Course Syllabus

HIST 281: Survey of Middle Eastern Civilization

Department of History and Art History
George Mason University

Location: Fairfax campus, Krug Hall, room 210 (in-person class)
Tuesdays, 7:20-10:00 pm

Faculty: Dr. Christopher Anzalone (canzalon@gmu.edu)
Adjunct Professor, Department of History and Art History & Schar School of Policy and Government
Assistant Professor, Middle East Studies & the Krulak Center, Marine Corps University**

Office Hours: After/before class or virtual by appointment

**The opinions and conclusions expressed during the teaching of this course are those of the Instructor alone and do not necessarily represent the views of either the U.S. Marine Corps, Department of Defense, or any other U.S. governmental agency.**

Course Description

This course is a general introduction to the history of the Middle East and North Africa from just before the rise of Islam in the 7th century to the start of the age of European colonialism (18th century). We will also cover parts of the Indian Subcontinent, Central Asia, and Sub-Saharan Africa influenced historically by Middle Eastern states and societies as well as Muslim and Islamicate civilizations. Key concepts and topics the course covers include “caliphate,” “jihad,” concepts of war and peace, “shari’a”/Islamic law, the formation of Muslim sects (e.g. the Sunni and Shi’ite Islamic traditions) Sufism/Islamic mysticism, and Islamic political thought, statecraft, and the formation of major Muslim polities/states such as the Umayyad, Abbasid, and Fatimid Caliphates, the “Gunpowder Empires” of the Ottomans, Safavids, and Mughals, and North and Sub-Saharan African and Iberian Muslim dynasties.

During the semester, we’ll cover the emergence of Islam during the Prophet Muhammad's lifetime in the 6th and 7th centuries, Islam’s expansion and consolidation during the period of Arab hegemony and the formation of the first caliphates/Muslim imperial states, the Turkic migrations and rise of states like the Seljuq and Ottoman Empires, and other seminal events that form the background of the contemporary Middle East and North Africa and other historically interconnected regions with majority or sizeable Muslim populations, including Central Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa.
Course Objectives

By the end of the course, you will have a grasp of the major trends in Middle East and North African history as well as an appreciation for the rich, multifaceted, and complex politics, societies, economies, and cultures that characterize these regions. You will understand, historically, how religion interacts with and shapes – and is shaped by – other social, economic, cultural, and political dynamics and identities including ethnic, geographical, tribal, socioeconomic/class, and linguistic. Students will be able to communicate their knowledge orally and in writing to a variety of audiences.

Course Grading & Assignments

(1) Attendance & Active Class Participation: 10%
(2) Pop Quizzes (2): 10% each (20%)
(3) Mid-Term Exam (October 4): 30%
(4) Final Exam: 40%

Attendance & Active Class Participation
Active class discussion is a key part of the learning process. Every student is expected to attend class regularly and come having done the assigned readings and ready to actively participate in class discussions. Participating in class discussions includes listening to the instructor and your fellow students and offering your constructive comments, questions, and critiques of assigned readings and other class materials, including primary sources.

Class meetings will begin with lectures followed by class/group discussion and all students are expected to actively participate.

Pop Quizzes
There will be two pop quizzes during the semester, each worth 10% of the course grade. These quizzes will be based on the assigned course readings and previous class lectures/discussions. Come prepared to each class meeting with a blue book.

Blue books may be purchased at the university bookstore (https://gmu.bncollege.com/School-Supplies-ArtTech/Testing-Forms/Scantrons--Blue-Books/Blue-Books/Roaring-Spring-Blue-Exam-Book-812-x-7-White-4-Sheets/p/4131) as well as through office supply retailers (e.g. Staples & Office Depot) and Amazon.

Mid-Term & Final Exams
There will be an in-class mid-term exam and a final exam in December at the time scheduled by the university. The in-class mid-term exam is on October 4. The final exam will be held according to the Office of the University Registrar’s Fall 2022 Final Exam Schedule (https://registrar.gmu.edu/wp-content/uploads/Fall-2022-Final-Exam-Schedule.pdf).

Both exams will be completed in blue books. Make sure to bring blue books to both exams.
Your letter grade derives from the following scale (after rounding to the nearest 0.1%):

- **A+**: 98.5% and higher
- **A**: 94-98.4%
- **A-**: 90-93.9%
- **B+**: 87-89.0%
- **B**: 84-86.9%
- **B-**: 80-83.9%
- **C+**: 77-79.9%
- **C**: 74-76.9%
- **C-**: 70-73.9%
- **D**: 60-69.9%
- **F**: 59.9% and lower

**Statement on Special Needs of Students with Disabilities**

Disability Services at George Mason University is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students by upholding the laws that ensure equal treatment of people with disabilities. If you are seeking accommodations for this class, please first visit [https://ds.gmu.edu/](https://ds.gmu.edu/) for detailed information about the Disability Services registration process. Then please discuss your approved accommodations with me. Disability Services is located in Student Union Building I (SUB I), Suite 2500. E-mail: ods@gmu.edu | Phone: (703) 993-2474

**Statement on Academic Integrity**

Faculty in the Department of History and Art History have zero tolerance for academic dishonesty and will strictly enforce Mason’s honor code (see: [https://oai.gmu.edu/mason-honor-code/](https://oai.gmu.edu/mason-honor-code/)). Please familiarize yourself with the honor code and all forms of plagiarism, including self-plagiarism and providing false citation information, ([see below for more information on plagiarism](https://library.gmu.edu/sites/default/files/common/tutorials/PDF-tutorials/understanding_plagiarism.pdf)). All work completed in your name must be original to the specific assignment and be yours alone. Any work or ideas you gather from other sources must be cited properly per university regulations and standard academic requirements. As required, instances of plagiarism will result in a withholding of credit/a zero grade for the assignment and notification to the Office of Academic Integrity for referral to the Honor Committee.

Please see me if you are concerned about proper citation. The University Libraries also has several short tutorials on plagiarism and proper research citation available at [https://library.gmu.edu/tutorials/student-tutorials](https://library.gmu.edu/tutorials/student-tutorials) and

**What is Plagiarism?** ([https://oai.gmu.edu/mason-honor-code/what-is-plagiarism/](https://oai.gmu.edu/mason-honor-code/what-is-plagiarism/))

Plagiarism is defined by Webster as “to steal and pass off (the ideas or words of another) as one’s own; use (another’s production) without crediting the source.” It is also considered an act of “literary theft: {to} present as new and original an idea or product derived from an existing source.” Often in academic work we are asked to draw upon the scholarship of others to support
our arguments. While this is a tradition that dates back almost to the beginning of the educational experience, it is also a tradition to properly credit those whose ideas you are using to develop your own argument. This includes incorporating your own scholarship into new pieces. The ability to analyze and synthesize prior research into an argument is at the core of developing as a scholar. Using the ideas of others without proper attribution is unethical and a violation of the Honor Code.

Categories of plagiarism violations include but are not limited to the following:

- Self-plagiarism
- Inadequate citation
- False citation
- Failure to quote sources/material

### Course Policies

**Correspondence:** Students will be notified about posted content on Blackboard or other course developments via their GMU e-mail. I recommend that you check your GMU e-mail account at least once every 24 hours. Please contact me only via your GMU e-mail.

**Absences:** You should make every possible effort to avoid missing class meetings. If you miss a class meeting due to an illness or another extenuating circumstance (which may be classified as an excused absence at the instructor’s discretion with prior notification), please notify me about the circumstance within 24 hours of the class and preferably before class. Official documentation, such as a signed medical doctor’s or health clinic’s note, will be required for an absence to be considered, at instructor discretion, an excused absence. Pop quizzes missed due to an unexcused absence cannot be made up.

**Late Work:** All work must be handed in by the assigned deadline. The mid-term and final exams must be taken at the scheduled times. Familiarize yourself with the College of Humanities and Social Sciences’ final exam policies: [CHSS Academic Affairs | Final Exams Policies (gmu.edu)](https://www.gmu.edu).

### Course Readings

**Required Books:**

*All available at the University Bookstore ([https://gmu.bncollege.com/shop/gmu/page/find-textbooks](https://gmu.bncollege.com/shop/gmu/page/find-textbooks)).

The assigned course readings below should be completed prior to that week’s class meeting (e.g. Week 2’s assigned readings should be completed before our August 30 class meeting).

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**Week 1 (August 23): Introduction to the Pre-Islamic Near East**

**Readings:**
*Berkey*, Chapter 1: Introduction (pgs. 3-9) & Chapter 2: The Religions of Late Antiquity (pgs. 10-38)

**Week 2 (August 30): Jahiliyya & Arabia before Islam**

**Readings:**
*Lapidus*, Chapter 1: Middle Eastern Societies before Islam (pgs. 7-25);
  Chapter 2: Historians and the Sources (pgs. 26-30)
  Chapter 3: Arabia (pgs. 31-38)

*Berkey*, Chapter 3: Arabia before Islam (pgs. 39-49)
  Chapter 4: The Early Seventh Century (pgs. 50-53)
  Chapter 5: Approaches and Problems (pgs. 57-60)

**Week 3 (September 6): Early Islam & the Life of Muhammad**

**Readings:**
*Berkey*, Chapter 6: The Origins of the Muslim Community (pgs. 61-69)

*Hillenbrand*, Chapter 2: Muhammad (pgs. 23-57)
  Chapter 3: The Qur’an (pgs. 59-81)

*Lapidus*, “The Judeo-Christian Heritage” (pgs. 46-48)

**Week 4 (September 13): The Succession Crisis & Arab-Muslim Empires**

**Readings:**
*Berkey*, Chapter 7: Early Islam in the Near East (pgs. 70-75)
  Chapter 9: The Beginnings of Sectarianism (pgs. 83-90)
  Chapter 10: The Non-Muslims of Early Islam (pgs. 91-101)

*Lapidus*, Chapter 5: Introduction to the Arab-Muslim Empires (pgs. 55-57)
  Chapter 6: The Arab-Muslim Conquests and the Socioeconomic Bases of Empires (pgs. 58-65)
  Chapter 7: Regional Developments: Economic and Social Change (pgs. 66-79)
**Week 5 (September 20): The Rashidun & Umayyad Caliphates**

**Readings:**
* Lapidus, Chapter 8: The Caliphate to 750 (pgs. 80-87)
* Hillenbrand, Chapter 6: Diversity (pgs. 138-159)
* Kennedy, Chapter 1: The First Caliphs (pgs. 1-31)

**Week 6 (September 27): The Umayyad Caliphate to the ‘Abbasids**

**Readings:**
* Berkey, Chapter 8: The Umayyad Period (pgs. 76-82)
  Chapter 11: The Abbasid Revolution (pgs. 102-109)
* Kennedy, Chapter 2: The Executive Caliphate: The Rule of the Umayyads (pgs. 33-61)
  Chapter 3: The Early Abbasid Caliphate (pgs. 63-76)

**Week 7 (October 4)**

**MIDTERM EXAM**

**Week 8 (October 11)**

Tuesday classes do not meet this week due to Fall Break on Monday, October 10.

**Week 9 (October 18): The Abbasid Caliphate**

**Readings:**
* Berkey, Chapter 12: Issues in Islamic Identity (pgs. 113-123)
  Chapter 13: Religion and Politics (pgs. 124-129)
  Chapter 17: The Non-Muslim Communities (pgs. 159-175)
* Lapidus, Chapter 9: The ‘Abbasid Empire (pgs. 91-104)
  Chapter 10: Decline and Fall of the ‘Abbasid Caliphate (pgs. 105-113)
* Kennedy, Chapter 4: The Culture of the Abbasid Caliphate (pgs. 99-122)
Week 10 (October 25): The Shi’ites, Sunnis, & the Formalization of the Sects

Readings:

*Berkey*, Chapter 14: Shi’ism (pgs. 130-140)
   Chapter 15: The Formation of Sunni Traditionalism (pgs. 141-151)

*Kennedy*, Chapter 7: The Caliphate of the Shi’ites (pgs. 173-204)

*Hillenbrand*, Chapter 5: Law (pgs. 114-130)

Week 11 (November 1): The Medieval Post-Abbasid Period & the Crusades

Readings:

*Lapidus*, Chapter 20: The Post-‘Abbasid Middle Eastern State System (pgs. 225-273)

*Berkey*, Chapter 18: The Medieval Islamic Near East (pgs. 179-183)
   Chapter 19: Characteristics of the Medieval Islamic World (pgs. 184-188)
   Chapter 20: A Sunni “Revival”? (pgs. 189-202)
   Chapter 21: Common Patterns in Social and Political Organization (pgs. 203-215)

Week 12 (November 8): Al-Andalus: Muslim Iberia & North Africa

Readings:

*Lapidus*, Chapter 27: Spanish-Islamic Civilization (pgs. 382-405)

*Kennedy*, Chapter 8: The Umayyads of Cordoba (pgs. 205-228)
   Chapter 9: The Almohad Caliphs (pgs. 229-237)

*Lapidus*, “The Almoravids and the Almohads” (pgs. 375-379)

Week 13 (November 15): The Turkic Migrations & the Ottoman Empire

Readings:

*Lapidus*, Chapter 31: The Turkish Migrations and the Ottoman Empire (pgs. 427-462)
   Chapter 32: The Post-Classical Ottoman Empire (pgs. 468-481)
   Chapter 33: The Arab Provinces under Ottoman Rule (pgs. 482-489)

*Kennedy*, “The Ottoman Caliphate” (pgs. 247-254)
Week 14 (November 22): The Safavid & Mughal Empires

Readings:

*Lapidus*, Chapter 37: The Safavid Empire (pgs. 490-506)
Chapter 35: The Indian Subcontinent: The Delhi Sultanates and the Mughal Empire (pgs. 507-537)

Week 15 (November 29): Islamicate Africa

Readings:

Chapter 40: Islam in Sudanic, Savannah, and Forest West Africa” (pgs. 588-606)
Chapter 41: The West African Jihads (pgs. 607-613)
Chapter 42: Islam in East Africa and the European Colonial Empires (pgs. 619-634)