Course Objectives

This is a course on the intellectual history of Muslim revivalist thought in South Asia.

If you need to know more about "intellectual history", please read Peter E. Gordon, "What is Intellectual History: A Frankly Partisan Introduction to a Frequently Misunderstood Field". You should note as well that terms like "revivalism", "reformation" themselves have a specific theological and historical context. Their application to Islamicate societies and cultures, then, is analytically problematic. However, as in other asterik-worthy terms like "Middle East" or "South Asia", we are dealing with such a wide body of scholarship and popular saturation that the un-packing of all this semantic baggage becomes counter-productive (also, I am not fond of neo-logisms). Hence, I ask you only to note and notate the terms you use - carefully.

The chronological focus of this course will be roughly from 1700-1950, give or take fifty years on either end. We will examine the historical archive available to us and will re-trace some key moments in the intellectual productions of Muslim thinkers and actors confronting the transition from the “Gunpowder Empires”, i.e. Ottoman, Safavid and Mughal to the (primarily) British colonial rule in South and Western Asia. This intellectual terrain, which peaks in the late 19th - early 20th century as Muslim "revivalism", is itself highly variegated with a wide range of thinkers. The daily reality of colonialism itself, the responses to it from nationalist, statist, imperialist, reformist, modernist, and revivalist authors (to pinpoint a few) creates a "conversation" in Arabic, Persian, English, Urdu and French which stretches across nearly three centuries.

Following the contours of this “conversation” is our primary goal.


If we also keep a critical presentist focus in our analytical method, we can trace the concrete realities which manifested out of this conversation and from these ideological processes – the post-colonial state of Pakistan claimed itself to be solely a religiously imagined entity; Afghanistan, under the Taliban, proclaimed itself an “Islamic Emirate”.

We have, as our agenda, a clear set of objectives:

- To examine the political history of colonialism, nationalization, and islamization in South Asia.
- To trace the ideological genealogy and political activism of Islamic revivalist movements such as the Jama’at-i Islami – a major Islamic party in Pakistan, the Tablighi Jama’at, seminaries such as the Deobandi or the Bareli.
- To critically analyze the role played by Islam as a political discourse in shaping the agenda and policies of an anti-colonial (and often also an anti-nationalist) state.
- To develop analytical tools necessary in conducting historical research. The output will be a research paper that relies on primary sources (provided) and focuses on any of the themes, persons or events presented in the class.

Primary Readings

As a course in intellectual history, we will rely heavily on primary sources in Persian, and Urdu (some in Arabic and French). I will attempt to provide English translations but we will also do in-class readings. A more complete listing of such sources will be in the “Reading” tab.
• Letters of Shah Wali Allah (1703-1762): To Kings and Consuls and Nobels, To Some Kings & others.
• Letters of Syed Ahmad Barelwi (d. 1831): To Mahmod Sultan Herat & others
• Altaf Hussain Hali (1837-1914), Musaddas.
• Siddique Hasan Khan (1835-1889): The End is Near.
• Syed Jamal al-din Afghani (1838-1897): Responsibilities of the State, Why did the Muslims Weaken?, Islam and Nationalism, On Naturism
• Muhammad Ilyas al-Kandhlawi (b. 1885), Ashraf ‘Ali Thanawi (1863-1943), Ahmad Riza Khan Barelvi (1856-1921): Selections
• Maulana Shaukat Ali, Brochure.
• Muhammad Iqbal (1877-1938): Shikwa, Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam
• Khalifah Magazine. May 2003.

Secondary Readings

Books:


*Articles, Book Chapters & Selections:*


Francis Robinson. ”‘Ulama of South Asia from 1800 to the mid twentieth century” in Islam, South Asia, and the West (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2007): 59-99


Course Requirements

You will be required to read, think, and discuss.

- There will be 1 page response papers (to specific primary readings) due at various classes

- A 20-25 page research paper. Details on the composition and requirements will be given in class.

- Remember that the readings for the week are to be done prior to that week’s class meeting. The readings/articles will be made available either in the Islamwissenschaft library, or the Graduate School library or on the blog. Feel free, of course, to purchase the books via Amazon.de etc. They are worth it.

Course Schedule

See blog site, Reading tab.