Indonesia is often described as the world’s largest Muslim-majority country. But where do we find Islam in contemporary Indonesia? And how is it best approached as a topic of anthropological enquiry? Is it to be sought in the mosques and Qur’anic schools of rural Java? Or perhaps in the transnational networks that link Indonesia with the wider Islamic world? Alternatively should we look to the local ballot box and the work of Islamic civil society groups? Or to popular Islamic programming on television and in the cinema, and in the vibrant discussions taking place through social media? This course examines the relationship between Islam and public culture with an eye to questions of broader theoretical import. Issues of piety, ethics and bodily comportment will be examined vis-à-vis public debates on such topics as Islamic attire, educational reform, economics, polygamy and pornography. In addition to readings from the current scholarship, the course will examine materials (in translation) from the Indonesian press, television and film, as well as social media.

Course Requirements

- Read the syllabus.
- Complete and careful reading/viewing of all required course material. All reading materials are available on the Moodle website.
- Regular attendance and active participation in seminar discussion.
- A written paper of 12 to 15 pages on a topic chosen by the student and approved by the instructor. You are encouraged to choose a topic pertaining to one of the weekly themes. Further details will be distributed in class. General guidelines are available online at www.eth.uni-heidelberg.de/studium/studieninformationen_en.html
- All work must be completed on time; no extensions will be granted for this course, except on grounds of major life disruption.
- Bring pen or pencil and paper to every session for taking notes and other in-class work.
- Laptops, tablets & cellphones are not to be used in class. Class sessions are carefully designed to develop critical thinking skills. Screens interfere with this process. Exceptions will be made for learning disabilities or special needs evidenced by doctor’s note.

Background Reading

A series of short articles has been provided on the Moodle site for those new to the study of Indonesia and/or Islam. Although not absolutely required, these readings are strongly recommended as preparation for the course.

**Some Guiding Questions for Your Reading**
These questions are meant to help you link the particular concerns of a given author with the wider issues addressed on the course. Please return to them regularly.

- How has Islam figured in the study of Indonesian culture and society? And how has Indonesia figured in the study of Islam?
- Given its multiple and differently mediated iterations, what critical framework is best suited to the study of Islam in contemporary Indonesia?
- To what questions and problems has Islam provided answers for contemporary Indonesians? And through what institutions and practices have these answers been pursued?
- To what extent are the received categories of political economy and cultural interpretation equipped to address contemporary articulations of Islam and public culture in Indonesia?
- What political, or ‘normative’, projects are carried forward by enquiry in the human sciences? And how do they relate to the projects embodied in public articulations of Islam?

**Course Overview**

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CLASS SCHEDULE

1) Course Introduction: The Idea of Islam in the Study of Indonesia  
Tuesday, October 13

In this introductory session we’ll consider the place of Islam in the history of scholarship on Indonesia. We will focus in particular on the question as to whether Islam is best understood as a ‘thin veneer’ covering over older animist and Hindu-Buddhist sensibilities, or if, alternatively, we should see Indonesia as falling within the spectrum of ‘normative’ and ‘mystical’ practices more widely characteristic of the Islamic world. Having reviewed prominent participants in the discussion we will reflect on the ways this line of questioning may limit our engagement with the practices that have historically constituted Islam in Indonesia. This will open the way to develop a new set of themes and questions that will occupy us for the remainder of the semester.

2) The Disappearance of Pluralism?  
Tuesday, October 20

Required Reading

Further Reading:

3) Countercurrents: Of Paranormals and Pop Preachers  
Tuesday, October 27

Required Reading
Further Reading:


A Note in Passing

By this point in the course we will have tracked the emergence of two sets of debates: (i) one among scholars as to the state of Islam in Indonesia, and (ii) another among Indonesian Muslims as to the nature of Islam and its proper place in contemporary politics and society. As we shall see, there is considerable overlap between these two sets of debates, and it is important to note that they each embody both historical and constructive (i.e., ‘normative’) aspirations.

4) Pesantren and the Education of Desire
Tuesday, November 3

Required Reading


Further Reading:


5) “Woman with a Turban” (*Perempuan Berkalung Sorban*)
Tuesday, November 10

Required Viewing & Reading

- Film: *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban*.

Further Reading:

Islam and Public Culture in Indonesia

- Imandra, T. ‘Independent Versus Mainstream Islamic Cinema in Indonesia; Religion Using the Market or Vice Versa?’ In Baumgartel, T. (ed) Southeast Asian Independent Cinema. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.

6) Islamic Media and Consumerism
Tuesday, November 17

Required Reading

Further Reading:

7) Ayat-Ayat Cinta (“Verses of Love”)
Tuesday, November 24

In-class viewing of Indonesian box office hit, Ayat-Ayat Cinta.

Required Reading

Further Reading:

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8) Polygamy: Words, Wars and Awards  
Tuesday, December 1

Required Reading

Further Reading:

9) Mistik Synthesis: Televising Ghosts, Jinn and Kyai  
Tuesday, December 8

Required Reading

Further Reading:

10) Dangdut: Music and the Idea of ‘The People’  
Tuesday, December 15

Required Viewing & Reading
- Dangdut video clips on Moodle.
Further Reading:

11) Power/Representation: Islam and Party Politics
Tuesday, December 22

Required Reading

Further Reading:

Winter Holidays (24 December 2015 to 06 January 2016)

12) Islamic Finance as Kritik der politischen Ökonomie
Tuesday, January 5

Required Reading
**Further Reading:**


**13) Thugs, Terrorists and Fatwas, Oh My!**  
Tuesday, January 12

**Required Reading**


**Further Reading:**


**14) On The Importance of Being Liberal**  
Tuesday, January 19

**Required Reading**


**Further Reading:**


15) The Idea of Indonesia in the Study of Islam
Tuesday, January 26
  Reading TBA

16) Student Consultations on Paper Topics
Tuesday, February 2
  NB: Appointments will be arranged ahead of time.