



# *The Hebrew University of Jerusalem*

## *Syllabus*

### *The World of the Unseen in Islam - 24807*

*Last update 23-09-2024*

*HU Credits:* 2

*Degree/Cycle:* 2nd degree (Master)

*Responsible Department:* Comparative Religion

*Academic year:* 0

*Semester:* 1st Semester

*Teaching Languages:* English

*Campus:* Mt. Scopus

*Course/Module Coordinator:* Hannelies Koloska

*Coordinator Email:* [hannelies.koloska@mail.huji.ac.il](mailto:hannelies.koloska@mail.huji.ac.il)

*Coordinator Office Hours:* upon appointment

*Teaching Staff:*

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Dr. Hannelies Koloska

Course/Module description:

This course explores the concept of al-ghayb (the unseen) and its importance in Muslim belief, practice, and thought. The concept al-ghayb refers to the hidden, unseen, or invisible, and includes a range of important phenomena in Muslims' everyday lives. The realm of the unseen (‘ālam al-ghayb) includes both those parts of reality that simply cannot be seen and those phenomena that cannot by their nature be perceived (e.g. God, paradise, the past, or the future). The belief in the al-ghayb is a central part of Muslim faith and plays a role concerning knowledge and revelation, dreams and visions, and to the powers of jinn, angels, magic, or evil eyes. The unseen is full of power and potential; but the enticement of the territories of the unseen is also disturbing, troublesome, and even dangerous. We will examine how al-ghayb is foundational to Islamic theology, philosophy, mysticism, and practices.

Course/Module aims:

To introduce students to the key concept of al-ghayb in Islamic theology and Muslim beliefs.

To provide students with an overview of the development of the concept of “al-ghayb” in different epistemologies through the study of primary sources.

To connect textual studies with Muslim practices.

Learning outcomes - On successful completion of this module, students should be able to:

Understand the foundational role of al-ghayb in Islamic theology and its relation to other key Islamic doctrines (e. g. belief in angels, afterlife, the nature of God).

Analyze philosophical and theological debates surrounding al-ghayb.

Explore the role of mystical experience in Islam as an important part of Islamic religious practice and theology.

Discuss practices and beliefs involving the unseen in Muslim cultures.

Critically engage with primary Islamic texts and secondary scholarship to develop a nuanced understanding of how al-ghayb is perceived and approached across different Islamic traditions.

Attendance requirements(%):

100, In case of absence, the teacher has to be notified (not more than 2 times).

Teaching arrangement and method of instruction: -group/pair or individual works

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-interactive learning

Course/Module Content:

*Texts and Discussions:*

- 1) *Scriptural Foundations: Al-Ghayb in the Qur'an and Hadith*
- 2) *Scriptural Foundations: Human sensory capabilities and limitations to access al-ghayb in the Qur'an and Hadith*
- 3) *Theology and Philosophy: The Absolute and the Relative Al-Ghayb*
- 4) *Theology and Philosophy: Reason and Revelation – the access to knowledge of the unseen*
- 5) *Mystical Experience: Access to the Unseen*

*Practices:*

- 6) *Dreams and Visions*
- 7) *Angels and Jinn*
- 8) *Healing*

Required Reading:

MacDonald, D.B., & Gardet, L. (2012). *al-Ghayb*. In P. Bearman (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Islam New Edition Online* (El-2 English). Brill.

[https://doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912\\_islam\\_COM\\_0231](https://doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_0231)

Bar-Asher, M. M. (2018). *Hidden and the Hidden*. In *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān Online*. Brill. [https://doi.org/10.1163/1875-3922\\_q3\\_EQSIM\\_00190](https://doi.org/10.1163/1875-3922_q3_EQSIM_00190)

Bubandt, Nils ; Rytter, Mikkel ; Suhr, Christian; Dordrecht (2019). "A second look at invisibility: Al-Ghayb, Islam, ethnography," *Contemporary Islam* 13.1, pp.1-16.

Mittermaier, Amira (2019). "The Unknown in the Egyptian Uprising: Towards an Anthropology of Al-Ghayb." *Contemporary Islam* 13.1: 17-31.

Additional Reading Material:

TBA

Grading Scheme:

Essay / Project / Final Assignment / Home Exam / Referat 50 %

Presentation / Poster Presentation / Lecture/ Seminar / Pro-seminar / Research proposal 25 %

Active Participation / Team Assignment 25 %

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Additional information:

*This course will be taught in English.*

*Arabic is an asset. Primary sources will be read in English translation.*