

Approaches to Middle Eastern and Islamic History

HIST 535-001/HIST 575-001

Lec/Sem; 3.000 Credits

Robinson B108

Tuesday 7:20-10:00 PM

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Course Description

Why does Islamic history imply medieval times whereas that of the Middle East directs our attention to the modern era? How do these histories differ or coalesce in time and space? Is Islam the most defining signifier in studying histories of Muslim societies? What have been conventional and revisionist ways of studying these fields among modern historians? In response to these and similar questions, this course aims to serve as an in-dept introduction to major themes, problems, and interpretations of Middle Eastern and Islamic history. Innovative and representative texts of historical writing from ten different topics, such as origins of Islam, colonialism, and gender, will be examined. We will highlight and discuss critical concepts, methodologies, ideological biases, cultural undertones, schools of thought, and theoretical frameworks in contemporary historiography. Existing paradigms will be critiqued and new approaches will be put to scrutiny. Different ways of historical thinking, analysis, and writing will be explored. Peculiarities of Middle Eastern and Islamic history and its shared rhythms with broader world history will be emphasized. The purpose of the course is to expose students to the subtleties of historian's craft, explore historical literature on selective topics, and endow them with skills to critically engage with scholarship in Islamic and Middle Eastern history.

Students are expected to have completed at least one semester of coursework or its equivalent in Islamic and/or Middle Eastern history, and display an overall familiarity with the culture, geography, basic vocabulary, and major issues pertaining to the study of this field. Class activity will primarily rely on discussion and student presentations. Because this is a graduate level seminar course, student contribution in a thoughtful and stimulating way is essential. To facilitate discussion and improve critical writing skills, students will write a short response paper for each of the ten assigned texts. The final paper will be a critical analysis of scholarly literature on one of the topics covered. Students are strongly advised to start reading the texts immediately in order to have more time for research, analysis and writing.

Course Policies

- Attendance is required.
- Any excused absence should be accompanied with proper documentation.
- Students must have read the course material prior to class time.
- All written work must be uploaded to Blackboard by midnight prior to the class.
- Late submission will incur a penalty of 5 points out of 100 for each day it's delayed.
- No-show for a class assignment will incur a penalty of 10 points out of 100.
- For assignments and performance all are responsible from the full content of the course.
- In classroom, electronic devices may not be used beyond the purpose of note-taking.
- Students who request academic accommodation for a warranted condition should first contact the Office of Disability Services at 703-993-2474 (<http://ods.gmu.edu/>).
- All should strictly comply with George Mason University Honor Code and adhere to the standards of academic integrity. For more information see <http://oai.gmu.edu/honor-code>.

Course Requirements and Grading

Class Participation	30 %
Overall Contribution	10 %
Book Presentation	05 %
Discussion Leading	05 %
Paper Presentation	05 %
Critical Feedback	05 %
Response Papers (10x4)	40 %
Research/Review Paper	30 %

Required Readings

1. Andrews, Walter G. and Kalpakli, Mehmet. *The Age of the Beloveds: Love and the Beloved in Early-Modern Ottoman and European Culture and Society*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2000.
2. Casale, Giancarlo. *The Ottoman Age of Exploration*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.
3. Dabashi, Hamid. *The World of Persian Literary Humanism*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012.
4. Donner, Fred McGraw. *Narratives of Islamic Origins: The Beginnings of Islamic Historical Writings*. Princeton: Darwin Press, 1998.
5. El Fadl, Khaled Abou. *Rebellion and Violence in Islamic Law*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
6. Guha, Ranajit. *Dominance without Hegemony: History and Power in Colonial India*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998.
7. Kafadar, Cemal. *Between Two Worlds: The Construction of the Ottoman State*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996.
8. Kurzman, Charles. *The Unthinkable Revolution in Iran*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005.
9. Mitchell, Timothy. *Colonizing Egypt*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988.
10. Raymond, André. *Cairo*, transl. William Wood. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000.

Weekly Schedule

Week 1

August 26

Introduction

Optional Reading:

Hodgson, "The Role of Islam in World History," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 2. (1970): 99-123

Week 2

September 2

Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins*

Week 3

September 9

Raymond, *Cairo*

Week 4

September 16

El Fadl, *Rebellion and Violence in Islamic Law*

Week 5

September 23

Dabashi, *The World of Persian Literary Humanism*

Week 6

September 30

Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*

Research Paper Proposals Due

Upload e-copies to Blackboard by midnight, September 29th.

Week 7

October 7

Casale, *The Ottoman Age of Exploration*

Week 8

October 14

Columbus Day Recess, No Class

Week 9

October 21

Andrews and Kalpakli, *The Age of the Beloveds*

Week 10

October 28

Guha, *Dominance without Hegemony*

Week 11

November 4

Mitchell, *Colonizing Egypt*

Week 12

November 11

Kurzman, *The Unthinkable Revolution in Iran*

Research Paper Drafts Due

Upload e-copies to blackboard by midnight, November 10th.

Week 13

November 18

Presentations & Discussion

Week 14

November 25

Presentations & Discussion

Week 14

December 2

General Discussion

Research Papers Due

Upload e-copies to blackboard by midnight, December 1st.

Hand in hard copies in class, December 2nd.