

HISTORY 281-001
SURVEY OF MIDDLE EASTERN HISTORY

Fall 2023

Prof. Hamdani

TR 10:30-11:45

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Innov. 134

HH 3145

Course Description:

This course will provide an understanding of the history of Islam from the 7th century to the turn of the 20th century. The course will cover Islamic history during the Prophet Muhammad's lifetime, the expansion and consolidation of Islam during the period of Arab conquests, Turkish in-migration and resulting Turkic states like the Ottoman empire, and other events that form the **background to the contemporary Middle East and North Africa.**

Course Readings and Requirements:

Readings will include selections from **three required textbooks**, as well as excerpts from primary and secondary sources on specific topics. Students must complete readings for each lecture before class, and actively participate in class discussion. In addition to readings and lecture, the requirements of this course include a midterm exam, final exam, and two short papers. Guides for exams and papers will be provided at the appropriate time.

Course Rules and Regs:

Please also note that your cell phones must be turned off, put away, or they will be taken away from you until the end of the class period.

Your use of laptops for any other purpose than to take notes in class, or access readings under discussion will be noted, and again, your laptop will be taken from you until the end of class unless used for class purposes. Class is not the time to multitask, shop online, or entertain yourself and check your social media. Please.

Appropriate decorum: arrive on time, take your bathroom breaks before or after class, no food allowed, pay attention.

Mason Core:

This course satisfies Mason Core requirement in Global Contexts. The goal of Mason Core's Global Contexts is to:

1. Identify and explain how patterns of global connections across nations and/or cultures have shaped societies to create interdependence and inequality.
2. Use a disciplinary lens to demonstrate knowledge of how at least one nation and/or culture participates in or is affected by global contexts.
3. Apply an understanding of one's own positionality within a globally interdependent and unequal world to analyze solutions to global problems.

By the conclusion of the course, students should be able to exhibit:

- a. Familiarity with the main themes in the history of the Middle East and North Africa.
- b. How those main themes and processes have been shaped by global contexts and trends.
- c. Understand how the history of the Middle East and North Africa is the result of interdependence and inequality.
- d. And understand how our own positionality affects our understanding of this region and ability to analyze its problems.

This course also satisfies requirements for the Islamic Studies minor, and Middle East Studies concentration of the Global Affairs Major.

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

Berkey, J. *The Formation of Islam*. Cambridge, 2002.

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

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

Hist 281 Scanned Readings - readings will be posted on Blackboard and/or 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 be given in-class and 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 dates.

Add/Drop Period: 8/28-9/5/2023 Selective Withdrawal Period Begins – 9/5/2023

IMPORTANT INFORMATION :

Syllabus, scanned readings and study guides will be posted on Blackboard.

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 <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

COUNSELING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES (CAPS): (703) 9932380;
<http://caps.gmu.edu>

TENTATIVE LECTURE AND ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE:

Week 1 Introduction

T: Introduction to course

R:

<https://teachmiddleeast.lib.uchicago.edu/foundations/geography/index>

[Html](#)

[https://www-jstor-org.mutex.gmu.edu/stable/25741178?](https://www-jstor-org.mutex.gmu.edu/stable/25741178?seq=12#metadata_info_tab_contents)

[seq=12#metadata_info_tab_contents](#)

#"Languages and Peoples", Cambridge Encyclopedia of the
Middle East and North Africa

*Does physical geography affect the distribution of peoples and
evolution of societies in the Middle East? How? Why?*

Week 2 Arabia and the Rise of Islam

T: Berkey, Chs. 1, 3 - 6

R: # Pre-Islamic poetry – selections; Robinson: "Muhammad"

Why did Islam succeed in uniting the Arab tribes?

Week 3 Comparative Monotheisms

T: #Berkey, Ch. 2; # "Gilgamesh" in Kirk, *Myth*

R: # Selections from Scriptures

*Is Islam merely a Judeo-Christian heresy or a distinct monotheist
religion? Why?*

Week 4 The Arab Empire

T: Berkey, Chs. 7- 11

R: Robinson: "Abd al-Malik"; # "Tribe and State" in Crone, *States
in History*; "The story of a tax collector" in al-Tanukh; Abu Hamza
in Crone, *God's Caliph*.

The Prophet ruled in the name of Islam. Did his successors?

Week 5 The Age of the Caliphates

T: Berkey, Chs. 12-14

R: Robinson, "al-Ma'mun", "al-Tabari", "Ibn Fadlan", "Abu Bakr al-Razi", "al-Biruni"; [https://www.aramcoworld.com/Articles/January-2019/Cairo-s-](https://www.aramcoworld.com/Articles/January-2019/Cairo-s-House-of-Knowledge)

[House-of-Knowledge](#)

If Umayyad rule resulted in an Islamic revolution, what was the result of `Abbasid rule?

Week 6 Classical Islamic Society

T: Berkey, Chs. 15-17.

R: Robinson, "Rabi'a al-Adawiya", "Arib", "al-Hallaj"; # "Kafur", "Bajkam" in Lewis, *Islam*, Vol. I, pp. 39-45.; "Women and her Five Lovers" in *1001 Nights*;

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

Week 7 Islamic Politics

T: Berkey, Chs. 18 - 21,

R: Robinson, "Ibn Taymiyya", "Ibn Khaldun", "Saladin"; # Letter to al-Malik al-Ashtar in *Nahj al-Balagha*; "Ibn Taymiyya on Politics" in *al-Siyasa al-shari'ya*

Paper #1 Due; Midterm review

What was Islamic about politics in the Islamic world?

Week 8 Midterm Exam

T: Fall Break: **No Class**

R: MIDTERM EXAM

Week 9 Islamic Civilization

T: Berkey, Chs. 22-25. Robinson, "Ibn Rushd", "Rashid al-Din".

R: 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; Robinson, "Timur", "Mehmed II", "Shah Ismail"

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 – selection

"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 East meets West

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

R: Film: Shah Abbas

Usama b. Munqidh was offended by the French. Al-Jabarti was not. Why?

Week 13 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 14 **TBD**

T: **TBD**

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

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*

Paper #2 Due

Review for Final

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

FINAL EXAM: 12/12