

**HISTORY 281**  
**SURVEY OF MIDDLE EASTERN HISTORY**

Fall 2017

Prof. Hamdani

TR 10-11:45 am

RB 347, 993-1250

RA 248

[shamdani@gmu.edu](mailto:shamdani@gmu.edu)

Office hrs: R 3-4 pm

This course will provide an understanding of the history of the Middle East from the rise of Islam in the 7<sup>th</sup> century to the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The course will cover Islam during the Prophet Muhammad's lifetime, its expansion and consolidation during the period of Arab hegemony, Turkish migration and resulting Turkic states like the Ottoman empire, and other events that form the background to the contemporary Middle East. By the conclusion of the course, students should have a grasp of the major trends in Middle East history, as well as an appreciation for the rich and complex societies, politics, economies and cultures that characterize the region.

Readings will include selections from three textbooks, as well as scanned readings consisting of excerpts from primary and secondary sources on specific topics. Students are expected to have completed the readings for each lecture before class, and to actively participate in class discussion. In addition to readings and attending lecture, the requirements of this course include a midterm exam, final exam, and two short papers. A field trip may be planned for some time during the term, in a manner and time convenient to students.

This course satisfies Mason Core course and Global Understanding requirements. As a course in global understanding, students will be expected to demonstrate their ability to assess and evaluate the sources, both primary and secondary, and to provide clear explanation, interpretation and analysis through the essay exams, papers, and oral participation in class. Upon completing the course, students should also be able to:

- Develop understanding of global patterns and processes and their interaction with society
- Demonstrate understanding of the interconnectedness, difference, and diversity of this global society
- Apply awareness of global issues to a consideration of their individual responsibilities within a global society

READINGS: The following book and reader are all required and available for purchase at the GMU bookstore.

Berkey, J., *The Formation of Islam: Religion and Society in the Near East 600-1800*. Cambridge University Press. 2003.

Gelvin, J. *The Modern Middle East*. Oxford University Press, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. 2015.

Robinson, C. *Islamic Civilization in Thirty Lives*. University of California Press. 2017.

Hist 281 Scanned Readings - readings will be emailed to students to their gmU email address. These readings are indicated by a # in the assignment schedule below

### REQUIREMENTS AND GRADE DISTRIBUTION:

*Participation*— 10%. Poor participation will adversely affect a student's grade.

*Exams* – Midterm 25%, Final 35%. Each exam will involve identifications and essays. Exam dates are absolutely non-negotiable (so plan work, study, and vacations around them). Study guides will be provided for both exams beforehand.

*Papers* – 15% each. Papers will each be from 3-5 pages, on a weekly topic from before, and after, the midterm. Paper guide will be provided before due date.

### ADDITIONAL ISSUES:

Students are not allowed to eat, text, or use laptops for any purpose other than taking notes during class. Cell phones must be turned off. Walking in late is not only rude and disruptive, but will adversely affect your grade. If a student is not prepared to participate, it is better not to attend, as attendance of warm bodies alone does not qualify as participation.

### ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

GMU is an Honor Code university; please see the University Catalog for a full description of the code and the honor committee process. The principle of academic integrity is taken very seriously and violations are treated gravely. What does academic integrity mean in this course? Essentially this: when you are responsible for a task, you will perform that task. When you rely on someone else's work in an aspect of the performance of that task, you will give full credit in the proper, accepted form. Another aspect of academic integrity is the free play of ideas. Vigorous discussion and debate are encouraged in this course, with the firm expectation that all aspects of the class will be conducted with civility and respect for differing ideas, perspectives, and traditions. When in doubt (of any kind) please ask for guidance and clarification.

### GMU EMAIL ACCOUNTS

Students must use their Mason email accounts to receive important University information, including messages related to this class.

### OFFICE OF DISABILITY SERVICES

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at 993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the ODS. <http://ods.gmu.edu>

### CAMPUS RESOURCES:

WRITING CENTER: 114 Robinson A Hall; (703) 993-1200;  
<http://writingcenter.gmu.edu>

### UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

“Ask a Librarian” <http://library.gmu.edu/mudge/IM/IMRef.html>

COUNSELING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES (CAPS): (703) 993-2380;  
<http://caps.gmu.edu>

### UNIVERSITY POLICIES

<http://catalog.gmu.edu>,

Last Day to Add Classes: 9/5/17

Last Day to Drop Classes: 9/29/17

## TENTATIVE LECTURE AND ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE:

|        |  |
|--------|--|
| Week 1 | Introduction<br><br>T: Introduction to course<br><br>R: #Physical and human geography of MENA<br><br><i>Does physical geography affect the distribution of peoples and evolution of societies in the Middle East?</i>  |
| Week 2 | Arabia and the Rise of Islam<br><br>T: Berkey, Ch. 1, 3, 4<br><br>R: # Pre-Islamic poetry – selections<br><br><i>Why did Islam succeed in uniting the Arab tribes?</i>   |
| Week 3 | Comparative Monotheisms<br><br>T: Berkey, Ch. 2; # “Gilgamesh” in Kirk, <i>Myth</i><br><br>R: # Selections from Scriptures<br><br><i>Is Islam merely a Judeo-Christian heresy or a distinct monotheist religion? Why?</i>  |
| Week 4 | The Arab Empire<br><br>T: Berkey, chs. 5-8<br><br>R: Robinson, “Muhammad”, “Abd al-Malik”; # “Tribe and State” in Crone, <i>States in History</i> ; “The story of a tax collector” in al-Tanukhi<br><br><i>The Prophet ruled in the name of Islam. Did his successors?</i> |
| Week 5 | The Islamic Empire<br><br>T: Berkey, chs. 9-11.<br><br>R: #Abu Hamza in Crone, <i>God’s Caliph</i> ; Robinson, “al-Ma’mun”, “al-Tabari”, “Ibn Fadlan”.<br><br><i>If Umayyad rule resulted in an Islamic revolution, what was the result of `Abbasid rule?</i>              |
| Week 6 | Islamic Society<br><br>T: Berkey, Chs. 12, 16, 17.   |

R: Robinson, “Rabi’a al-Adawiya”, “Arib”, “al-Hallaj”; # “Kafur”, “Bajkam” in Lewis, *Islam*, Vol. I, pp. 39-45.; “Manners and Customs” in Lutfi, *Women in Middle Eastern History*; “Women and her Five Lovers” in *1001 Nights*

**Paper #1 Due**

*Who was better off in Islamic society: women or slaves? Why?*

Week 7 Midterm Exam

T: **Columbus Day**, No Class

R: **MIDTERM EXAM**

Week 8 Islamic Politics

T: Berkey, Chs. 13, 14, 16.

R: Robinson, “Ibn Taymiyya”, “Ibn Khaldun”; # Letter to al-Malik al-Ashtar in *Nahj al-Balagha*; “Ibn Taymiyya on Politics” in *al-Siyasa al-shar’iya*

*What was Islamic about politics in the Islamic world?*

Week 9 Islamic Cultures

T: Berkey, Chs. 17, 20; Robinson, “Abu Bakr al-Razi”, “al-Biruni”, “Saladin”, “Ibn Rushd”.

R: Berkey, Chs. 22-25; Robinson, “Ibn Hazm”, “Karima al-Marwaziyya”, “Rumi”.

*What was common to Islam’s cultures?*

Week 10 From Caliphate to Military State

T: Berkey, Ch. 21.

R: # “The Merits of the Turks” in Jahiz, *Life and Works*, “Beyrek and the Oghuz” in *Book of Dede Korkut*; Robinson, “Timur”

*“The Turks ... are the bedouin of the non-Arabs”, said Jahiz. Explain.*

Week 11 The Ottoman and Safavid Empires

T: Gelvin, Chs. 2, 3.

R: Robinson, “Mehmed II”; # Letters of Ogier Ghislain de Busbecq, selections; “The Turkic and Mongol Heritage” in C.

Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual*; Ottoman kanun – selections

*“No distinction is attached to birth among the Turks...”, which according to de Busbecq was the reason for Ottoman success. Do you agree? Why?*

Week 12      The Early Modern Middle East

T: # “The Frankish Character” in Usama b. Munqidh, *Arab-Syrian Gentleman*; Ottoman views of the West – selections; Al-Jabarti on the French – selection

R: Robinson, “Shah Ismail”

*Is modern the same as western?*

Week 13      Documentary

T: **TBD**

R: *No Class*; **Thanksgiving break**

Week 14      The Modern Era

T: Gelvin, Ch.4

R: Gelvin, Ch. 5, 6; # “Ibrahim Hakki Pasha” in Findley, *Ottoman Civil Officialdom*

*“... in the hands of Eastern rulers, the civilization of the West ... instead of restoring a tottering state, appears to threaten it with speedier ruin”, wrote Curzon. Do you agree? Why?*

Week 15      The Modern Era Continued

T: Gelvin, Chs. 11-14.

R: # Sati al-Husri, “Muslim Unity and Arab Unity” in Haim, *Arab Nationalism*; “Ziya Gokalp” in *Ency. Of Islam*; “Discourse of the Veil” in Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam*

**R: Paper #2 Due  
Review for Final**

*Who were more important in shaping the Middle East after WWI, imperialists or nationalists?*

**FINAL EXAM: 12/19; 10:30-1:15pm (Subject to possible change by registrar:  
CHECK PATRIOTWEB)**