

Approaches to Middle Eastern and Islamic History

HIST 535-001/HIST 575-001

Robinson Hall B204

Tuesday 7:20-10:00 PM

Huseyin Yilmaz

Office: Robinson B 375B

Office Hours: Monday 2:00-4:00 PM

Email: hyilmaz@gmu.edu



Course Description

Why does Islamic history imply medieval times whereas that of the Middle East directs our attention to the modern era? How do these histories differ or coalesce in time and space? Is Islam the most defining signifier in studying histories of Muslim societies? What have been conventional and revisionist ways of studying these fields among modern historians? In response to these and similar questions, this course aims to serve as an in-depth introduction to major themes, problems, and interpretations of Middle Eastern and Islamic history. Innovative and representative texts of historical writing from ten different topics, such as origins of Islam, colonialism, and gender, will be examined. We will highlight and discuss critical concepts, methodologies, ideological biases, cultural undertones, schools of thought, and theoretical frameworks in contemporary historiography. Existing paradigms will be critiqued and new approaches will be put to scrutiny. Different ways of historical thinking, analysis, and writing will be explored. Peculiarities of Middle Eastern and Islamic history and its shared rhythms with broader world history will be emphasized. The purpose of the course is to expose students to the subtleties of historian's craft, explore historical literature on selective topics, and endow them with skills to critically engage with scholarship in Islamic and Middle Eastern history.

Students are expected to have completed at least one semester of coursework or its equivalent in Islamic and/or Middle Eastern history, and display an overall familiarity with the culture, geography, basic vocabulary, and major issues pertaining to the study of this field. Class activity will primarily rely on discussion and student presentations. Because this is a graduate level seminar course, student contribution in a thoughtful and stimulating way is essential. To facilitate discussion and improve critical writing skills, students will write a short response paper for each of the ten assigned texts. The final paper will be a critical analysis of scholarly literature on one of the topics covered. Students are strongly advised to start reading the texts immediately in order to have more time for research, analysis and writing.

Course Policies

- Attendance is required.
- Any excused absence should be accompanied with proper documentation.
- Students must have read the course material prior to class time.
- All written work must be uploaded to Blackboard before class meets.
- Late submission will incur a penalty of 5 points out of 100 for each day it's delayed.
- No-show for a class assignment will incur a penalty of 10 points out of 100.
- For assignments and performance all are responsible from the full content of the course.
- In classroom, electronic devices may not be used beyond the purpose of note-taking.
- Students who request academic accommodation for a warranted condition should first contact the Office of Disability Services at 703-993-2474 (<http://ods.gmu.edu/>).
- All should strictly comply with George Mason University Honor Code and adhere to the standards of academic integrity. For more information see <http://oai.gmu.edu/honor-code>.

Course Requirements and Grading

Class Participation	30 %
Response Papers (10x4)	40 %
Term Paper	30 %

Required Readings

1. Ahmed, Shahab. *What is Islam*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015.
2. Andrews, Walter G. and Kalpakli, Mehmet. *The Age of the Beloveds: Love and the Beloved in Early-Modern Ottoman and European Culture and Society*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2000.
3. Casale, Giancarlo. *The Ottoman Age of Exploration*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.
4. Dabashi, Hamid. *The World of Persian Literary Humanism*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012.
5. Donner, Fred McGraw. *Muhammed and the Believers*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012.
6. El Fadl, Khaled Abou. *Rebellion and Violence in Islamic Law*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
7. Guha, Ranajit. *Dominance without Hegemony: History and Power in Colonial India*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998.
8. Kafadar, Cemal. *Between Two Worlds: The Construction of the Ottoman State*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996.
9. Kurzman, Charles. *The Unthinkable Revolution in Iran*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005.
10. Mitchell, Timothy. *Colonizing Egypt*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988.
11. Raymond, André. *Cairo*, transl. William Wood. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000.

Weekly Schedule

Week 1

January 24
Introduction

Week 2

January 31
Donner, *Muhammed and the Believers*

Week 3

February 7
Raymond, *Cairo*, 1-215

Week 4

February 14
El Fadl, *Rebellion and Violence in Islamic Law*, 1-162

Week 5

February 21
Dabashi, *the World of Persian Literary Humanism*, 1-131, 191-224

Week 6

February 28
Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, all pages

Week 7

March 7
Casale, *the Ottoman Age of Exploration*, 1-152

Week 8

March 14
Spring Break

Week 9

March 21
Andrews and Kalpakli, *the Age of the Beloveds*, 1-163

Week 10

March 28
Guha, *Dominance without Hegemony*, 1-151

Week 11

April 4
Mitchell, *Colonizing Egypt*, 1-128.

Week 12

April 11

Kurzman, *The Unthinkable Revolution in Iran*, all pages

Week 13

April 18

Ahmed, *What is Islam*

Week 14

April 24

Presentations & Discussion

Week 15

May 1

General Discussion

Week 16

No Class

Final Papers Due

Upload e-copies to blackboard by midnight.