Oberlin College  
Department of History and MENA Program  
HIST-121  
Fall 2015  
History of the Middle East and North Africa (I):  
From the Rise of Islam to 1800

Professor Zeinab Abul-Magd  
MWF 11:00-11:50am  
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Office hours: Wednesday 1-2pm, and by appointment

Course Description  
This course examines the history of the Middle East from the rise of Islam until 1800. Moving between primary sources and secondary readings, the course studies crucial moments in Islamic history and addresses many questions that are still relevant to issues in the MENA region and the world at large today. It covers the formation of Islam as a religion and civilization: Islamic governments, sciences, law, theology, philosophy, and literature; women and gender in Islamic text and context; Jewish and Christian minorities in Islamic text and context; and encounters between East and West and the question of Jihad. The course begins with looking at the foundations of Islam in Near Eastern civilizations and religions, especially Judaism and Christianity. Then it covers the message and life of Muhammad, looking at the Qur'an and Hadith and reading through the biographies of Muhammad's companions and wives. It looks at the period that followed Muhammad's death, which witnessed the expansion of the Islamic empire and the rise of caliphates and dynasties. This period also witnessed the beginning of sectarianism, or the emergence of shi'i and sunni religious and political factions. The course then studies different Islamic systems of government in both Sunni and Shi'i states. Islamic medicine, sciences, mysticism, shari'a law, theology, philosophy, and literature all flourished under the patronage of these states, and the Islamic city became the global center of trade and learning. After that, the course looks closely at the Crusades, a moment in which the West encountered the East, and Islamic Jihad took up a new shape. Then the course puts special emphasis on issues of Jewish and Christian minorities in Islamic states, as well as issues of women and gender in Islamic societies. Finally, the course looks at another moment of encounter between the East and the West: the Napoleonic campaign in Egypt, which invoked Islamic Jihad anew.

Course Requirements and Grading  
(1) Class attendance and participation (20%)  
(2) Reflection paper (15%), 2-3 pages  
(On the readings of any session in weeks 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, a hard copy due in beginning of chosen session)
(3) Mid-term exam (20%), take-home essay, 5-6 pages, due October 16th @12noon
(4) Map quiz (10%), in class on November 16th
(5) Book review (15%), 3-4 pages, due Dec. 4th
   (Review of Juan Cole, Napoleon's Egypt)
(6) Final Research Paper (20%), 6-7 pages, Due December 16th @11:00AM
   (Choose a topic and discuss it with Zeinab for approval and primary sources)

Required Texts
  • Chris Lowney, A Vanished World: Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Medieval Spain (Oxford University Press, 2006)
  • Laila Ahmad, Women and Gender in Islam (Yale University Press, 1993)
  • Amin Maalouf, Samarqand (Interlink Publishing Group, 1998)
  • Juan Cole, Napoleon's Egypt

Course Schedule

WEEK 1

M August 31
   Introduction

W Sept 2
L Pre-Islamic Empires, Civilizations, and Religions
   Fisher, ch. 2
   Berkeley, "the Religions of Late Antiquity", pp. 10-38 (On Blackboard)

F Sept 4
L Prophet Muhammad: Life and Message
   Fisher, ch. 3, 7
   Gerald Hawting, "the Rise of Islam," pp. 9-25 (On Blackboard)

WEEK 2

M Sept 7
   Happy Labor Day!

W Sept 9
L Early Caliphates, Umayyads, and Expansion
   Fisher, ch. 4, 5
   Fred Donner, "The Islamic Conquests," pp. 28-47 (On Blackboard)

F Sept 11
D Biographies of Prophet's Companions and Wives
The "Rightly Guided Caliphs": Abu Bakr
http://www.sunnah.org/publication/khulafa_rashideen/caliph1.htm
'Aisha Bint Abi Bakr:
http://web.youngmuslims.ca/online_library/companions_of_the_prophet/aishah.html
Fatima bint Muhammad:
http://web.youngmuslims.ca/online_library/companions_of_the_prophet/fatimah.html

WEEK 3
M Sept 14
L Beginnings of Sectarianism
   Robert Gleave, "Shi‘ism," pp. 87-103 (On Blackboard)

W Sept 16
L The Abbasid Caliphate
   Fisher, ch. 6

F Sept 18
D Hugh Kennedy, When Baghdad Ruled the Muslim World, ch. 1, 3, 5
(On Blackboard)

WEEK 4
M Sept 21
L Islamic Governments: Sunni and Shi‘i States
   Fisher, ch. 11, 12

W Sept 23
L Islamic Governments: Sunni and Shi‘i States
   Fisher, 16, 17, 19

F Sept 25
D Amin Ma‘luf, Samarkand (Book 1,2 pp. 1-152)

WEEK 5
M Sept 28
L Islamic Theology, Rationalism, and Rebellion
   Ann Lambton, "Kharijis, and Zaydis: Murijs, Qaditis, and Mu‘tazalis" (On Blackboard)

W Oct 30
NO Class (in a conference abroad)

F Oct 2
NO Class (in a conference abroad)

WEEK 6
M Oct 5
L Sufism: Male and Female Mystics
   Fisher, pp. 88-90
W Oct 7  
D Islamic Literature: Poetry, Stories, Biographies, Autobiographies, and Mirrors of Princes  
http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/arabianpoets1.html  
http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/1100Hariri.html  
http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/masoudi.html  
http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/med/1001.html  

F Oct 9  
D Islamic Philosophy and Secularism  
Ibn Rushd (Averroës), Religion & Philosophy  
http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/1190averroes.html  

WEEK 7  
M Oct 12  
L Islamic Medicine and Sciences  
   Fisher, pp. 97-102  

W Oct 14  
Review Session  

F Oct 16  
Midterm Exam to be submitted in class  
Islamic Architecture  
Film Screening  
Paradise Found: Discovering Islamic Art  

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WEEK 8 (Oct. 19-25)  
Enjoy the Fall Break!  

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WEEK 9  
M Oct 26  
L Islamic Law: Theory, Courts, and Muftis  
   Fisher, ch. 8, pp. 86-88  
   Albert Hourani, "The Culture of 'Ulama", pp. 158-165 (On Blackboard)  
   Texts of Fatwas (to be distributed in class)  

W Oct 28
D  Shari’a Courts
   Leslie Pierce, Morality Tales: Law and Gender in the Ottoman Court of Aintab (On Blackboard)

F  Oct 30
D  Arab Philosophy of History
   Ibn Khaldun, The Muqaddimah (On Blackboard)

WEEK 10
M  Nov 2
L  Islamic City: Trade and Learning
   Andre Raymond, “Urban Life and Middle Eastern Cities,” pp. 207-223 (Blackboard)

W  Nov 4
L  Waqf, Economy, and Politics
   Zeinab Abul-Magd, “Women, Gender, and Waqf,” (On Blackboard)
   Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/3632408

F  Nov 6
D  The Travels of Ibn Battuta
   Russ Dunn, The Adventures of Ibn Battuta (On Blackboard)

WEEK 11
M  Nov 9
L  East Encounters West: The Crusades and Islamic Jihad
   Carole Hillenbrand, The Crusades: Islamic Perspectives (On Blackboard)

W  Nov 11
D  East Encounters West: The Crusades and Islamic Jihad
   Usama Ibn Munqidh, An Arab-Syrian Gentleman and Warrior in the Period of the Crusades, pp. 3-17, pp. 143-170 (On Blackboard)

F  Nov 13
D  Legacy of the Crusades Today and Clash of Civilizations?
   (TBA)

WEEK 12
M  Nov 16
   Map Quiz
L  Jewish and Christian Minorities
   Karen Barkey, “Islam and Toleration: Studying the Ottoman Imperial Model,”
URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/20059691

W  Nov 18
L Bruce Masters, Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Arab World: The Roots of Sectarianism, ch. 1, 2 (On Blackboard)

F  Nov 20
D Jewish and Christian Minorities
   Chris Lowney, A Vanished World: Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Medieval Spain (selections)

WEEK 13
M Nov 23
L Women and Gender in Text and Context
   Laila Ahmad, Women and Gender in Islam, ch. 2, 3

W Nov 25
L Women and Gender in Text and Context
   Laila Ahmad, Women and Gender in Islam, ch. 4, 5
   Women and Gender in Contemporary MENA (TBA)

F  Nov 27
Happy Thanksgiving!

WEEK 14
M Nov 30
D Imperialism and Modernity
   Juan Cole, Napoleon's Egypt (Selected Chapters on Blackboard)

W Dec 2
D Imperialism and Modernity
   Al-Jabarti’s Chronicle of the First Seven Months of the French Occupation, pp. 17-119 (On Blackboard)

F Dec 4
Book Review Due (Juan Cole, Napoleon’s Egypt)
Film Screening
   Edward Said: On Orientalism

WEEK 15
M Dec 7
D Imperialism and Orientalism
   Edward Said, Orientalism (Selected Chapters on Blackboard)

W Dec 9
L Transition from “Traditionalism” to “Modernity” in the 19th Century
F Dec 11
Conclusion & Reflections on History and Current Issues.

"L" for lecture and "D" for a discussion session.