

## Race and Slavery in Islam

Hist 387 – DL2 ; Inst 375 – DL6

Spring 2024

TR – 1:30 - 4:10

Office Hours: By appointment

Prof. S. Hamdani: [shamdani@gmu.edu](mailto:shamdani@gmu.edu)

Prof. H. Yilmaz: [hyilmaz@gmu.edu](mailto:hyilmaz@gmu.edu)



We are finding ourselves in a historical moment, questioning not only racism but also its connection to slavery in our nation's past. Both issues complicate the pasts and present of many other societies, including those of the Islamic world. This course will explore the issues of race and slavery in Islam. We will ask, is there a connection between race and the institution of slavery in the Islamic world? What legacies have both issues left today? We will consider instances of slave revolts in early Islam, the experience of elite slaves in the early modern period, the paradoxical role of female slaves, and case studies of Muslim slaves in the west, among other examples as we survey the issues of race and slavery in this global faith community, through primary, secondary, visual, literary and documentary sources.

This course fulfills the Global Understanding component of Mason Core. The goal of the global understanding category is to help students see the world from multiple perspectives, reflect upon their positions in a global society, and be prepared for future engagement as global citizens. By the end of term, students are expected to have achieved the following outcomes: understanding how globalization makes visible connections among global societies; developing intercultural competencies; exploring responsibilities within our global world through analysis and creative responses. (see [masoncore.gmu.edu](http://masoncore.gmu.edu))

Readings and materials for this course will be challenging. They will include selections from normative and prescriptive texts (such as religious literature), as well as literary, political, historical and biographical works. All readings will be scanned and posted on Blackboard, or linked to syllabus. It is imperative that students complete readings before their assigned due date, so as to facilitate discussion in class.

Course requirements will include a midterm exam, six response papers, and a final paper. The midterm exam will consist of identifications. Study guide for midterm exam, and response paper and final paper guides will be provided in advance of due dates.

Because this is a synchronous DL (Distance Learning or online) course, attendance and participation during scheduled class days and hours is mandatory. We will use the university designated web-conferencing software – Blackboard Collaborate/Zoom. You are required to have cameras on throughout each class session, so please ensure your device has a functional camera and microphone. In an emergency, students can connect through a telephone call, but video connection is the expected norm.

Add/Drop Period: January 23 - 30

Unrestricted Withdrawal Period: February 7 - 20

Selective Withdrawal Period: February 21 – March 25

Grade Distribution:

Participation 15%

Midterm Exam 20%

Response Papers 35%

Final Paper 30%

Required Texts to Purchase or Access Online:

Gurnah, *Afterlives*

Casale, *Prisoner of the Infidels*

Recommended:

Brown, *Slavery in Islam*

Scanned readings on Bb designated by # Readings

### Additional Requirements:

#### 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 activate their GMU 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>

### Other Useful Campus Resources:

WRITING CENTER: A114 Robinson Hall; (703) 993-1200; <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu>  
UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES "Ask a Librarian" <http://library.gmu.edu/mudge/IM/IMRef.html>  
How to use the library catalogue: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ldyWYA-qH\\_I&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ldyWYA-qH_I&feature=youtu.be)

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

#### UNIVERSITY POLICIES

The University Catalog, <http://catalog.gmu.edu>, is the central resource for university policies affecting student, faculty, and staff conduct in university affairs.

## Topic and Assignment Schedule

### Week 1 – Introduction

January 16

Course intro. – *Empire of the Faith*, PBS, Parts 1-

3. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uxnT1Trn5kc>

January 18

#Gelvin, *The Modern Middle East*, ch 1 & 2

### Week 2 – Early Islam

January 23

#Brown, *Slavery and Islam*, Introduction

*Reflection Paper: What Does Slavery Mean to You?*

January 25

#Brockopp, “Slave and Slavery” (*Ency. Of the Quran*); “Bilal” (EI2)

### Week 3 – “Normative” Slavery

Tuesday, January 30

#Brown, *Slavery*, Ch. 2 “Slavery in the Shariah”

Thursday, February 1

#Lewis, *Islam*, Ch. 10 “Black and White” (Ibn al-Faqih, Ibn Qutayba, al-Jahiz), Ch. 12 “Slaves” (Nizam al-Mulk, al-Quduri, Ibn Butlan, al-Abshihi);

Schine, “Race and Blackness in Early Islamic Thought”

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1T7zlJXeXjkeJFArWk9Rpwnj2c6k21gWQ>

### Week 4 – Slavery and the Caliphate

February 6

#Jankowiak, “Dirhams for Slaves”; Alibhai, *Through the Eyes of Judhar*, Introduction

February 8

#Talhami, “Zanj Rebellion Reconsidered”; Silkaitis, “Modern Takes on the Zanj Rebellion”

### Week 5 – On Gender and Slavery

February 13

#Gordon, “Preliminary Remarks on Slaves and Slave Labor in the Third/Ninth Century

`Abbasid Empire”; Anderson, “Concubines, Eunuchs and Patronage in Early Islamic Cordoba”

February 15

#Ibn al-Sa`I (Ghadir, `Inan, Ghadid, `Arib); Mernissi, “Scheherazade Goes West”, Ch. 9 (the Majless); Rowson, “Traffic in Boys: Slavery and Homoerotic Liaisons in Elite Abbasid Society”

**Week 6 – Military Enslaved**

February 20

#Patterson, “Intro.” And “Ultimate Slave” in *Slavery and Social Death*; Theories of Slavery

February 22

#Waterson, “The Mameluks”; “Zahir Baybars” (EI3); Elbendary, “The Sultan, the Tyrant, the Hero”; Marmon, “Domestic Slavery in the Mamluk Empire”

**Week 7 – The Indian Ocean in the Early Modern period**

February 27

#Jackson, “Turkish Slaves on Islam’s Indian Frontier,” in *Slavery and South Asian History*

February 29

#Kennaway, “East African Slave Trade”; Eaton, “Rise and Fall of Military Slavery in the Deccan,” in *Slavery and South Asian History*.

**Midterm posted on Blackboard**

**Week 8 Spring Break**

**Week 9 – Ottoman Ruling Establishment**

March 12

#Itzkowitz, *Ottoman Empire*, ch2; Tezcan, “The Politics of Race”

March 14

#Inalcik, “Servile Labor in the Ottoman Empire”; Connerman, “Slaves and Slave Agency in the Ottoman Empire”

**Midterm due on Blackboard**

**Week 10 – Devshirme and Janissaries**

March 19

#Radushev, “Peasant Janissaries?”

March 21

#Mihailovic, “Memoirs of a Janissary”; Kunt, “Ethnic-Regional Solidarity,” 233-239

### **Week 11 – The Harem and the Ottoman Court**

March 26

#Hathaway, “Introducing the Chief Eunuch,” “The African Connection,” “An Arrangement in Black and White”

March 28

#Argit, *Life After the Harem*, ch1

### **Week 12 – The Mediterranean in the Early Modern period**

April 2

#Dursteler, “Fatima Hatun” in *Renegade Women*; Davis, *Christian Slaves Muslim Masters*, ch 4

April 4

Casale, *Prisoner of Infidels*

#Matar, *Europe Through Arab Eyes*, Letters 15, 18, and 20

### **Week 13 – The Americas: Muslims as the Enslaved**

April 9

Hamel, “Silencing the Past”; <https://nmaahc.si.edu/explore/stories/collection/african-muslims-early-america>

#Sylviane Diouf, *Servants of Allah*, Intro. And Ch. 1.

April 11

#Berlin, “American Slavery in History and Memory”; Omar B. Said

<https://www.loc.gov/ghe/cascade/index.html?appid=33ea589e72d048c0ae6a62ffaf565d33&loc=twloc>; <https://docsouth.unc.edu/nc/omarsaid/omarsaid.html>

Film: *Prince among Slaves* (2007)

### **Week 14 – Black Islam**

April 16

Malcolm X; Mumammed Ali  
*After Malcolm Archives*

April 18

Guest speaker  
Abdulkhabeer, *Muslim Cool*

## **Week 15 – “Modern Slavery”**

April 23

<https://aeon.co/essays/are-the-persian-gulf-city-states-slave-societies;>

<https://www.antislavery.org/slavery-today/modern-slavery/>

Saban, “Encountering Domestic Slavery” in Fay, *Slavery in the Islamic World*; <https://youtu.be/bUEmnFPxARk>;

April 25

Gurnah, *Afterlives*

Reflections and review for Final Paper