

## Clark College Mature Learning – Winter 2014/15

# ISIS/ ISIL: How Did the "Islamic State" Gain Power?

*Tuesdays, 1:30 – 3:20 PM  
January 6 – February 3, 2015  
Foster Hall Auditorium (Room #126)*

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**Course Description:** Deconstructing ISIS/ISIL, the “Islamic State” and dreams of the Islamists; and the emergence of Abu Bakr al Baghdadi “al Qurayshi” who, between the beheadings and mass killings, has redefined radicalism. More powerful than Osama bin Laden’s al Qaeda in size, equipment and funding, both Saudi Arabia (Sunni) and Iran (Shi’a) are cooperating against this regional and global threat. Has al-Baghdadi struck a nerve with the psychopaths and sociopaths of the world or has he managed to so alarm both the fundamentalist Sunni and Shi’a Muslim leaders that even they might unite to defeat this common enemy who is so bold as to threaten even the holiest cities of Mecca and Medina – revered by all devout Muslims around the world? What are the similarities between Kurdistan and Afghanistan? Let’s explore the depth and breadth of tribal, cultural, religious and political factors at play.

Each session will start with a review of current events relevant to these global challenges.

**Presentation(s)** will be a combination of PowerPoint, videos and films from the Internet, and a little “Al Jazeera English” to prompt/facilitate discussion. I anticipate guest speakers with roots in Afghanistan and Pakistan, as well as an anthropologist and educator, all of whom will share their experiences and perspectives.

**Curriculum: (Tuesdays, 1:30 – 3:20 PM, January 6 – February 3)**

First session (1/6/2014) – Introduction and overview of the five sessions; laying the foundation for constructively confronting diverse perspectives, personal “truths,” and “facts” that influence our daily discourse. “The TRUTH is out there somewhere...” isn’t it? What led to the emergence of ISIS/ISIL and the “Islamic

State?” We will also briefly explore “Cold War II;” Turkey’s President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who has turned away from NATO and the EU to further complicate strategies and alliances in Syria and Iraq; and Iraqi Kurdistan’s Peshmerga and Asaish.

Second session (1/13) – (**Guest Speaker: Korean and Vietnam War Veteran Jim Moody – turned educator and anthropologist**) “One man’s *Terrorist* is another man’s *Freedom Fighter*.” Human interaction from a tribal/cultural perspective and the influencers that range from religious beliefs to political ideologies. Strategies for building and repairing bridges across ethnic, faith, cultural and political divides.

Third session (1/20) – (**Guest Speaker: Author Arif Humayun**) Author of Connivance by Silence, Arif will present an historical perspective as to how radical interpretations and practices emerged in the name of Islam, creating the aberration known as Islamism, or the pursuit of the mythical “Islamic State.” Arif will provide insights into those who justify both violence and subterfuge to defeat or otherwise subjugate non-believers (aka: “Infidels”).

Fourth session (1/27) – (**Guest Speaker: Ishtiaq Khan**) Afghanistan: Past, Present and Future. What have we learned, or should we have learned, from our incursions into Afghanistan and Iraq? Is newly-elected President Ashraf Ghani the “real deal” - likely to turn the tide on both corruption and radicalism in his country and, potentially, influence the rest of Central and South Asia (Afghanistan, Pakistan and India)? Who (and what) are the “Taliban?”

Fifth session (2/3) – Driven mostly by current events, a reflection on “America’s *Jihad*” and our many challenges, nationally and internationally, through the lens of mediation and other methods of conflict resolution. Are we recognizing and learning from our mistakes? Military forces and coalitions aside, who else is on the “front lines” against the likes of ISIS/ISIL, the “Islamic State,” and other “Evil-Doers” motivated or driven by flawed foreign policies, anti-West propaganda, distorted belief systems or causes?

**Class Evaluation:** Class evaluations are now done by email, outside of class time. Sometimes, the email will be delivered to your “junk mail,” but we can assure you it is from Clark College. Your responses are completely anonymous – and appreciated.