Course Description:

For centuries, the Mediterranean was thought to be the center of the world. Home to some of history’s great civilizations, it is also the birthplace of the three Abrahamic faiths: Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. Although Christians, Jews, and Muslims managed to coexist for long periods of time, some of the most terrifying instances of violence in the last one hundred years have been attributed to radical religious beliefs among these groups. The origins for these tensions are often located in the medieval and early modern periods. The Crusades, the expulsions of Jews and Muslims across Europe, and the campaigns against heresy led by the Spanish, Portuguese and Italian inquisitions represent some of the most notorious instances of intolerance and violence produced by religious belief. These institutions and events, however, have too often been misunderstood as the result of mere religious zealotry. The central aim of this course, thus, is to provide a medium to investigate how religion functioned within society during a time very different from our own. The course offers a brief introduction to selected primary sources but focuses on recent works of scholarship in the history of the Mediterranean world during the late medieval and early modern centuries.

Through common readings, we will examine religion through events and institutions considered today as offensive to western ideas of liberty (e.g., the Crusades, the inquisitions, the dhimmi system, forced expulsions, and slavery). In western Europe and the United States today, religion occupies a much different place than it did in the medieval and early modern periods. While most people today continue to adhere to religious belief on some level, religion in “the West” is very different. The United States government, for instance, officially abides by a policy of separation of church and state. Thus, as twenty-first century Americans, understanding societies in which religion was a public and pervasive force is a difficult exercise. The fundamental goal of the course, then, is to expose students to perhaps the most basic tenet of historical study: the effort to understand something foreign.
Required Texts:


- All required readings listed above are available on reserve in the library
- The instructor will post the additional required reading on the course website

Optional General Background Works:

Daniel Goffman, The Ottoman Empire and Early Modern Europe (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002).
L.P. Harvey, Muslims in Spain, 1500-1614 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

- All optional general background readings listed above are available in the library; if you have trouble consulting them, please let me know

Optional Reference Works:


- All optional reference works listed above (with one exception – Forster) are available in the library if you have trouble consulting them, please let me know
- Should you wish to consult the Forster volumes, let me know, and I can place a request at the library

Prerequisite:

Students should have taken at least one introductory level history or religious studies course in a relevant field (e.g., medieval or early modern Europe, early Middle East / north Africa, introduction to Islam, history of Christianity, Jewish history).

Grading and Requirements:
The instructor will evaluate students’ performance based upon three factors:

- **Attendance and Active Participation** constitute 20% of the student’s grade.
  - Attendance alone does not produce a strong grade; students are expected to attend class and participate actively; in addition to contributing in class, students can also participate through e-mail consultations and attending office hours
  - Unexcused absences will detract from a student’s grade, as will late arrivals to class
  - Students who demonstrate the appropriate documentation (e.g., a doctor’s letter) may bring laptop computers or other necessary devices to class; otherwise, no laptop computers, cell phones, or other electronic devices are allowed in class; students will bring hard copies of the required readings to class

- **Three Response Essays (600-750 words each)** constitute 45% of the student’s grade (15% each).
  - Essays address the assigned reading for a given class. Students should spend approximately one page crafting a concise summary of one of the readings. In that space, the student should explain what s/he considers the main point or purpose of the text and what elements of the text contribute to it. The second page can address one of a number of things: 1) how the given reading offers a similar or different perspective on a theme that has arisen in a previous class, 2) how the given reading relates to the other reading for the same meeting, 3) what was surprising about the given reading, 4) what weaknesses the student identified in the author’s work, etc.
  - Due to the instructor before the class in which the given reading is assigned (either via e-mail or hard copy in person); students can choose to respond to the readings for any meeting in the semester; given the flexibility of this assignment, there will be no extensions; in order to avoid leaving these papers for the semester’s end, students will complete at least one paper in September, one in
October, and one in November. Students may, of course, write all three papers in September.

- Students may and are encouraged to seek the assistance of the instructor; they may submit one essay draft to the instructor (at least 72 hours before the deadline); the instructor will require many students (possibly all) to rewrite their papers and resubmit them; should the re-written essay receive a higher grade, it will replace the original grade

- **One Research Prospectus** constitutes 5% of the student’s grade
  - The one-page prospectus introduces the work(s) of scholarship that the student will review in the final essay; the student will have identified the main topic(s) addressed by the given work(s)
  - Due to the instructor before class on Nov. 13; students may and are encouraged to submit a prospectus at an earlier date

- **One Final Essay (2,000-2,500 words)** constitutes 30% of the student’s grade
  - Students will meet with the instructor (at the very latest) during the weeks of Oct. 30 or Nov. 6 to determine a topic for the final essay, which will provide an in-depth review of a monograph (a book-length work of scholarship examining one particular topic); with the approval of the instructor, students may choose to write about a set of articles or to compare two monographs
  - The final essay is like an expanded version of the short reviews that students will write over the course of the term; for this project, students will situate the given monograph within its field(s) and identify what questions it raises, what it aims to achieve, what structure and methodology it employs, how it revises previous scholarship, what it leaves undone, as well as what strengths and weaknesses it has
  - Students may and are encouraged to seek the assistance of the instructor; they may submit one essay draft to the instructor (at least one week before the deadline)
  - Due to the instructor before class on Dec. 4; students may and are encouraged to submit the essay at an earlier date

**Meeting Schedule:**

Sept. 4: Introduction & the Crusades

The first week, we will consider the Crusades, one of the foundational episodes in the history of conflict between Christians, Jews, and Muslims in the Mediterranean. **The instructor will post all readings on Blackboard except the four required books listed above.**

Sept. 11: Conflict and Coexistence

Although medieval Europeans launched a series of Crusades to regain the Holy Land from Islamic sovereignty, conflict was by no means a foregone conclusion.


Sept. 18: Approaches to Religious Conversion

Though many religious conversions in the medieval Mediterranean took place under pressure, many churchmen looked to convert others through persuasion


Sept. 25: Inquisitions

Mass conversions overseen by the Catholic Church often produced converts who practiced their original religions in secret. The infamous Spanish Inquisition was established to uproot the practice of “crypto-Judaism.”


Oct. 2: Slavery

After considering the institutions used by the Catholic Church to control heresy and to deal with individuals of minority religions, we examine instances in which Jews and Muslims became authority figures in a different context – as slave masters.


Oct. 9: Class visit to Allen Memorial Art Museum

Oct. 16: Views of the East from the West

The religious, cultural, and political differences between Christians and Muslims gave rise to a long tradition of Christians writing about Islam and the East.


Oct. 22-26: Fall Break
Oct. 30: Views of the West from the East

While scholars long thought that Muslims had no interest in learning about the Christian West, recent research has shown otherwise.

- **Meet with instructor to discuss possible final essay topics**

Nov. 6: Jews in Europe after the Expulsions

While Christians and Muslims both had political sovereigns in the Mediterranean, the Jews’ lack of one created a fundamentally different experience, which we examine through their expulsion from Spain and continued diaspora.

- **Meet with instructor to discuss possible final essay topics**

Nov. 13: Jews in the Ottoman Empire

- **Submit prospectus of final essay**

Nov. 20: Expulsion of Muslims and Moriscos

While the Spanish Crown expelled both Jews and Muslims around the same time, the reasons for doing so were by no means identical.

Nov. 27: Conversions to Islam

Catholic Churchmen repeatedly attempted to convert Jews and Muslims, but conversions from Catholicism to Islam were an ever-present concern in the Mediterranean.

- Selection from Philip Massinger, *The Renegado* (1630).

Dec. 4: Eastern Christianity & Islam

Much of our knowledge regarding Christian-Muslim relations involves Catholics, yet in the Eastern Mediterranean, Orthodox Christians came into daily contact with Muslims.


Dec. 11: Submit final essay