Course Objectives

Developing a Christian Mind (DCM) serves several purposes. Especially, as a core course required of all students, it introduces the central intellectual project of Calvin College, which is the development of a broad, faith-based engagement with the ambient culture. Learning objectives of the course include the following:

- Introduce basic themes of the Christian tradition, as interpreted in its Reformed accent,
- Introduce the nature, tradition, and aims of Christian liberal arts education,
- Foster academic community by providing a common fund of intellectual experience for all first-year students, and
- Explore in some depth how Christian faith bears on some issue under current public debate.

The purposes of DCM are partly realized in common elements in all sections of the course:

- Reading Cornelius Plantinga’s Engaging God’s World
- Attending a plenary session with film and discussion
- A-F grades assigned (rather than S or U of other interim courses)
- Opportunity to watch films in the DCM film series
- A final exam with essay questions chosen from a common bank

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1 In consultation with the author, this syllabus has been edited for length, removing details particular to the author’s context such as office hours and location, absence policies, honor codes, and other instructor-specific (or institution-specific) details.
Each section of DCM explores a particular issue, drawn from the professor’s academic discipline or area of expertise, as the means for enacting a Christian engagement with culture. We will take up the issue of our section of DCM, Understanding Islam, by reading some books and other documents and discussing them in class, by keeping a journal of writings on assigned topics, and by going on a field trip.

Required Texts
Besides needing a Bible, including Old and New Testaments, please acquire the following:


Course Assignments and Activities
Your grade for this course will be based on my evaluation of your work on the following activities and assignments:

1. Class attendance and participation (50 points)
   - Attendance and participation in all class meetings
   - Daily readings, including a devotional schedule and academic assignments
   - Please note that phone and electronic media use in class is prohibited
   - Attend and review one film in the DCM film series
   - Participation in the field trip

2. Journal entries (50 points)
   The journal will include entries on eight assigned topics. Each entry should be 300-500 words, typed double-space, printed, and handed in at the beginning of class on the assigned day.

3. Integrative essay (50 points)
   An integrative essay (1000 words, typed double-space) will constitute the take-home portion of the final exam.

4. Final exam (50 points)
   The in-class portion of the final exam will include four short essays covering the book by Plantinga as well as other elements. (50 points)

DCM Section Themes
This section of DCM is about two things, understanding Islam and understanding Christianity. Two concepts will guide us as we work on understanding Islam and understanding Christianity. The first one is language. In Engaging God’s World offers a metaphor of competition as a way of thinking about how Christianity relates to other faith traditions (p. x). This raises many questions: what kind of competition is this—a game? A race? Are there teams? Where is the finish line? etc. Fortunately, Plantinga also
suggests another metaphor for studying different religious traditions, that of language (p. xvi). When learning another language we find ourselves adjusting to new ways of seeing the world. Some are readily translatable into familiar terms and concepts, while others are not. At least three things gained by studying another language seem applicable in studying a different religious tradition. One is that we get access to information available in that language. Another is that we can communicate with people who speak the language. A third is that in studying another language we acquire terms, concepts, and insights that are helpful in understanding our own native language, and language in general. Therefore, we will need language as the first concept to guide us in understanding Islam and understanding Christianity.

The other concept we need is worldview. This concept is often discussed as if it were the same as a philosophy of life, as something you choose, like your ideals for success. It is often used in the singular, as if there were (or ought to be) a single, “Christian worldview” that we all agree on or take for granted. But worldview is more complicated than this might suggest and has many interwoven strands. It can be difficult to disentangle and critically reflect on the various strands of our own worldview, because the Christian strand is always tied up with other strands—race, nationality, class, gender, and more. Some strands may be unconscious. The normal difficulty in disentangling the strands of worldview becomes even more acute when Christians try to understand another faith tradition. In this course we will spend a good bit of time reflecting on this difficulty.

The course asks a lot of questions, and while it does offer some well-thought-out suggestions, it does not necessarily provide complete answers. Rather, it introduces the project of developing a Christian mind that animates community life at Calvin College and, through the topic of understanding Islam, invites you into participation in ongoing work on and conversation about the project.

**COURSE CALENDAR**

*Class meets every day throughout the month of January*

**Day 1 – Wednesday**

- Theme: Christian traditions
- Class Reading: Plantinga, 153-175

**Day 2 – Thursday**

- Theme: Creation
- Class Reading: Plantinga, ix-44
- Daily Devotional Readings:
  - Rumi: Who Says Words (p. 2)
  - Qur’an: 1
  - Bible: Ps. 100
Day 3 – Friday

- Theme: The Fall
- Class Reading: Plantinga, 45-69; Bavinck
- Journal Due: “My Christian Tradition”
- Daily Devotional Readings:
  - Rumi: A Children’s Game (p. 4-5)
  - Qur’an: 114
  - Bible: Ps. 23

Day 4 – Saturday

- Film Viewing at 8 pm: Queen of Katwe
- Daily Devotional Readings:
  - Rumi: Many Wines (p. 6-7)
  - Qur’an: 97
  - Bible: Jn. 2:1-12

Day 5 – Sunday

- Daily Devotional Readings:
  - Rumi: Reed Flute’s Song (p. 17-19)
  - Qur’an: 1
  - Bible: Ps. 42

Day 6 – Monday

- Theme: Redemption
- Class Reading: Plantinga, 71-101
- Journal Due: “My Questions”
- Daily Devotional Readings:
  - Rumi: Five Things to Say (p. 9-10)
  - Qur’an: 2:1-20
  - Bible: Ps. 1
Day 7 – Tuesday
► Theme: Vocation and the Kingdom
► Class Reading: Plantinga, 103-146
► Daily Devotional Readings:
  • Rumi: Be Melting Snow (p. 13)
  • Qur’an: 2:86-96
  • Bible: Mi. 6:8

Day 8 – Wednesday
► Theme: The Qur’an
► Class Reading: Ruthven, xi-38
► Journal Due: “The Qur’an”
► Film Viewing at 8:45am: The Man Who Knew Infinity
► Daily Devotional Readings:
  • Rumi: Emptiness (p. 26-28)
  • Qur’an: 2:114-121
  • Bible: Deut. 6:4-9

Day 9 – Thursday
► Theme: The Prophet
► Class Reading: Ruthven, 38-56
► Daily Devotional Readings:
  • Rumi: Muhammad (p. 257-260)
  • Qur’an: 2:255-256
  • Bible: Rm. 8:1-17

Day 10 – Friday
► Theme: Sunnis and Shiites; SAMS
► Journal Due: “Muhammad”
► Class Reading: Ruthven, 57-68
► Film Viewing at 8:45am: The Mission
► Daily Devotional Readings:
  • Rumi: Where Everything (p. 34-35)
  • Qur’an: 2:285-286
  • Bible: Phil. 2:1-11
Day 11 – Saturday

- Film Viewing at 8 pm: *Arrival*
- Daily Devotional Readings:
  - Rumi: Not a Day (p. 41-42)
  - Qur’an: 96
  - Bible: Heb. 12:1-13

Day 12 – Sunday

- Daily Devotional Readings:
  - Rumi: Taking in the Night (p. 77-79)
  - Qur’an: 1
  - Bible: Is. 40:31

Day 13 – Monday

- Theme: Sufism
- Class Reading: Ruthven, 68-81
- Journal Due: SAMS
- Daily Devotional Readings:
  - Rumi: Bismillah (p. 70)
  - Qur’an: 3:1-9
  - Bible: Jn. 1:1-15

Day 14 – Tuesday

- Theme: Sharia
- Class Reading: Ruthven, 82-99; Jennings
- Daily Devotional Readings:
  - Rumi: The Guest House (p. 109)
  - Qur’an: 2:285-286
  - Bible: Ps. 139
Day 15 – Wednesday
- Theme: Muslim Women
- Class Reading: Ruthven, 100-125; Abu-Lughod
- Journal Due: Sufism
- Daily Devotional Readings:
  - Rumi: Birdwings (p. 174)
  - Qur’an: 52:1-28
  - Bible: I Jn. 1:5-10

Day 16 – Thursday
- Theme: Jihad
- Class Reading: Ruthven, 126-157
- Daily Devotional Readings:
  - Rumi: Only Breath (p. 32)
  - Qur’an: 55
  - Bible: Lk. 19:1-10

Day 17 – Friday
- Theme: Muslims in Grand Rapids; Mosque Field Trip
- Class Reading: TBD
- Journal Due: “Muslim Women”
- Daily Devotional Readings:
  - Rumi: Dervish at the Door (p. 116-117)
  - Qur’an: 57
  - Bible: Mt. 5:1-12

Day 18 – Saturday
- Film Viewing at 8pm: Birth of a Nation
- Daily Devotional Readings:
  - Rumi: King...Doctor (p. 225-233)
  - Qur’an: 32
  - Bible: I Cor. 13
**Day 19 – Sunday**

- Daily Devotional Readings
  - Rumi: Three Brothers (p. 233-237)
  - Qur’an: 1
  - Bible: Ps. 150

**Day 20 – Monday**

- Theme: Interfaith Models
- Reading: Hick, TBD
- Journal Due: “At the Mosque”
- Daily Devotional Readings:
  - Rumi: Put this Design (p. 128-129)
  - Qur’an: 13:15-16
  - Bible: Jn. 9:1-41

**Day 21 – Tuesday**

- Final Exam
- Integrative Essay Due
- Daily Devotional Readings:
  - Rumi: Two Ways of Running (p. 178-80)
  - Qur’an: 92
  - Bible: Lk. 24:13-35