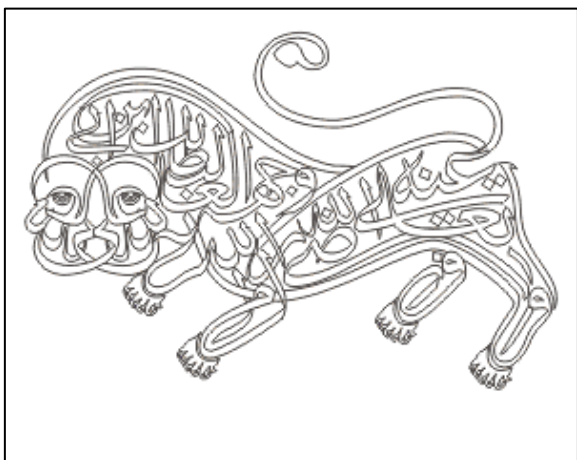


## HIST\*2890 Early Islamic World - Fall 2025



Asadallah, "The Lion of God"



*Bayt al-Hikma* or "House of Wisdom" in Abbasid Baghdad

### Calendar Description:

This course is an introduction to the history of Islam. The course will consider the founding of Islam, and its global diffusion, from the seventh to the fourteenth centuries.

### Course Description:

Early Islamic World is an introductory survey of the themes, events, and issues that define pre-modern Islamic civilization, from its inception in Arabia as a minority religion among a small community of believers in the 7<sup>th</sup> century CE, to its development into a formidable political empire, and across continents and cultures to create a powerful if diverse world civilization that has endured. This course begins with the emergence of early Islamic society and the Muslim faith. We explore the challenges which arose as Islamic expansion and encounters with different peoples and traditions influenced the evolution of this far-reaching civilization. Due to constraints of time, this course proceeds chronologically from this early Islamic era up to roughly the 15<sup>th</sup> century; other courses examine later periods of Islamic history.

**The class format will be in-class lectures and discussions unless unforeseen circumstances cause the need for online delivery, in which case they would also be in synchronous format. All lectures and discussions will not be recorded for later viewing, so students are expected to attend all components, whether in-class and online.**

## Required Resources

Vernon O. Egger, *A History of the Muslim World to 1405: The Making of a Civilization*. New Jersey: Pearson (2004).

Purchased new: approx. \$120; used: a range between \$15-83. There is an ebook available as well. The bookstore should have used copies, and a copy will be on reserve at the library.

Reza Aslan, *No God But God: the Origins, Development, and Future of Islam*. NY: Random House (2006).

Purchased new: approx. \$31; used: a range between \$6-10. The bookstore should have used copies, and a copy will be on reserve at the library.

## Recommended Resources

Ira Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies*. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (2002). In Bookstore or Library Call Number: DS35.63 .L37 2002

Frederick Mathewson Denny, *An Introduction to Islam* 2nd ed. New York: Macmillan Pub. Co. (1994). In Library Call Number: BP161.2 .D46 1994

Tamim Ansary, *Destiny Disrupted: A History of the World through Islamic Eyes* (NY: Public Affairs, 2009).

You will find at the end of each chapter in Egger there is a recommended bibliography of further reading. Make use of it.

I may occasionally ask you to read and/or discuss another text – an article or other short piece that will be considered assigned reading. I may also require you to view a video outside of class. I will try to give you plenty of notice if I require this. Sometimes it may be a photocopy of something distributed in class; it may also be placed on Reserve in the library or posted on our Courselink website.

HIST\*2890 maintains an e-learning website, <https://courselink.uoguelph.ca/d2l/home/972463>. Familiarize yourself with this online tool. A variety of course materials, announcements, the Dropbox for assignment submissions, and other relevant information will be posted here.

There is also an online Course Guide designed for this class. Go to <http://guides.lib.uoguelph.ca/HIST2890>

## Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

1. Identify and explain key historiographical issues related to the early Islamic world, the rise of Islam and the evolution of Islamic civilization.
2. Evaluate the diversity of the Islamic world over time and place as an exercise in tracing non-Western, pre- and early modern historical experiences, as a way to broaden your knowledge of the world.
3. Differentiate interpretations based on the variety of evidence and methodologies used by historians in scholarship; you will develop your own interpretations based on a broad range of reading and evidence.
4. Improve your analytical and writing skills through paper assignments and essay-based work on some aspects of early Islamic history and culture.

## Assessments

All Assessments are to be done independently and without the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) programs to generate work.

**Assessment #1:** Online personal statement **due in Dropbox Monday Sept 8<sup>th</sup> by 12pm noon.**  
See instructions/questions on assignment sheet in Courselink. (5%)

**Assessment #2: Discussion participation in class.** On-going. You must be in attendance to gain participation credit. (10%)

**Assessment #3: Midterm Exam**      **Week 6**      **Thurs Oct 16, In-Class**      (25%)

Short answer and essay sections. The format of the Midterm exam will be explained in more detail some time during class, but will be based upon readings and lectures. You are expected to attend class; if you do not, you will find the exam very difficult. We will discuss themes from the readings weekly and your engagement in these discussions will prove helpful to you in problematizing history.

**Assessment #4: Summary/Review of *Encyclopaedia of Islam* article** (25%)

***\*You must choose and clear your article choice with the instructor no later than 6 pm Tues Oct 28 of Week 8 but preferably before that. Any later and I cannot guarantee it will be approved and you risk potentially failing the assignment for choosing inappropriately.\****

**Due in Dropbox by 11:30am Thurs Nov 6 of Week 9**

Approx. 1000 words, double-spaced. Choose an article that interests you. Start by choosing a topic to read about that relates to a particular theme of the course or an issue that is relevant to the study of early Islamic history. Choose a particular issue that interests you and that is

covered within the time-frame of this class. Ask yourself, what historical problem am I exploring? What historical issue am I trying to understand? *In your review, you must include three (3) potential research directions or projects for which this article could serve as a starting point in research.*

### **Assessment #5: Final Research Project Oral Presentation**

**Due between Week 12 and Dec 3<sup>rd</sup> of Final exam period.**

**(35%)**

Students will pursue a research assignment (begun by Assessment #4) by analyzing a minimum of 6 scholarly sources BEYOND THE ASSIGNED TEXTS for their information, arguments, and academic usefulness in relation to the topic explored. These sources should give the students a more nuanced understanding of the subject they are exploring; they will give students an idea of the scholarly debates and discussions taking place around a particular topic. **At least 2 of the sources chosen must be scholarly books.** The rest must also be academic – in other words, either articles from peer-reviewed journals or individually-authored chapters in scholarly books. **Students will present their findings to the instructor during office hours or via a Zoom meeting some time between the last weeks of the semester and the final exam period in a 15-minute presentation.** There will be a sign-up sheet posted in the early weeks of the semester for students to sign up for a timeslot some time between Week 12 of the semester and the first week of final exam period. **Students must submit a typed bibliography of their sources using the *Chicago Manual of Style* method, and any relevant notes, to Dropbox at least 24 hours before the presentation to the instructor, and any preparation notes they used for the presentation.**

*Index Islamicus* is the most comprehensive database for our field. Access to this is provided by the library. Links can be found in the HIST2890 course guide:

<http://guides.lib.uoguelph.ca/HIST2890>

### **Format of Papers**

Written assignments are to be submitted on white paper; typed or computer printed; page set-up of **1-inch margins** of document on all sides; **DOUBLE-SPACED** lines (12pt); **12pt regular font** (Times or Times New Roman); **pages are to be consecutively numbered.** Papers should have a **separate title page, which includes the students' names and student numbers, the instructor's name properly spelled, and the course number.** Students are to maintain a copy of their paper. Inability or unwillingness to observe the guidelines for assignments will result in serious deductions.

## Footnoting

Students must follow the proper rules for footnoting and bibliographical research, where appropriate, specified by the Chicago Manual of Style, latest edition. Hist 2890's course website contains some useful tips on writing papers and footnoting. Evaluation is based on work and the submission of work of the student's own effort. Plagiarism means to take the ideas, writing, or arguments of others and pass them off as one's own. If quoting directly from a book (source), enclose that material in double quotation marks and indicate the source with a reference (citation). When citing that you are borrowing from a source, though not directly lifting the words, place a reference at the end of the borrowed material, though without quotation marks. Proper footnoting and bibliographical style composes part of the learning process and students will be evaluated on this. Inability or refusal to follow these regulations will result in deduction of marks or possibly a failed assignment.

## Handing in Assignments and Late Penalties

Assignments are to be submitted **ON THEIR ASSIGNED DUE DATES; exceptions will be made only in the case of documented medical emergency. Extensions will only be granted if requested at least 5 days in advance.** Please be aware that if you do not submit an assignment on the due date, it will be considered late up to the point at which it is uploaded in Courselink Dropbox or until the assessment has been provided to me. Do not leave papers in my mailbox in the History Department or slide papers under my door. There are no guarantees I will get your paper on that day or at all. You will incur penalties until I have an assessment to mark, regardless of the circumstances, if you do not turn it in on time. You need to communicate with me as soon as possible if you cannot make the deadline for an assignment. If you do not, I am not responsible for any difficulties you encounter due to late submission.

These are NOT legitimate reasons to be granted an extension, so do not ask:

- Computer or printer problems
- Assignments are due at the same time in other courses
- You have to do an extra shift in your job that week
- You will be away that week

If you will be away on the day an assignment is due, you **MUST** make arrangements to get a hard copy to me ahead of time, or have a friend bring it to class for you.

**A PENALTY OF 4% PER DAY (INCLUDING WEEKENDS AND HOLIDAYS) WILL BE SUBTRACTED FROM THE FINAL PAPER MARK FOR LATE PAPERS HANDED IN PAST THE DUE DATE FOR ASSIGNMENTS.**

**Emailed attachments from students will NOT be accepted,** except with prior permission from the instructor. Coursework may be accepted up till the last day of scheduled classes in the

term with the professor's permission, but this will be subject to the above 4% penalty, and only if you have made this request during the regular semester.

If a student cannot complete the assignment prior to the last scheduled class of term, inform the instructor. No make-up tests will be administered without medical or compassionate documentation. No exemption from penalty for late assignments will be granted except in the case of legitimate reason. Explanations for late papers scribbled on assignments will not exempt students from incurring late penalties. Students experiencing difficulties and personal problems not related to the course are advised and encouraged to go to the Student Wellness Services (<https://wellness.uoguelph.ca/>) to discuss their problems. Student counselling will contact the instructor if consideration for course work is to apply. **Plan ahead and GET YOUR WORK IN ON TIME.** Penalties add up and can imperil a student's standing in the course and in the university. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that her/his work is submitted on time, and attendance at examinations met.

## TURNITIN

In this course, your instructor may be using Turnitin, integrated with the CourseLink Dropbox tool, to detect possible plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration or copying as part of the ongoing efforts to maintain academic integrity at the University of Guelph. All submitted assignments will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. Use of the Turnitin.com service is subject to the Usage Policy posted on the Turnitin.com site.

A major benefit of using Turnitin is that students will be able to educate and empower themselves in preventing academic misconduct. In this course, you may screen your own assignments through Turnitin as many times as you wish before the due date. You will be able to see and print reports that show you exactly where you have properly and improperly referenced the outside sources and materials in your assignment.

## Classroom Etiquette and Useful Tools

To avoid distraction, the History Department requests that you turn off your wireless connections during class unless requested by the instructor to do otherwise. The Department maintains a web site (<http://www.uoguelph.ca/history>) that will be helpful in various ways to students in History courses - such as conveying names of student award winners, information on undergraduate and graduate programs at Guelph, and news of the Department.

# Course Schedule

## Week 1

**Th Sept 4:** Introduction to course and themes

**Assessment #1: Personal statement due in Dropbox Monday Sept 8<sup>th</sup> by 12pm noon**

**T Sept 9:** difficulty of studying entire region in 12 weeks, Sources and historiography, Orientalism. The Pre-Islamic Middle East Order.

**Th Sept 11:** Muhammad the Prophet; Early Islam

**Readings:** Egger, *A History of the Muslim World to 1405...*, Ch 1 pp.1-32.

Reza Aslan, *No God But God...*, pp.xiii-xxviii, Ch 1, pp.3-22.

**Recommended:** Lapidus, pp.3-9, Ch 1. *A History of Islamic Societies*,

Denny, *An Introduction to Islam*, Ch 1-2.

## Week 2

**T Sept 16/ Th Sept 18**

**Film: “Islam: Empire of Faith” Part I** (1<sup>st</sup> hr of film and discussion)

“The Constitution of Medina” and early Muslim/non-Muslim relations

**Readings:** Reza Aslan, *No God But God...*, Ch 2-3 pp.23-75.

\*On HIST\*2890 Courselink site: Ibn Ishaq’s *The Life of Muhammad*, “Marriage with Khadija,” “Muhammad’s Call and First Revelation,” and ‘The Constitution of Medina,” from F.E. Peters (ed.), *A Classical Reader on Islam* (Princeton,1994), pp.49-53, 74-75.

Karen Armstrong, *Muhammad: A Biography of the Prophet*, excerpts.

Al-Bukhari, Sahih, III, pp.392-394, “How the Qur’an was Assembled,” from Bernard Lewis (ed.), *Islam: from the Prophet Muhammad to the Capture of Constantinople, Vol II: Religion and Society* (Oxford, 1987), pp.1-2.

**Recommended:** Lapidus, *Islamic Societies*, Ch 2-3.

Denny, *An Introduction to Islam*, Ch 3.

\***Discussion:** The “Constitution” of Medina; the Death of the Prophet Muhammad (see Egger)

## Week 3

**Sept 23/ Th Sept 25** Arab-Muslim Conquests and Methods of Warfare, the Caliphate and Succession; Consolidation of the Arab Peninsula and Expansion

**Readings:** Egger, *A History of the Muslim World to 1405...*, Ch 2 pp. 33-61.



Reza Aslan, *No God But God...*, Ch 4-5, pp.76-141.

**Recommended:** Lapidus, *Islamic Societies*, Ch 4.

Denny, *An Introduction to Islam*, Ch 4.

\*On HIST2890 Courselink site: al-Turtushi, Siraj al-Muluk, pp.229-230, “The Pact of ‘Umar,” and al-Shafi’i, Kitab al-Umm, “The Pact to be Accorded to non-Muslim Subjects,” from Lewis (ed.), *Islam: from the Prophet Muhammad...*, pp.217-223.

On Reserve: Al-Tabari, “The Account of the Murder of ‘Uthman,” in *The History of al-Tabari, Vol. XV: The Crisis of the Early Caliphate*, Trans. By Stephen Humphries (SUNY Press, 1990), pp.181-223.

Discussion: treatment of non-Muslims; The Murder of Uthman (656 CE)

## Week 4

**T Sept 30/ Th Oct 2** Tenets of Islam, Rituals and Obligations, the Qur’an

**Readings:** Egger, *A History of the Muslim World to 1405...*, Ch 3 pp. 81-83.

On Reserve: F.E. Peters (ed.), “The Past, the Sacred & the Profane,” in *A Classical Reader on Islam* (Princeton, 1994), Ch 1 pp.8-42.

Reading on the meaning of “Jihad”

**Recommended:** Denny, *An Introduction to Islam*, Ch 5-7, 12.

Discussion: Similarities/Differences with other Monotheisms (read Peters for ideas).

## Week 5

**T Oct 7:** The High Caliphate and Islamic Civilization, The Umayyads (661-750 Damascus)

**Th Oct 9:** The High Caliphate and Islamic Civilization: The Abbasids (750-1258 Baghdad); The Golden Age (750-1000) and Persianate Fluorescence; Islamic civilization in North Africa and Spain.

**Readings:** Egger, *A History of the Muslim World to 1405...*, Ch 4 pp.85-113.

Courselink/On Reserve: Jahiz, “From the Merits of the Turks and other Essays,” from William McNeill & Marilyn Waldman (eds.), *The Islamic World* (University of Chicago Press, 1973), pp.111-124.

**Recommended:** Lapidus, *Islamic Societies*, Ch 5, 7; Ch 16 pp.299-328.

Firdawsi, “Rustam and Sohrab,” from *Shah-nameh/Book of Kings*, Trans. by A. & E. Warner, Kritzeck’s *Anthology*, pp.116-123.

Discussion: The Cultural Effects of Expansion



## Week 6

**T Oct 14: NO CLASS – FALL BREAK**

**Th Oct 16: Assessment #3: Midterm Exam during Class**

## Week 7

**T Oct 21** Sunnis & Shi'is, Schisms & Sects; The Mystical Dimension: Sufism

**Readings:** Egger, *A History of the Muslim World to 1405...*, Ch 3 pp.62-80; Ch 5 pp.123-7.  
Reza Aslan, *No God But God...*, pp.174-191; Ch 8, pp.199-224.

\*On HIST2890 Courselink site: Jalal al-Din Rumi, Masnavi, "Illustrations" trans. By  
A.J.Arberry, from James Kritzeck (ed.), *Anthology of Islamic Literature* (Penguin Books,  
1964), pp.242-243.

**Recommended:** Lapidus, *Islamic Societies*, Ch 6; Ch 15 pp. 283-290.

Denny, *An Introduction to Islam*, Ch 10-11.

**Film : "Sufi Soul" and/or Film excerpt: "Dervishes of Kurdistan"**

**Th Oct 23: \*Library Research Tutorial in class: Tools to get you going on your final research assignment**

How to prepare for this class: TBA

**\*Students please have your choice of article from *Encyclopaedia of Islam* to review communicated at the latest by Tues Oct 28<sup>th</sup> by 6 pm.**

## Week 8

**T Oct 28 /Th Oct 30** Transmission of Islamic knowledge: Politics, Administration, Culture, Islamic Law

**Readings:** Egger, *A History of the Muslim World to 1405*, Ch 5 pp.114-122, 127-138; Ch 8 pp.199-228.

Reza Aslan, *No God But God...*, Ch 6, pp.142-173.

**Recommended:** Lapidus, *Islamic Societies*, Ch 10

Denny, *An Introduction to Islam*, Ch 8-9.

Discussion: Sources of Islamic Law and its application.

## Week 9

**T Nov 4/ Th Nov 6:** The Steppe peoples: Turks (Seljuks in Baghdad, 1055), Return of Sacral Kingship, Issues of Power

**Assessment #4: Summary/Review of *Encyclopaedia of Islam* article due in Dropbox by 11:30am Tues Nov 4**

**Readings:** Egger, *A History of the Muslim World to 1405...*, Ch 6 pp.139-171.

selections from al-Mawardi, *The Ordinances of Government, A Translation of al-Ahkam al-Sultaniyya...* Trans. by W. Wahba (UK: Ctr for Muslim Contribution to Civilization. Garnet Publishing, 1996);

On Reserve: Nizam al-Mulk, "Advice to Governors," *Book of Government or Rules for Kings*, Trans. by H. Darke.

**Recommended:** Lapidus, *Islamic Societies*, Ch 9, 11.

Discussion: Islamic Political Authority: al-Mawardi on Sunni Theory of the Imamate; Nizam al-Mulk's *Book of Politics*

## Week 10

**T Nov 11/ Thurs Nov 13:** Crusaders and Salah al-Din (Saladin), The coming of the Mongols, Turco-Mongolian influence, Mamluks; Nomads vs. Sedentarists

**Film: "Islam: Empire of Faith" Part I (2nd hr of film)**

**Readings:** Egger, *A History of the Muslim World to 1405...*, Ch 7 pp.172-198; Ch 10, pp.257-289.

On Reserve: Ibn Athir, from "Great History," and al-Juvaini, from "History of the World Conqueror," in McNeill and Waldman (eds.), *The Islamic World*, pp. 248-272.

Also excerpts from Paul Kahn & Francis Woodman Cleaves, *Secret History of the Mongols: The Origin of Chingis Khan* (C & T Asian Culture Series, 1999).

**Recommended:** Lapidus, *Islamic Societies*, Ch 13 pp.226-234; Ch 14 pp.248-250; Ch 15 pp.290-294; Ch 17 pp.337-341; Ch 18 pp.356-368.

Discussion: Barbarians – Crusaders & Mongols! Problems in Mongol Historiography

## **Week 11**

**T Nov 18/ Th Nov 20** “Ties that Bind”: the Muslim Commonwealth; Ibn Battuta and the World of Islam in the 14thC; Is there an Islamic City?

**Readings:** Egger, *A History of the Muslim World to 1405...*, Ch 9 pp.229-256.

On Reserve: Excerpt from Ibn Battuta, *Travels*, in McNeill and Waldman (eds.), *The Islamic World*, pp. 274-308.

**Recommended:** Lapidus, *Islamic Societies*, Ch 12; Part I Conclusion pp.183-193.

Discussion: The World of Islam in the 14<sup>th</sup> Century

## **Week 12**

**T Nov 25/ Th Nov 27** Conversion on the periphery (Central Asia, Africa, SE Asia); Ibn Khaldun's view of history; Gunpowder Empires, military states intro

**Readings:** Egger, *A History of the Muslim World to 1405...*, Ch 11 pp.290-316.

Excerpt from Ibn Khaldun's *al-Muqaddimah*.

\*On HIST2890 Courselink site Hourani, bio on Ibn Khaldun

**Recommended:** Lapidus, *Islamic Societies*, Introduction Part II pp.197-225; Ch 19-21; Conclusion to Part II pp. 443-449.

Discussion: Ibn Khaldun's cycle of history, rise and fall of empires. Legacies.

## **Final Review**

**Week 12 - Dec 3<sup>rd</sup>:**      **Individual Final Research Project interviews begin to be conducted and will continue through first week of Final exam period**

# University Statements

## Academic Integrity

The University of Guelph is committed to upholding the highest standards of academic integrity and it is the responsibility of all members of the University community – faculty, staff, and students – to be aware of what constitutes academic misconduct and to do as much as possible to prevent academic offences from occurring. University of Guelph students have the responsibility of abiding by the University's policy on academic misconduct regardless of their location of study; faculty, staff and students have the responsibility of supporting an environment that discourages misconduct. Students need to remain aware that instructors have access to and the right to use electronic and other means of detection.

Please note: Whether or not a student intended to commit academic misconduct is not relevant for a finding of guilt. Hurried or careless submission of assignments does not excuse students from responsibility for verifying the academic integrity of their work before submitting it. Students who are in any doubt as to whether an action on their part could be construed as an academic offence should consult with a faculty member or faculty advisor.

The [Academic Misconduct Policy](#) is outlined in the Undergraduate Calendar.

## Accessibility

The University promotes the full participation of students who experience disabilities in their academic programs. To that end, the provision of academic accommodation is a shared responsibility between the University and the student.

When accommodations are needed, the student is required to first register with Student Accessibility Services (SAS). Documentation to substantiate the existence of a disability is required; however, interim accommodations may be possible while that process is underway.

Accommodations are available for both permanent and temporary disabilities. It should be noted that common illnesses such as a cold or the flu do not constitute a disability. Use of the SAS Exam Centre requires students to make a booking at least 10 days in advance, and no later than the first business day in November, March or July as appropriate for the semester. Similarly, new or changed accommodations for online quizzes, tests and exams must be approved at least a week ahead of time. For students at the Guelph campus, information can be found on the [SAS website](#).

## Accommodation of Religious Obligations

If you are unable to meet an in-course requirement due to religious obligations, please email the course instructor within two weeks of the start of the semester to make alternate arrangements.

See the Academic calendar for information on regulations and procedures for [Academic Accommodations of Religious Obligations](#).

## Copies of Out-of-class Assignments

Keep paper and/or other reliable back-up copies of all out-of-class assignments: you may be asked to resubmit work at any time.

## Drop Date

Students will have until the last day of classes to drop courses without academic penalty. The deadline to drop two-semester courses will be the last day of classes in the second semester. This applies to all undergraduate students except for Doctor of Veterinary Medicine and Associate Diploma in Veterinary Technology (conventional and alternative delivery) students. The regulations and procedures for course registration are available in the [Undergraduate Calendar - Dropping Courses](#).

## Email Communication

As per university regulations, all students are required to check their <uoguelph.ca> e-mail account regularly: e-mail is the official route of communication between the University and its students.

## Health and Wellbeing

The University of Guelph provides a wide range of health and wellbeing services at the [Vaccarino Centre for Student Wellness](#). If you are concerned about your mental health and not sure where to start, connect with a [Student Wellness Navigator](#) who can help develop a plan to manage and support your mental health or check out our [mental wellbeing resources](#). The Student Wellness team are here to help and welcome the opportunity to connect with you.

## Illness

Medical notes will not normally be required for singular instances of academic consideration, although students may be required to provide supporting documentation for multiple missed assessments or when involving a large part of a course (e.g., final exam or major assignment).

## Recording of Materials

Presentations that are made in relation to course work—including lectures—cannot be recorded or copied without the permission of the presenter, whether the instructor, a student, or guest lecturer. Material recorded with permission is restricted to use for that course unless further permission is granted.

## Resources

The [Academic Calendars](#) are the source of information about the University of Guelph's procedures, policies and regulations which apply to undergraduate, graduate and diploma programs.

## When You Cannot Meet a Course Requirement

When you find yourself unable to meet an in-course requirement because of illness or compassionate reasons please advise the course instructor (or designated person, such as a teaching assistant) in writing, with your name, id#, and e-mail contact. See the Undergraduate Calendar for information on regulations and procedures for [Academic Consideration](#).