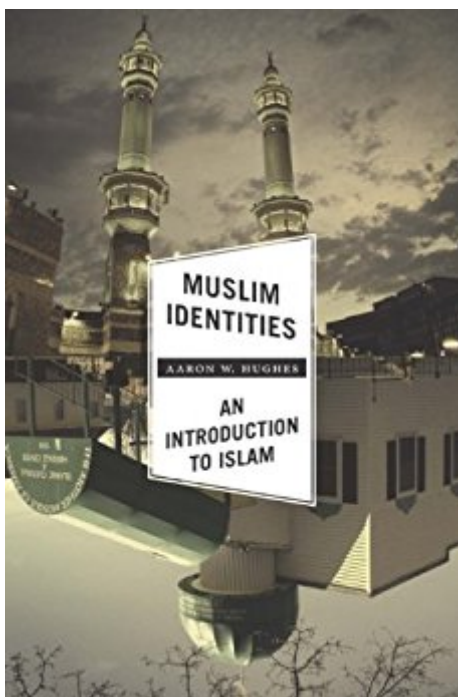


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# Muslim Identities: An Introduction To Islam



## Synopsis

Rather than focus solely on theological concerns, this well-rounded introduction takes an expansive view of Islamic ideology, culture, and tradition, sourcing a range of historical, sociological, and literary perspectives. Neither overly critical nor apologetic, this book reflects the rich diversity of Muslim identities across the centuries and counters the unflattering, superficial portrayals of Islam that are shaping public discourse today. Aaron W. Hughes uniquely traces the development of Islam in relation to historical, intellectual, and cultural influences, enriching his narrative with the findings, debates, and methodologies of related disciplines, such as archaeology, history, and Near Eastern studies. Hughes's work challenges the dominance of traditional terms and concepts in religious studies, recasting religion as a set of social and cultural facts imagined, manipulated, and contested by various actors and groups over time. Making extensive use of contemporary identity theory, Hughes rethinks the teaching of Islam and religions in general and helps facilitate a more critical approach to Muslim sources. For readers seeking a non-theological, unbiased, and richly human portrait of Islam, as well as a strong grasp of Islamic study's major issues and debates, this textbook is a productive, progressive alternative to more classic surveys.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The author holds the Philip S. Bernstein Chair of Jewish Studies in the Department of Religion and Classics at the University of Rochester. He's a religion scholar with a Ph.D. from Indiana University-Bloomington. He's published a couple of previous books about Islam. Overall, I appreciated this book and learned from it. It's straightforward, suitable for an advanced undergraduate course in religion studies or comparative religion. It's not a textbook, though -- by which I mean it's not one of those crappy volumes cobbled together by a committee and marketed en masse. It's very well footnoted, and every chapter has a book list at the end, "suggestions for further reading." My biggest criticism of the book is that the author continually repeats a caveat that Islam is not a "one size fits all" religion. It gets really tiring. This is why I mentioned that undergraduate market -- I felt like he wanted to keep repeating this caution in case somebody picked up the book and only read one chapter. I've talked with a number of Muslims from different countries about their religious beliefs and practices. It's really interesting to get one person's perspective. But when you read an academic study (albeit a survey like this one) about a religion, you get a bird's-eye view. You get historical perspectives. You learn about why Sunnis and Shi'as are separate from each other. Hughes includes a chapter about Sufis too, which I enjoyed very much (see my Goodreads review of *Mystical Islam: An Introduction to Sufism*).

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