

**Module Title:** Introduction to Muslim Theology & Shi'ī Belief

**Module Code:** THEINT

**Course Duration:** 17 Weeks

**Teaching Method:** 2 units/week

**Credits:** 10

### Overview:

This module consists of two parts. The first part is designed to provide students with a detailed historical background on the origins and development of Islamic theology, theological concepts, the interface between theology and philosophy and the major schools of early and classical Muslim theology. It will study the history and genealogy of ideas by situating some of the major theological arguments within their historical and social contexts. The diversity in Muslim theology will be underscored by detailed reference to the differences in method employed by various trends, allowing students to appreciate the justifications for contrasting doctrinal positions.

The second part of the module offers a detailed introduction to the major themes and central justifications for classical Imāmī doctrine. Classical Imāmī Shī'ī theologians consider knowledge of the fundamental beliefs of religion to be a common obligation upon all responsible individuals. What's more they consider that this knowledge should be acquired through justifications and not simply by way of imitation (*bi dalīl la bi taqlīd*). With the contextual background painted in the first part of the module, the detailed introduction to classical justifications to the fundamental beliefs in Shī'ī Imāmī thought will allow students to situate the development and nature of the Imāmī justifications for belief within broader classical Muslim theological debate.

### Syllabus:

The following are the subjects that are discussed in this module:

- Definition, subject matter, objective and benefits of Muslim theology
- Origin and etymology of *Kalām* and the earliest debates on beliefs by the earliest Muslims
- Relationship between Muslim theology and the other Muslim disciplines
- Historical origin and development of Muslim theology and theological ideas: ideas of the earliest Muslims, Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, Wāṣil bin 'Aṭā', Abu'l-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī, Qāḍī 'Abd al-Jabbār
- Introduction to the key concepts and positions held by the Mu'tazilite, Ash'arite and other Muslim theological schools
- The relationship between theology and philosophy
- Rational ('*aqlī*) and textual (*naqlī*) theological arguments on various religious beliefs
- Introduction to Shiite theology, and discussion of the main themes and justifications for the central doctrines therein :
  - i. Oneness of God (*tawḥīd*)
  - ii. Divine justice of God ('*adl*)
  - iii. Prophethood (*nubuwwa*)

- iv. Imamate (*imāma*)
- v. Eschatology (*ma'ād*)

### **Learning outcomes:**

On completion of this module, the successful student will be able to:

1. Discuss the definition, subject matter, aims, benefits of Muslim theology
2. Show an understanding of the relation between Muslim theology and other Muslim sciences
3. Discuss the history and development of Muslim theology with reference to the key Muslim theologians
4. Demonstrate a critical comprehension of the main concepts and questions in Muslim theology
5. Evaluate and discuss the different Muslim schools of theology and their respective ideas, and methodological dispositions.
6. Critically analyse main points of controversy between the different Muslim theological schools
7. Show a general understanding of the main beliefs in Traditional Shi'ite theology and be able to discuss their justifications in the manner of classical Imāmī theology.
8. Develop skills to analyse and employ traditional methods of theological reasoning

### **Assessment Weighting:**

- 100% Exam

### **Learning Materials:**

#### Core Texts:

- AMI Pack
- Mutahhari, M., (2002), *Understanding Islamic Sciences*, London, ICAS Press
- al-Faḍlī, 'Abd al-Hādī al-Faḍlī, *Khulāṣatu 'Ilm al-Kalām*, (Qom: Dār al-Kitāb al-Islāmī)
- Fāḍil Miqdād, 'Allāma Yusuf ibn Muṭahhar al-Ḥillī, *Al-Nāfi' Yawm al-Ḥashr fi Sharḥ al-Bāb al-Hādī 'Ashar*,
- Sobhani, J., (2001), *Doctrines of Shi'i Islam: A Compendium of Imami Beliefs and Practices*, London: Tauris

Further Reading:

- Fakhry, Majid, (1997), *Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Mysticism*, Oxford: Oneworld
- Kassimi, Husain, (2000), *Aristotle and Aristotelianism in Medieval Muslim, Jewish, and Christian Philosophy*, Austin & Winfield Publishers
- Lalani, Arzina, (2004), *Early Shiite Thought: The Teachings of Imam Muhammad al-Baqir*, London: I.B. Tauris in Association with the Institute for Ismaili Studies
- Martin, Richard C *et al*, (1997), *Defenders of Reason in Islam: Mu'tazilism from Medieval School to Modern Symbol*, Oxford: Oneworld
- Netton, Richard Ian, (1991), *Muslim Neoplatonists: An Introduction to the Thought of the Brethren of Purity, (Islamic Surveys)*, Edinburgh: University Press
- Netton, Richard Ian, (2006), *Islamic Philosophy and Theology*, Routledge