

# **Using WebCT Technology to Introduce Students to Islam**

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## **Description**

This course web site introduces students to the religion of Islam with the help of WebCT technology. From the homepage, students can access six different areas: Readings, Assignments, Glossary, Syllabus, Calendar, and Grades. The first three of these are particularly important in realizing the goals of the course.

The "Readings" section contains a list of links, each of which relates to the topic of a particular class period. By clicking on the relevant link for a given day, students are taken to a page containing background information and questions to consider while reading from the assigned textbooks. In addition, each page has a set of links to Internet sites that present further information, images, and audio resources that enable the student to get a fuller and more accurate sense of the particular aspect of Islam under discussion. These features include biographies, maps, texts, photographs, and recordings of Muslim prayer and Qur'an recitation.

Each student is required to complete a writing assignment for each class period that can be accessed through the "Assignment" component of the homepage. These timed assignments are submitted and graded on-line, and they serve as an excellent tool by which to monitor student progress.

The "Glossary" section of the web site contains a set of technical terms and their definitions that are foundational to a proper understanding of Islam. These can be accessed by students both within the pages of the "Readings" section and as a separate list from the "Glossary" link.

The other three areas on the homepage (Syllabus, Calendar, and Grades) are primarily for student use and do not have a direct bearing on pedagogical matters.

## **Assessment**

WebCT technology was used in the course "Introduction to Islam" in a limited way during the Spring 2001 semester. The feedback from students was extremely positive in both informal discussions and official course evaluations. Many of them acknowledged the benefits it offered to enhance their understanding of a religious system with which they had very little prior familiarity. The links to Internet sites and their visual and audio resources were identified as particularly helpful. Similarly, the glossary of terms was singled out as a very useful tool for class and exam preparation. A fuller version of the web site will be used in the same course during the Spring 2002 semester.