Heretics and Infidels: Muslims, Christians, Jews and the Legacy of the Middle Ages  
MW 2:30-3:45 King 339

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Why do we care what others believe? Does the construction of the self rely on the demonization of the other? Does it necessarily inspire violence? By exploring the history of Jewish, Muslim and Christian relations in the Middle Ages we will examine how these groups, in violence and peace, shaped their own and each other’s identities for centuries to come. In light of contemporary discussions of orthodoxy and heterodoxy and the nature of difference, we will analyze two pivotal encounters, the Crusades and the Reconquista of Spain. The Crusades and the Reconquista, both movements of Europeans to retake what they believed to be Christian territory from Muslim hands, created bitter divisions among these groups and new solidarities within them. In the last part of the course, we will focus on the disturbing legacy of these interactions in a post 9/11 world and discuss ways of moving beyond them.

Course goals and expectations: There are several goals I hope we accomplish. We are together exploring some of the fundamentals of historical inquiry—understanding sources, deconstructing narratives, plunging into the debates about these particular developments—and I hope we will all come away with a greater sense of just how complex and rich they are. We are not just trying to understand past concerns, however, but also discern the continuing relevance of the “deep” past. The Crusades and the Reconquista of Spain allow us to discuss the importance and fragility of historical memory: why the events of hundreds of years ago still matter to us today and how these histories are constantly being invoked in the creation of modern national, ethnic and religious identities, sometimes in divisive and sometimes in constructive ways. I don’t think these goals are incompatible—the usefulness
of studying the past for the present day coupled with an understanding of its irreducible alterity—because I hope the course is more about engendering a sense of responsibility for those uses rather than denying their importance.

More generally, *Heretics and Infidels* is a first year seminar and as is designed to introduce you to liberal arts learning. I hope it will spark your interest in this period in history and the kinds of questions we’ll raise, but also allow you to work on skills that will help you navigate through the next four years successfully: critical reading, analytical thinking, clear communication and information literacy. To these ends, you are asked to come to class prepared to discuss both primary texts and secondary literature in class, and complete several written and oral assignments and produce a final project that is both collaborative and well-researched. And because we are privileging group discussion rather than lecture, I ask that we are all both respectful of each other’s viewpoints and unafraid to closely examine them in class.

This FYS can be applied for credit in History, including the major and minor. Successful completion also gives W-Int credit.

**Course materials:**
All required books are available at the Oberlin Bookstore and are on reserve in the library. I do not have a textbook in mind—if you want to have a reference book for the material we discuss in the course, you might want to purchase one (I can recommend a few) or spend some quality time with the *Dictionary of Medieval History* (ed. Joseph Strayer, in the reserve section of the library).

**Required Readings:**
Talal Asad, *Suicide Bombing* (2007)
Amin Maalouf, *In the Name of Identity* (2003)
Anouar Majid, *We Are All Moors* (2009)

**Requirements and Grading:**
Participation 20%; 5-7 page Crusades paper 20%; Reading Responses 20%; Final Project (Group oral presentation (15%) and individual written paper (25%) 40% total

Grading based on the following: A+ 100-97; A 96-93; A- 92-90; B+ 89-87; B 86-83; B- 82-80; C+ 79-77; C 76-73; C- 72-70; D 65-69, F below 65.

All written work must be turned in to receive credit for this class.

**Details:**
Participation (and attendance): This course is a seminar, which means your participation is ESSENTIAL for making it work; we need you there and wide awake! If there is an emergency and you must miss a class, please let me know before class begins that you will be absent, or similarly, if you can come to class but have not been able to do the reading, please come and see me and we’ll set up a time to talk.
Crusades paper: 5-7 pp. Will include first draft and final, plus peer review. An article written soon after 9/11 (Andrew Curry, U.S. News 4/8/02) was entitled, “The Crusades: the Truth about the Epic Clash between Christianity and Islam.” This paper is what you imagine should follow such a title. What do you think is the “truth”, or meaning of the Crusades? Why have they lasted in historical memory for so long? Try to think about these questions in light of all our readings and discussions to this point, and do your best to relate the historical (11th-century) to the theoretical and contemporary (Maalouf, Said, Asad). You are welcome to read Curry’s original essay, but your perspective should be your own.

Reading responses: There are three reading responses marked on the syllabus, two before Fall Break, and one after. These are shorter writing pieces designed to give you space to grasp the reading and reflect on it. The responses should be 2-3 pages in length (approx. 500-600 words), so do not spend lots of time on summarizing without leaving room for your analysis. Feel free to link your thoughts to previous weeks’ readings/discussion. The first reading response, to Maalouf, will not be graded.

Final Project: This is your chance to think creatively with the theoretical and historical tools discussed during the semester. I would like to try an experiment and have the class come up with the nature of the assignment together, but have two parts to it: 1. A group presentation and 2. An individual paper connected to the group work. The paper should be between 10-12 pages but you as a group may decide its content. More below on 11/4.

Evaluation in general: I will be handing out grading rubrics so you get a clear idea of what is expected. But in general, what I look for is that you are learning how to understand and evaluate what we are reading and discussing and that you are able to express your point of view with thoughtfulness and as much clarity as you can muster! All written assignments should be typed and double-spaced, with at least ½ in. margins on all sides. All pages numbered! Proofread! Edit! When you have citations and you need to include footnotes and a bibliography, refer to some of the reference guides from the Oberlin History Department that I have posted on Blackboard. When in doubt, please get in touch with me.

Other Class Policies:

Disabilities: If you have specific physical, psychiatric, or learning disabilities and require accommodations, please let me know early in the semester so that your learning needs may be appropriately met. You will need to provide documentation of your disability to Jane Boomer in the Office of Disability Services in Peters G-27/G-28.

Lateness: Late assignments will be penalized by dropping 3 points from your grade every day a paper is late.

Plagiarism: All work turned in for this course must be your own. The College requires that students sign an "Honor Code" for all assignments. This pledge states: "I affirm that I have adhered to the Honor Code in this assignment." For further information, see the student Honor Code which you can access via Blackboard>Lookup/Directories>Honor Code. If you
turn something in without pledging the honor code, I will wait to grade it until you do. There are many gray areas with plagiarism, especially in the age of digital browsing, and so if you have questions about what constitutes plagiarism, please see me or raise it in class.

**Finding and doing the assignments:** All required books are available at the Oberlin Bookstore and are on reserve in the library. Readings posted on Blackboard are labeled Bb. They are located under Course Documents in the file “Reading Assignments”. The readings listed for a particular class should be done before that class. ABOVE ALL, BRING READINGS TO CLASS!

**Schedule of Classes**

**Part I. Constructions of Self and Community**

**Week 1**
9/4 **Introductions**

**Week 2**
9/9 **The Nature of the Beast: Individual Rights and Communal Identity**
Amin Maalouf, *In the Name of Identity*, Sections I-II (all) (pp. 9-83)

9/11 **The Art of Othering. Class will meet in the lobby of the Allen Memorial Art Museum.** We will be discussing both the readings and the images in the museum.
Amin Maalouf, *In the Name of Identity*, Section III, Chapters 2-4, Section IV, Chapters 2, 5 and the Epilogue (95-109, 128-134, 151-164) Bb. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (1979), pp. 1-9

**Due:** Reading response to Maalouf’s work. What is the problem of identity, for him, and what causes it? What does he propose to do to solve the problem? Do you agree with 1. his conception of the problem and 2. how to fix it? Why or why not? If you would like to comment on/incorporate Said in your response, you may do so but are not obliged.

**Week 3**
9/16 **Three Abrahamic Communities.** Who are Christians, Jews and Muslims and what does this one story mean to their different faiths?
Bb: Hebrew Bible: Genesis 11-13, 15-18, 21, 22, 25; Christian Bible: Matthew 1, 3; John 8, Paul, Romans, 9, Galatians, 3; Qur’an Surat 2 rv 122-141, 258-260.

9/18 **Living Together, Thinking Apart?**

**Class will meet in Mudd Library, room TBA.**

* Some assignments might change during the course of the semester-think of the schedule as scaffolding rather than a brick house!
Part II. The Crusades: Clash of Civilizations?

Week 4
9/23 Medieval Sources
Bb. Christopher Tyerman, “The First Crusade,” in The Crusades: a very short introduction, pp. 19-26; Four Accounts of the First Crusade: Fulcher of Chartres; Solomon Bar Simson; Ibn-Al-Athir; Anna Comnena;

Due: Reading Response to primary sources. Pick an event or group of people portrayed in at least two different accounts (the author can identify with the group described), such as The Peasants’ Crusade or Peter the Hermit, the attack on Jews, the discovery of the Holy Lance, the siege of Antioch or Jerusalem, the Franks, the Greek Christians, the Seljuk Turks, etc. and discuss what you can learn from these accounts about the author’s viewpoint and the event/group of people being described.

9/25 Scholarship says!

Due: Find an article or book chapter on the western perspective of the First Crusade. If a book or chapter, check it out of the library, bring it in and be able to discuss it in class, if an article you can get through JSTOR or another journal aggregator, please print it out.

Weekend Movie Showing! Date TBA Kingdom of Heaven (Ridley Scott, 2005)
**popcorn provided

Week 5
9/30 Hollywood and historical accuracy

10/2 Saladin’s new lease on life
Watch a few episodes of Saladin, the recent animated cartoon (English with Malaysian subtitles) You don’t have to watch this one but can choose your own
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BOJa9AjKT-8&list=PL13CECCA57118C09E; Also watch at least 30 minutes of (Al-Nasser-Salah-Ad-Din, 1963 film) http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o6LXbfZZ2JQ, considered one of the greatest Egyptian films made.

Week 6
10/7 Medieval Battles and Modern Martyrdom
Bb. Samuel Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations?” (FPQ, 1993). Begin Talal Asad, On Suicide Bombing, Chapter 1, pp. 1-17 (to But Walzer wants to reassure his readers), 21-29 to the break, and p. 38 (last two paragraphs of chapter)

Note: Asad’s essay is probably the most difficult reading I am assigning this semester. I will provide questions ahead of time to help you think about the reading. There are references to many scholars that you might or might not know; he is using them to ‘think with’ but Asad does clearly mark his own conclusions to their work and to the questions he poses throughout.

10/9 Sacrifice, Holiness, and Death
Finish Asad, On Suicide Bombing, Chapter 2, pp. 39-45 (to the break), Chapter 3 (entire), pp. 65-96

Week 7 Crusades Paper (5-7pp., see assignments above) *Dates are different from usual!

10/13 Due: Turn in first draft (electronic please) by 4 PM. This is a Sunday, but I want to give your peer group time to read over your draft-it will benefit you in the end!

10/14 Peer review/discuss drafts

10/16 Paper Work and Midterm Evaluations in class. Please bring in your second draft to discuss with your peer group.

10/18 3PM. This is a Friday. Due: Final draft

Week 8 10/21-10/23 Fall Break No Classes!!

Part III. Reconquest: Danger from Within

Week 9
10/28 God’s soldiers
The Song of Roland sections 1-193, 271-298; pp. 29-114, 145-156
The Song of Roland is an epic poem written about the time of the First Crusade (probably early 12th century) but about a battle in northern Spain during the 8th century that involved Emperor Charlemagne and his beloved nephew Roland.

Due: Reading response to The Song of Roland. The following questions might be jumping-off points: How does this author portray Charlemagne and his (various) men, and how does
he describe their various Muslim foes? What are the attributes associated with each religion? Why do you think this song was created when it was, and why Charlemagne and Roland as the heroes? And what are the crusade values shown here?

10/30 Convivencia or Careful Segregation?
Bb. Richard Fletcher, “Convivencia,” in Moorish Spain, 131-156. Watch Bettany Hughes, BBC, When the Moors Ruled Europe [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X_Xnc8ijkrA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X_Xnc8ijkrA) (90 minutes). Was this really a golden age?

Week 10
11/4 Defining the end
Your final project for the course has two parts—a small group oral presentation of work you have done together, and an individual component that you do yourself. The rest—what question or questions you want to answer, how you want to organize it, what you think is a fair way to assess your own and your group’s contributions—will be decided by the class as a whole. During this class, we will hopefully come to an agreement that is workable for all, and please come to class with your creativity, a willingness to listen to others’ ideas, and substantive suggestions based on what we’ve discussed thus far.

11/6 Gendering the Other

Week 11
11/11 And now…the Spanish Inquisition

11/13 Debating the Inquisition
In class, we will divide into two groups and debate whether or not the Spanish Inquisition was an inevitable or at least predictable outcome of Iberian history. Be prepared!

*Extra Credit: a 2-page discussion of which side you think makes the most sense and why, due the following class

Week 12
11/18 Bringing our history with us
Begin Anouar Majid, We are All Moors, Intro, Chapters 1-2, pp. 1-85

11/20 Making Borders
Finish Majid, Chapter 4, Conclusion, pp. 123-176.
Week 13
11/25 Group Meetings with Professor Wurtzel. We will discuss where you are on your final projects and any problems/debates you are having amongst yourselves.

11/27 **NO CLASS** before Thanksgiving

Week 14
12/2 **Conclusions and Questions**
Please watch two Tedtalks of the ones listed as the most viewed (go with your interest but I absolutely LOVE Ken Robinson’s *How schools kill creativity*) and make notes about what the speakers do that make their presentations so compelling.

12/4 **Presentations of your final project (two groups)**

Week 15
12/9 **Presentations of your final project (two groups)**

12/11 **Celebrations**

12/20 **Due:** Final paper 3PM