://youtu.be/e2FKXPzsT7E?si=cb_uZdEnsEEbUOh3
- Rūmī, *Listen to the Nay* <https://youtu.be/mkYbjj9USs?si=eDRFrzn-CVd1tYu9>
- *Lā Ilāha Illā Allāh* Dhikr <https://youtu.be/lJUtZ8yZoP4?si=jTL1h9S-GyMSFFUI>

Class Session

Date: Wednesday, June 24, 2026

Time: 6:00–9:00 PM

Class Structure and Flow

1. Lecture and Discussion:

Instructor-led lecture and guided discussion based on the assigned readings, with attention to the role of aesthetics in spiritual formation.

2. Student Presentation – Junayd and the Affirmation of Unity (Tawhīd):

A student presentation on the life and teachings of **Junayd of Baghdad**, focusing on his understanding of *Tawhīd* (Divine Unity). Presenters should primarily consult Michael Sells's *Early Islamic Mysticism*, with additional scholarly sources encouraged.

3. Student Presentation – Key Sufi Concept:

A focused student presentation on **Mujāhada (Striving)**, based on Fethullah Gülen's *Key Concepts in the Practice of Sufism*. The presentation should explore both the spiritual depth of the concept and its practical implications for personal and communal life.

MODULE 9: Sufism in the Contemporary World

This module examines the place of Sufism in the modern and contemporary Muslim world. Students will explore how Sufi thought and practices have engaged with modernity, political authority, and reformist and fundamentalist movements.

The module also addresses the transformation of Sufi leadership, the public articulation of previously esoteric knowledge, and the ongoing relevance of Islamic spiritual traditions in contemporary contexts.

Topics Covered:

- Sufism and Modernism
- Sufism and the State
- Sufism and Fundamentalist Islam
- The Publication of the Secret
- New Styles of Sufi Leadership

Required Reading Assignments

1. **Chapter 8: “Sufism in the Contemporary World.”**
In: Carl W. Ernst, *Sufism: An Introduction to the Mystical Tradition of Islam*.
2. **The Treatise of the Nine Allusions (Telvihat-i Tis'a)**
The 29th Letter, Part 9
By: Bediuzzaman Said Nursi.
3. **“Another Way of Journeying and Initiation.”**
In: Fethullah Gülen, *Key Concepts in the Practice of Sufism (Emerald Hills of the Heart)*.

Suggested Readings for Understanding Student Presentations

These readings are optional but recommended to help students better follow and contribute to their peers' presentations. Reviewing them before class will enhance comprehension and enable meaningful questions and comments.

- **“Hallāj... And If They Only Knew”**
In: Michael Sells, *Early Islamic Mysticism: Sufi, Qur'an, Mi'rāj, Poetic and Theological Writings*. Paulist Press, 1996.
- **“Ilm Ladun (The Special Knowledge from God’s Presence).”**
In: Fethullah Gülen, *Key Concepts in the Practice of Sufism (Emerald Hills of the Heart)*:

Additional Optional Resources

- Ibn Taymiyya, *Commentary on the Creed of al-Hallāj*, in *Part II: Theological Approaches to Sufism*.
Edited by Ayman Shihadeh, published online by Cambridge University Press, September 12, 2012.
- Y. Alp Aslandogan, *Present and Potential Impact of the Spiritual Tradition of Islam on Contemporary Muslims: From Ghazali to Gülen*.

Class Session

Date: Friday, June 26, 2026

Time: 6:00–9:00 PM

Class Structure and Flow

1. **Lecture and Discussion:**
Instructor-led lecture and guided discussion based on the assigned readings, focusing on the challenges and transformations of Sufism in the contemporary world.

2. **Student Presentation – al-Ḥallāj: “And If They Only Knew”:**
A student presentation on the life, teachings, and legacy of al-Ḥallāj. Presenters should primarily consult Michael Sells’s *Early Islamic Mysticism*, with additional scholarly sources encouraged.
3. **Student Presentation – Key Sufi Concept:**
A focused student presentation on “Ilm Ladun (The Special Knowledge from God’s Presence),” based on Fethullah Gülen’s *Key Concepts in the Practice of Sufism*. The presentation should explore both the spiritual depth of the concept and its practical implications for personal and communal life.
4. **Course Evaluation and Closing Reflections:**
As this is the final class session, time will be devoted to course evaluation, closing reflections, and addressing student questions regarding the final paper and overall course themes.

Course Requirements and Grading

1. Attendance and Participation (30%)

- Attendance in all Zoom sessions is required. Classes will meet **Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, 6:00–9:00 pm (June 8–26)**, except **June 19**.
- Active participation in class discussions is expected. Participation includes verbal contributions in Zoom sessions, thoughtful engagement with peers’ presentations, and submission of reflective writing as outlined below.

2. Pre-Class Reading Summaries (20%)

- For each module, students are required to complete the assigned readings **before class**.
- Submit a **500-word summary** for each module, highlighting at least **three key points** from the texts. Summaries should demonstrate careful reading and understanding of the material.
- Summaries are due **before each class session** and uploaded to Canvas. Late submissions may affect your grade.

3. Post-Class Reflections (10%)

- After each class, students will write a **250-word reflection** addressing three points from the lecture that were particularly significant or thought-provoking.
- Reflections should show attention to lecture content and critical engagement with the material.

4. Student Presentations (20%)

- Each class will feature student presentations in two categories:

a) Sufi Figure Presentations:

One or two students will present on selected prominent Sufi figures, highlighting their understanding and practice of Sufism. Michael Sells, *Early Islamic Mysticism: Sufi, Qur'an, Miraj, Poetic and Theological Writings*, will serve as the primary source for these presentations, covering figures such as Hasan al-Basri, Rabia al-Adawiyya, Junayd of Baghdad, Al-Muhasibi, and Al-Hallaj.

b) Concept Presentations:

One or two students will present on a key concept commonly used in Sufi studies. Topics and readings will be listed in the syllabus. Presentations should provide context, definitions, and examples from primary texts.

5. Final Paper (20%)

- The final paper should be **10–15 pages** in length, formatted adequately according to the **Chicago Manual of Style**, and cite at least **five sources**.
- Students may either:
 1. Use the course materials to write a culminating essay reflecting on themes and ideas studied during the course, or
 2. Choose from one of the pre-approved topics listed in the syllabus.
- This paper should demonstrate critical engagement, clarity of argument, and integration of course readings.

Grading Breakdown:

Assignment	Percentage
Attendance and Participation	30%
Pre-Class Reading Summaries	20%
Post-Class Reflections	10%
Student Presentations (Sufi Figures & Concept)	20%
Final Paper	20%

Possible Topics for Final Papers

Students may choose **one of the following pre-approved topics** or propose a related topic in consultation with the instructor. Papers should engage course readings critically and demonstrate conceptual clarity, textual analysis, and thematic integration.

Core Sufi Concepts and Spiritual Psychology

- The Divine Name **al-Wadūd (The All-Loving)** and its role in Islamic mystical spirituality
- **Ma'rifa (Knowledge of God)**: pathways, obstacles, and spiritual realization in Sufi thought
- **Ikhlāṣ (Sincerity)** as a foundation of spiritual transformation in Sufism
- **Shukr (Thankfulness)** and gratitude as engines of spiritual growth in the Sufi path
- **Şabr (Patience)** and suffering from the perspective of Islamic spirituality
- **The Nafs and its levels**: spiritual struggle, purification, and moral psychology
- **Hurriyya (Spiritual Freedom)** in Sufi ethics and inner liberation
- **Mujāhada (Striving)** and disciplined self-transformation in Sufi practice

Worship, Supplication, and Devotional Life

- **Supplication (Du‘ā')** and its central place in the mystical tradition of Islam
- The **supplications of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ** and their spiritual pedagogy
- **Dhikr (Remembrance of God)**: theory, method, and transformative impact
- **The Divine Names of God (al-Asmā' al-Ḥusnā)** in Sufi devotional practice

Tawhīd, Metaphysics, and Mystical Experience

- **Tawhīd as lived reality**: from theological doctrine to spiritual witnessing
- **Fanā'** (Annihilation in God) in the teachings of Junayd of Baghdad
- **Jam'** (Union / Integration) and spiritual unification in Sufi discourse
- **Ibn ‘Arabī's concept of al-Insān al-Kāmil (The Perfect Human)**
- **Wahdat al-Wujūd and Wahdat al-Shuhūd**: comparative perspectives and spiritual implications

Qur'an, Prophecy, and Sacred Exemplars

- The Qur'an as a **matrix of mystical experience** in Islamic spirituality
- The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ as **mystical exemplar and object of love** in Sufi thought
- **Jesus (‘Isā)** as a spiritual reference in Islamic mysticism
- **Angels** and their role in Islamic spiritual cosmology
- **Jinn and human beings**: mystical interpretations and spiritual meaning

Death, the Afterlife, Dreams, and the Unseen

- **Meditation on death (Rābiṭat al-Mawt)** in Islamic spirituality
- Sufi perspectives on **death, resurrection, and eternal life**
- **Dreams and visions** in the Islamic mystical tradition
- **Laylat al-Qadr (The Night of Power)** in Sufi interpretation and practice

Saints, Authority, and the Sufi Path

- **Walāya (Sainthood)** and the Friends of God (Awliyā' Allāh)
- Criteria of the “**true Sufi**” in classical and modern perspectives
- **Spiritual authority, discipleship, and ethical responsibility** in Sufi orders
- **Karāmāt (wonders)**: meaning, limits, and ethical sobriety

Sufi Orders and Comparative Approaches

- Comparing the spiritual methods of the **Naqshbandiyya and Qādiriyya**
- Comparing the spiritual methods of the **Rifā‘iyya and Shādhiliyya**
- **Sayr u Sulūk (Spiritual Journeying)** across different Sufi orders
- The **Mevlevi Order in the United States**: continuity, adaptation, and public spirituality

Ethics, Society, and the World

- The Sufi approach to **poverty, wealth, and material life**
- The relationship between **faith (īmān) and practice ('amal)** in Islamic spirituality
- **Sharī'a and Ḥaqīqa:** law, truth, and their integration in Sufi thought
- **Futuwwa (Chivalry and spiritual ethics)** in personal and communal life

Major Figures in Islamic Spirituality

- **Rābi'a al-Adawiyya** and the spirituality of divine love
- **Rumi's understanding of love** as a path to God
- **Rumi and Shams of Tabriz:** friendship, transformation, and spiritual awakening
- **al-Ghazālī's vision of the heart** and ethical purification
- **Bediuzzaman Said Nursi's understanding of sincerity (ikhlāṣ)**
- **Nursi's approach to death, resurrection, and faith in the modern age**

Comparative and Interfaith Perspectives

- Comparing a **Muslim saint and a Christian saint:** spiritual authority, ethics, and devotion
- Sufi spirituality and **interfaith resonance:** shared themes and distinct frameworks

Institutional and Academic Policies

Students are responsible for reviewing and complying with all Hartford International University (HIU) academic and institutional policies. These policies—including academic integrity, grading, attendance, accessibility, and student conduct—are outlined in the HIU Student Handbook and related policy documents, which can be accessed at the following link:

- <https://www.hartfordinternational.edu/current-students/academics/academic-policies>