Oberlin College
MENA Program and Department of History
HIST-121
Fall 2012
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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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) A reflection paper on readings (2-3 pages) (10%)
(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%) (in class, October 17th)
(4) Map quiz (10%) (Nov. 19th)
(5) Book review (20%) (4-5 pages) (Dec. 7th)
  (Juan Cole, Napoleon's Egypt)
(6) Final Paper (20%) (due date TBA)
  (Choose a topic and discuss it with Zeinab for approval and 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, Samargand (Interlink Publishing Group, 1998)
  • Juan Cole, Napoleon's Egypt

Course Schedule

WEEK 1
M  Sept. 3
  Labor Day

W  Sept 5
  Introduction

F  Sept 7
L  Pre-Islamic Empires, Civilizations, and Religions
  Fisher, ch. 2
  Berkeley, "the Religions of Late Antiquity", pp. 10-38 (electronic reserve)

WEEK 2
M  Sept 10
L  Prophet Muhammad: Life and Message
  Fisher, ch. 3, 7

W  Sept 12
L  Early Caliphates, Umayyads, and Expansion
  Fisher, ch. 4, 5
  Fred Donner, "The Islamic Conquests," pp. 28-47 (electronic reserve)
F  Sept 14
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://www.mohammad-pbuh.com/3/aishah.htm
   Fatima bint Muhammad:

WEEK 3
M  Sept 17
L  Beginnings of Sectarianism
   Robert Gleave, "Shi‘ism," pp. 87-103 (electronic reserve)

W  Sept 19
L  The Abbasid Caliphate
   Fisher, ch. 6

F  Sept 21
D  Hugh Kennedy, When Baghdad Ruled the Muslim World, ch. 1, 3, 5, 7
   (electronic reserve)

WEEK 4
M  Sept 24
L  Islamic Theology, Rationalism, and Rebellion
   Ann Lambton, "Kharijis, and Zaydis: Murijs, Qaditis, and Mu‘tazalis" (electronic reserve)

W  Sept 26
   HAPPY YOUM KIPPUR

F  Sept 28
   NO Class (away for conference)
   Begin reading novel: Amin Ma’luf, Samarkand (Book 1,2 pp. 1-152)

WEEK 5
M  Oct 1
L  Islamic Governments: Sunni and Shi’i States
   Fisher, ch. 11, 12

W  Oct 3
L  Islamic Governments: Sunni and Shi’i States
   Fisher, 16, 17, 19

F  Oct 5
D  Amin Ma’luf, Samarkand (Book 1,2 pp. 1-152)
WEEK 6

M Oct 8
L Sufism: Male and Female Mystics
Fisher, pp. 88-90
http://www.islamicedfoundation.com/poetry/rabia.htm
http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/all-hallaj-quotations.html
http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/1270rumi-poems1.html

W Oct 10
L Islamic Medicine and Sciences
Fisher, pp. 97-102

F Oct 12
D Islamic Philosophy and Secularism
Ibn Rushd (Averroës), Religion & Philosophy
http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/1190averroes.html

WEEK 7

M Oct 15
Review Session

W Oct 17
Midterm exam

F Oct 19
Islamic Architecture
Documentary Video
Paradise Found: Discovering Islamic Art

WEEK 8 Enjoy the Fall Break!

WEEK 9

M Oct 29
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
W  Oct 31  
L  Islamic Law: Theory, Courts, and Muftis  
  Fisher, ch.8, pp. 86-88  
  Albert Hourani, "The Culture of 'Ulama", pp. 158-165 (electronic reserve)  
  Texts of Fatwas (distributed in class)

F  Nov 2  
D  Shari'a Courts  
  Leslie Pierce, Morality Tales: Law and Gender in the Ottoman Court of Aintab,  
  (Selected Chapters On Blackboard)

WEEK 10  
M  Nov 5  
L  Islamic City: Trade and Learning  
  Andre Raymond, "Urban Life and Middle Eastern Cities," pp. 207-223  
  (electronic reserve)

W  Nov 7  
L  Waqf, Economy, and Politics  
  Zeinab Abul-Magd, "Women, Gender, and Waqf," (On Blackboard)  
  Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/3632408

F  Nov 9  
D  Arab Philosophy of History  
  Ibn Khaldun, The Muqaddimah (electronic reserve)

WEEK 11  
M  Nov 12  
L  East Encounters West: The Crusades and Islamic Jihad  
  Carole Hillenbrand, The Crusades: Islamic Perspectives (electronic reserve)

W  Nov 14  
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 (electronic reserve)

F  Nov 16  
D  Reflections on East and West Today  
  (TBA)

WEEK 12  
M  Nov 19
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 21
D Jewish and Christian Minorities
   Chris Lowney, *A Vanished World: Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Medieval Spain*
   (selections)

F Nov 23
   Happy Thanksgiving!

WEEK 13
M Nov 26
L Women and Gender in Text and Context
   Laila Ahmad, *Women and Gender in Islam*, ch. 2, 3

W Nov 28
L Women and Gender in Text and Context
   Laila Ahmad, *Women and Gender in Islam*, ch. 4, 5

F Nov 30
   Women and Gender in Contemporary MENA
   (TBA)

WEEK 14
M Dec 3
D Imperialism and Modernity
   Juan Cole, *Napoleon's Egypt* (Selected Chapters on Blackboard)

W Dec 5
D Imperialism and Modernity
   Al-Jabarti’s *Chronicle of the First Seven Months of the French Occupation*, pp. 17-119
   (electronic reserve)

F Dec 7
   Book Review Due (Juan Cole, *Napoleon's Egypt*)
   Film Screening
   *Edward Said: On Orientalism*

WEEK 15
M Dec 10
D Imperialism and Orientalism
Edward Said, *Orientalism* (Selected Chapters on Blackboard)

**W** Dec 12
**D** Reflections on History and Current Issues (TBA)

**F** Nov 14
  Conclusion