

# Knowledge and Science in Islam (or The Lost Sciences)

**Instructor:** Shuja Ali Mirza

**Duration:** 3 Sessions

**Introduction:** Islam is the religion of knowledge and certainty. The words ‘knowledge’ and ‘intellect’ are prominent and preeminent in all Islamic texts. A deep perusal of these texts reveals that ‘knowledge’ is not something simplistic—it is not just a collection of unrelated facts and figures about various visible things. In the Islamic view, knowledge is a single whole and it is layered. It starts from the immaterial and extends to the material realm, all parts and levels being connected in one holistic order. As its ultimate goal is the One, its source and methodology are also inspired and informed by the One and Only, *al-‘Alīm al-Ḥakīm*. After shedding light on the above, the course will turn to how this traditional understanding of knowledge has been reduced to a mere shadow of what it used to be. The lost sciences of the traditional world will be enumerated and outlined. The course will go on to address the issue of modern science and “knowledge” in modern academia. It will conclude by discussing the traditional channels of Islamic knowledge in our day and their important role in reversing the trend of reducing knowledge and also in inspiring the profane sciences so that they can come to be seen as a part of knowledge in Islam.

## **Outline:**

- Lesson One: Islamic Knowledge and Knowledge in Islam
  - Lesson Two: The Tree of Knowledge—Unity and Hierarchy
  - Lesson Three: The Lost Sciences
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# Spiritual Anthropology

**Instructor:** Shuja Ali Mirza

**Duration:** 9 Sessions

**Introduction:** What is man? Where did man come from? Where is he now? Where is he going? What does it mean to be a human being? Does human life have any meaning? Anthropology is the science responsible for giving the answers to the questions posed. There are two types of anthropology which are based on two fundamentally different ways of understanding man. One is sacred while the other profane. The course will present the former while pointing out the shortcomings of the latter. As such, it will take as its point of departure the origin of man and trace, in a meta-historical fashion, his movement away from that origin. It will conclude with the arrival of man on the material plane of existence and his accelerating descent into the modern world. By lucidly describing this journey and the symptoms and underlying causes of the present quagmire, it will suggest a solution and a general course of action to be taken. This resolution of the current crisis and discord corresponds to man’s return to his origin and the ascent towards his final destination and goal. On the individual level, it means to embark upon the spiritual journey towards God, a journey that includes self-knowledge and self-purification. On the social plane, it means to cultivate a society that accords with Divine Guidance and conforms to Divine

Law and which provides an environment that attracts, nourishes and sustains its inhabitants on a path of spiritual wayfaring.

**Outline:**

- Lesson One: Different types of Anthropology and the Fall of Man
  - Lesson Two: Different Ways of Seeing Reality and the Unitive or Tawhidi Worldview
  - Lesson Three: Manifestation (*tajalli*) versus Displacement (*tajafi*) and Absolute Unity
  - Lesson Four: Getting Up from the Fall and True Felicity
  - Lesson Five: Intellect, Knowledge, Action, and Social Action
  - Lesson Six: Will, Love, and Passion
  - Lesson Seven: Of Myth and Gods
  - Lesson Eight: Modernity and its Isms
  - Lesson Nine: Post-modernity and Alienation
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## United Ummah and Muslim Unity

**Instructor:** Shuja Ali Mirza

**Duration:** 3 Sessions

**Introduction:** It does not take much to convince Muslims that the Ummah is one, ideally and in principle. It is also easy to elicit from them admissions and even lamentations of the current state of affairs—of an Ummah that is plagued with disunity and discord. The causes of divisiveness that have left the Ummah in such a torn and tattered state are, no doubt, various and manifold. The course will try to understand some of these causes and will look for a “solution”. Realizing that unity will not be achieved just by being aware of the need, nor by harbouring a thousand good intentions, the study will turn to both the intellect and traditional authority for guidance.

**Outline:**

- Lesson One: Unity vs Uniformity
  - Lesson Two: The United Ummah in the Qur’an
  - Lesson Three: The Imams (‘a) and Muslim Unity
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## Idols of the Modern World

**Instructor:** Salim Yusufali

**Duration:** 8 Sessions

*Among the people are those who set up compeers besides Allah, loving them as if loving Allah but the faithful have a more ardent love for Allah - though the wrongdoers will see, when they sight the punishment, that power, altogether, belongs to Allah, and that Allah is severe in punishment. (2:165)*

**Introduction:** Throughout history, one of the ugliest manifestations of the human being turning away from Allah has been the idol. Initially a rudimentary object fashioned of base material, the modern idol is subject to even a greater degree of worship, yet due to its sophisticated nature is able to penetrate into our hearts without our even being aware of its influence upon us. In this course we aim firstly to examine the definition and role of idols, the history of idol worship, and reasons behind idol worship from the Qur'an and *hadith*. We will then continue to study some of the idols of the modern era such as individualism, feminism, pluralism, democracy, modern forms of entertainment, and capitalism by reviewing scholarly critiques of these ideologies.

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## Spiritual Guidance of the Ma'sumin

**Instructor:** Salim Yusufali

**Duration:** 8 Sessions

Narrated from Imam al-Baqir ('a): *Seek in the east, seek in the west; you shall not find any knowledge which is valid except that which emanates from us, the Ahl al-Bayt ('a)*. (al-Kafi v. 1 p. 399)

**Introduction:** Within the rich traditions of the Ahl al-Bayt (a) lie many jewels of spiritual teachings that need to be studied and pondered upon. In this course, we aim to study one such tradition regarding the spiritual *jihad* in detail, along with the commentary of Imam Khumayni (may Allah sanctify his soul) on this tradition from chapter 1 of Imam Khumayni's commentary on 40 *ahadith*.

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## The Unfolding Sharī'ah

**Instructor:** Amin Rastani

**Duration:** 6 Sessions

**Introduction:** What is *fiqh*? Who is a *faqīh*? How does one become a *faqih*? What is the importance of *fiqh* in Islam? What developments has Shī'ah *fiqh* put behind and how has it grown over the decades after the major occultation of the twelfth imam ('a)? What are some of the arguments presented against taqlid and the *fiqh* of the jurists and what does the Howzah have to say in refutation of such arguments? This course explores the answers to these and other questions surrounding one of the most downplayed fields of Islamic thought that is sometimes taken for granted in the contemporary Islamic world.

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## Approaching the Quran

**Instructor:** Amin Rastani

**Duration:** 6 Sessions

**Introduction:** The Quran introduces itself as a book of guidance to all of mankind; this implies that it is a book understandable and approachable for all. But just like any other book, there are certain concepts and principles to keep in mind before approaching it, to guarantee an accurate understanding of what it intends to convey to the people. Neglect of such may lead to erroneous conclusions that can sometimes be detrimental to the faith or Islamic worldview and understanding of the believing individual. This course seeks to shed light on some of these concepts in a very general sense, while at the same time providing practical examples to better understand the importance of having the right approach to the Quran and give an idea of what happens when this isn't observed.

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## The Qur'ān and Meaning

**Instructor:** Rizwan Rashid

**Duration:** 6 Sessions

**Introduction:** The Qur'ān is the central sacred text of the Muslims par excellence. It is a divine gift originating from the celestial world and extending down into the realm of humanity. It is the greatest miracle left behind by the Seal of the Prophets (ﷺ), mandated to endure until the end of time. Through the multiple layers of meaning contained within it, it is meant to be man's guiding compass in his return to God. Using Ayatullah Jawādī Āmulī's exegetical work, *The Qur'ān in light of the Qur'ān*, this class will discuss some of the many facets of the Qur'ān. Topics will include: the reality of the Qur'ān, the Qur'ān's inimitability, the Qur'ānic mission, the eternity of the Qur'ān, and understanding the Qur'ān. The conflict between modern hermeneutics and traditional *tafsīr* will also be broached.

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## Tawḥīd in Principle and Action

**Instructor:** Rizwan Rashid

**Duration:** 5-7 Sessions

**Introduction:** In so far as it conveys a fundamental ontological reality, the concept of tawḥīd plays a quintessential role within the final religion of Islam. As a descriptive principle, it affirms the existence and Oneness of God; as a prescriptive command and natural consequence, it demands that man direct his whole being towards the One. Taking inspiration from the works of the great *'ulamā* within the *hawzā*, this course will provide an overview of the concept of tawḥīd. Topics will include: the ways of knowing God, proofs for the existence of God, the levels of tawḥīd, and tawḥīd in application.

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## Qur'ānic Eschatology

**Instructor:** Jaffer Jaffer

**Duration:** 3 Sessions

**Introduction:** The Qur'anic study of Death and Life after Death. We find that nearly One-Fourth of the Holy Qur'an discusses the subject of Death and Life after Death, showing us the importance of believing and being certain about these events. In this class we will examine Qur'anic verses which discuss a range of subjects such as: Death, Barzakh, Resurrection, Hisab, Sirat...etc. which will allow us to strengthen our core theological beliefs.

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## Qur'ānic Sciences

**Instructor:** Sayyid Asad Jafri

**Duration:** 3 Sessions

**Introduction:** This course will mainly focus on the historical context of the Holy Quran. Topics such as: Descent, Revelation and the Miracle nature of the Quran will be discussed. The purpose of such a course is to gain a better understanding of the Quran outside of the world of Tafseer. Its primary objective is to instigate and nurture a closeness with this Glorious Book that will lead us to want to delve deeper into its meaning.

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## Perfection illuminated

**Instructor:** Ali Karmali

**Duration:** 2 Sessions

**Introduction:** What is the perfect human being? What is the perfect Muslim? How can we strive to reach perfection? This session will be a comparative analysis of various ideologies viz-a-vis their understanding of perfection. In doing so, we will learn more about the nature of human beings, their potential of achieving perfection and closeness to the Almighty, InshaAllah.

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