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## **New PSU graduate class examines radical Islam**

As the third anniversary of the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon approaches, most Americans still struggle to understand radical Islam and what motivates some people to sacrifice their own lives in order to kill Americans and damage American interests.

Dr. Stephen Harmon, a member of the Pittsburg State University history department faculty, hopes a new graduate course he has developed will help answer some of those questions. Harmon will teach “Radical Islam in the Middle East and Africa” at PSU this fall.

Harmon has visited many parts of the Islamic world and he lived for more than two years in Islamic West Africa.

“I feel that I can bring much of my personal experience, in the forms of slides, personal collections of books and artifacts, as well as personal anecdotes, that will help bring the material alive to the students,” Harmon said.

Since Sept. 11, 2001, Harmon has been called upon frequently to speak to media and to public groups about Islam and the Middle East.

“I have been asked to speak at many venues, on and off campus, about radical Islam and its links to international terrorist activities,” Harmon said. “It became evident to me that people in this region were interested in and wanted more information about Islam in general and radical Islam in particular.”

Harmon said he hopes that students in his class gain a more thoughtful perspective about radical Islam and a better understanding of conditions and events that nurture its growth.

“I hope that students will take away from this course a better understanding of the origins of radical Islam, its current manifestations, the things that facilitate its expansion and generate its anger, as well as the differences between radical Islam on one hand and mainstream Islam and secular Arab nationalism on the other,” Harmon said. “This understanding, hopefully, will lead to students being better able to make informed decisions what policies our leadership should pursue to best deal with radical Islam.”