Religion V294-003: Women in Islam  
SPRING 2011

Thursday, 6:20-9:05 pm  
Bobet Hall 212

Instructor: Jill E. Hickson  
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Course Description:
This course will investigate the role of women in Islamic sacred texts, religious practice and law, and Islamicate history. We will explore the relationship between cultural and religious attitudes toward women in Muslim societies and the changing discourse in Muslim communities on the construction of gender identity. The primary goal of the course is to introduce students to the religion of Islam through an examination of women’s roles in it, both past and present. At the end of the course every student will have an initial understanding of some of the complexity surrounding the issue of women’s roles in Islam and manifestation of that complexity past and present in different parts of the Muslim world. The course is oriented to those who have little or no prior knowledge of Islam and those who already have a background in Islam.

Requirements: About 60 pages of reading per week, regular attendance and participation in class, weekly reading summaries, discussion leadership, and a research paper. Final grade to be calculated as follows:

1) Participation  
   15%
2) Discussion Leadership  
   25%
4) 1 research paper or 4 short essays  
   60%

In class performance: weighed at 15% of the course grade. Everyone is expected to come to class well prepared and to have that preparation reflected in their contribution to class discussions. Attendance is mandatory. Two (2) or more unexplained and unexcused absences will result in a reduction of one grade level.

Discussion leadership: weighted at 25% of the grade. Students will be placed in groups to lead the class discussion on a particular week’s readings. The mechanism for matching students with topic allocations will be explained during the first session. The grading of this section will be determined by the student’s understanding of the text, summarizing it to the class, and generating appropriate discussion and debate.

Four (4) essays or one (1) research paper: weighted at 60% of the grade. All written work is due on the date established in the syllabus. Late work will not be accepted.
Four (4) essays: Writing papers broadens one’s knowledge, deepens one’s understanding of the readings, and develops analytical as well as expository writing skills. The essay is a final product of a process which involves becoming thoroughly familiar with materials related to a particular subject, reading the information critically, and processing one’s own ideas about a topic. The key to a good paper/essay is to be analytical. You must not merely paraphrase or summarize what you have read, but rather use the readings and videos to argue your own points of view. Create a thesis and use the information from the course materials as evidence of your analysis.

All essays must be typed, double-spaced, with one inch margins, using 10-12 point fonts. These papers should be at least five pages. Citations (footnotes or endnotes) can be included in the text. A reference (bibliography) page is required. The essays are due on the following dates: February 10th, March 17th, April 14th, and May 5th, 2011. Late papers will not be accepted.

Research paper: The research paper must be typed, double-spaced, with one inch margins, using 10-12 point fonts. These papers should be at least fifteen twenty (20) pages. Citations (footnotes or endnotes) can be included in the text. A reference (bibliography) page is required. Topics must be cleared by the instructor. The paper is due no later than Thursday, May 5th, 2011.

The paper will address a particular aspect of the question of women in Islam (see suggested topics below). Students will consult with the professor and obtain approval for a topic. Students will provide the instructor with an abstract (1-2 paragraphs on your topic) and initial bibliography of works to be consulted for the paper by the end of the fifth week of classes (before Thursday, March 3, 2011).

Students must consult at least six (6) different scholarly resources, no more than one of these being either a world wide web resource, material used in this class, or an encyclopedic article.

Possible topics: Make sure you begin your research very early in the term. In most cases, you will not be able to exclusively rely on the material present in the Loyola library; rather, you will need to utilize interlibrary loan services. Be sure to discuss your topic with me very early in the term in order for you to have adequate time to obtain material through interlibrary loan.

The topics are organized into three general groups with some of the topics overlapping. In a first move, you should decide which topics you are interested in generally. After an initial round of research, you should be able to focus your topic by developing a title and a brief abstract. Ideally, you would consult with me before you write your abstract.

Issues of theology and practice:
Political agency, homosexuality/lesbianism (Islam supports/opposes), marriage, polygamy (Islam favors/condones/opposes), temporary marriage (Shiite and Sunni positions), female inheritance (inheritance laws are inherently just/unjust), abortion
(Islam supports/opposes), female circumcision (Islam supports/opposes), “honor-killings”
(Islam supports/opposes), harem, dress-code: veiling (Islam requires/does not require),
women’s dress as a political symbol, orientalism and women, film and Muslim women,
Islamic feminism (Leila Ahmed, Fatima Mernissi, et. al.)

Geography: (looking at local expressions of Islam as it pertains to women)
Middle East, Northern Africa, Turkey, Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan, India, Indonesia,
Malaysia, Europe (Germany, France – headscarf debates), United States, etc.

Comparative:
History of veil/dress code; comparisons with other religions, i.e. Judaism, Christianity,
Hinduism, etc., interpretations of Eve in Islam compared to other monotheistic traditions.
Other topics are possible with the permission of the Instructor.

Texts: The following books are required for the course and are available at the campus
bookstore.


Fatima Mernissi (1991). The Veil and the Male Elite: A Feminists Interpretation of

Blackboard Online Course Packet

Recommended texts:

like to purchase a Qur’an on your own please discuss options with the professor.

Additional reading material may be distributed by the instructor or placed on blackboard
throughout the semester.

CLASS MEETINGS

Thursday, January 13, 2011

Unit: Course introduction

Discussion: Introduction to class, review of syllabus, “orientalism”, review of
geography of Islamic world, selection of discussion leadership topics

Thursday, January 20, 2011

Unit: Pre-Islamic Arabia and Mohammad
Discussion: Pre-Islamic Period: Jahilliya (geography, culture, religions)
Reading: Ahmed, Chapters 1-2 (p. 1-39)

Discussion: Early Islam: 570-632 CE (Mohammad and Arabia)
Reading: Ahmed, Chapter 3 (p. 39-64)
Smith, “Women, Religion and Social Change in Early Islam”

Thursday, January 27, 2011

Unit: Women & the Qur’an and Hadith

Discussion: Women in Sacred History, Prophets Wives
Reading: Stowasser, “The Qur’an and God’s Prophets” (p. 13-24)
Mernissi, Chapters 2 and 3 (p. 25-61)
Hassan, “An Islamic Perspective”

Film: “Nazrah: A Muslim Woman’s Perspective”

Thursday, February 3, 2011

Unit: Women early Islam (610-750)

Discussion: Rightly Guided Caliphs (632-661), Ummayyads (661-750)
Readings: Mernissi, Chapters 8-10 (p. 141-180)
Ahmed, Chapter 4 (p. 64-77)

Thursday, February 10, 2011

Unit: Women in Abbassid and Medieval Times

Discussion: Abbassids: (750-1258); Medieval (1258-1850), Ottomans
Readings: Ahmed, Chapters 5 and 6 (p. 79-125)
Mernissi, “Fifteen Queens”
Kritzeck, “The Thousand and One Nights”

ESSAY #1 DUE

Thursday, February 17, 2011

Unit: Shari’a and Islamic Law

Discussion: Sources of Islamic law, Shari’a, Women in classical thought (family law)
Reading: Esposito, Chapters 1 and 2 (p. 1-46)

Unit: Shari’a and Islamic Law, cont.
Discussion: in class legal analysis
Reading: Shafi texts on marriage, divorce, and inheritance

Thursday, February 24, 2011

Unit: Sufism

Discussion: Sufism, Rabi’a al-Basri (717-801 C.E), poetry (Rumi)
Reading: Esposito, “Religious Life: Belief and Practice”
Hanif, “Rabi’a Basri: a Mystic Woman par excellence”
Clancy-Smith, “The House of Zainab: Female Authority”

Film: Mystic Iran

Thursday, March 3, 2011

Unit: Colonialism and Awakening

Discussion: Nationalism, class conflict, feminism
Reading: Ahmed, Chapters 7-9 (p. 127-188)

Film: Bliss

RESEARCH PAPER ABSTRACT DUE

Thursday, March 10, 2011 – NO CLASS

Thursday, March 17, 2011

Unit: Women and Public/Private Space

Discussion: Veil (hijab), segregation of gender, modesty
Reading: Mernissi, Chapter 5, 6, 7 (p. 85-140)

Film: Veiling and Seclusion

ESSAY #2 DUE

Thursday, March 24, 2011

Unit: Women, Education, Work and Public Space

Discussion: Education, Work, Public Space
Readings: Hijab, “Women and Work in the Arab World”
Shaaban, “Persisting Contradictions: Muslim Women in Syria”
Mayer, “Aberrant ‘Islams’ and Errant Daughters”

Film: Saudi Solutions

**Thursday, March 31, 2011**

**Unit: Women, Sexuality and the Body**

**Discussion:** Women, sexuality, body

**Readings:**
- Dunne, “Power and Sexuality in the Middle East”
- Obermeyer, “Introduction: A Region of Diversity and Change”
- Gruenbaum, “Patriarchy”
- Fargues, “Changing Hierarchies of Gender and Generation in the Arab World”

**Thursday, April 7, 2011**

**Unit: Women and the State**

**Discussion:** Women and the State

**Reading:**
- Karam, “Women, Islamism and State”
- Graham-Brown, “Women’s Activism in the Middle East”
- Brand, “Women and the State in Jordan”

Film: The Stoning of Soraya

**Thursday, April 14, 2011**

**Unit: Modernity and the Future**

**Discussion:** modernity and the future

**Reading:** Ahmed, Chapters 10-11 (p. 189-248)

ESSAY #3 DUE

**Thursday, April 21, 2011—NO CLASS**

**Thursday, April 28, 2011**

**Unit: Comparative Perspectives**

**Discussion:** The Iranian Revolution

**Reading:** Darrow, “Women’s Place and the Place of Women in the Iranian Revolution”

**Discussion:** The Arab World
Reading: Haddad, “Islam and Gender: Dilemmas in the Changing Arab World”

Discussion: Sudan
Reading: Nageeb, “Chapter Five: Nana’

Discussion: Women and Islamic Art
Reading: Denny, “Women and Islamic Art:

Film: TBA

Thursday, May 5, 2011

Course Evaluations
ESSAY #3 DUE
RESEARCH PAPER DUE

HISTORICAL TIMELINE

100-622 CE Jahilliya Period
100-500CE: early Jahilliya
500-622CE: late Jahilliya

570-632CE Muhammad
570CE  birth of Muhammad
595CE  marriage to Khadijah
610CE  Night of Power (first Revelation)
622CE  hijra
632CE  death of Muhammad

632-661CE  Rightly-guided Caliphs/Rashidun Caliphate
  632-634CE  Abu Bakr
  634-644CE  Umar
  644-656CE  Uthman
  656-661CE  Ali

661-750CE  Ummayyad Caliphate

750-1258CE  Abbassid Caliphate
  750-1492CE  Umayyad emirate in Spain
  945-1055CE  Buyids
  909-1171CE  Fatimids
  1171-1260CE  Ayyubids

1085-1291CE  Crusades

1258-1400CE  Outside Conquests
  1055CE  Seljuks
  1258CE  Mongols
  1260CE  Mamluks

1300-1923  Ottoman empire
  1453CE  Conquest of Constantinople

1918-present  Modern period
  The mandate period
  Colonial struggles
  Independence

GEOGRAPHICAL AREAS

NORTH AFRICA & MIDDLE EAST REGIONAL GEOGRAPHY

1. Middle East
   Yemen  Sana  Oman  Muscat
Bahrain  Manama  Qatar     Doha
Kuwait  Kuwait City  Saudi Arabia  Riyadh
Jordan  Amman  Iraq     Baghdad
Israel  Jerusalem  Iran/Persia  Tehran
Turkey  Ankara  Syria     Damascus
Lebanon  Beirut  UAE      Abu Dhabi

2. North Africa
   Morocco  Rabat
   Algeria  Algiers
   Tunisia  Tunis
   Libya   Tripoli
   Egypt   Cairo
   Sudan   Khartoum

3. Other major cities
   Mecca     Medina
   Istanbul/Constantinople  Tel Aviv

4. Regions
   Balkans: Bulgaria, Greece, Romania, Albania, Hungary, Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro
   Kurdistan: NW Iran, N Iraq, NE Syria, E Turkey, S Caucasus
   Andalusia: Southern Spain (Gibraltar)
   Hijaz: Southwestern Arabia along the coast of the Red Sea

5. Sub-regions
   Golan Heights
   Mesopotamia
   Palestine: West Bank, Gaza

6. Natural boundaries & resources
   Atlantic Ocean  Black Sea
   Indian Ocean  Caspian Sea
   Red Sea  Persian Gulf
   Mediterranean Sea  Sahara Desert
   Caucasus Mountains  Sinai Desert