

WOMEN IN ISLAM
Hist 462-001/575-002

Fall 2023
TR 1:30-2:45pm
Krug 242

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This course surveys the history of women in Islam from its rise in the 7th century to the present-day. The first half of the course will examine the historical processes that impacted women's roles, and the ways in which women affected, negotiated and/or subverted them in their own interest. The second half of the course will focus on specific topics such as work, war, the veil, etc., around which issues of gender status and identity have come into play, especially in the modern period.

By the conclusion of the course, students should have a grasp of the major chronology of changes in the status and role of women in Islam, as well as the debates surrounding specific issues affecting Muslim women in the present. They should also have the ability to demonstrate the continuities and connections as well as departures in their status and role. Students will be expected to demonstrate these outcomes through essay exams and papers which will involve evaluating the sources, both primary and secondary, textual and other, used in providing explanations and interpretations of women and gender in Islam.

This course fulfills the Mason Core Requirement in Global Understanding. As such it meets the following learning outcomes:

1. Identify and articulate one's own values and how those values influence their interactions and relationships with others, both locally and globally.
2. Demonstrate understanding of how the patterns and processes of globalization make visible the interconnections and differences among and within contemporary global societies.
3. Demonstrate the development of intercultural competencies.
4. Explore individual and collective responsibilities within a global society through analytical, practical, or creative responses to problems or issues, using resources appropriate to the field.

Readings for this course will be varied and will include selections from normative and prescriptive texts (such as religious literature), as well as literary, political, historical and biographical works. An effort has been made to privilege the voice of Muslim women as much as possible. Readings are challenging and so completing them before class, and attending and participating in class are strongly recommended. The midterm and final exams will be held in class and consist of identifications. Study guides will be provided

for exams at the appropriate times. Weekly reading responses and a final paper are also required and guides to both will be provided in class.

Graduate Students: we shall meet to determine your additional requirements.

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

Grade Distribution:

Participation 15%
Midterm exam 25%
Final Exam 25%
Paper 35%

Required Texts:

Ahmed, L. *Women and Gender in Islam*. Yale, 1992
Alsanea, R. *Girls of Riyadh*. Penguin, 2008
Alyan, H. *Salt Houses*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017
B. Baron and N. Keddie eds. *Women in Middle Eastern History*. Yale, 1990
Kamaly, H. *History of Islam in 21 Women*. Oneworld, 2021.
Khan, U. *Trespassing*. 2005.

Scanned Course Readings (selections designated below by #)

Important Information:

Check blackboard for syllabus and scanned readings, as well as study guides for exams and papers. Students are to complete all the assigned readings for each class before that class. Participation is expected and strongly suggested as failure to do so will adversely affect the student's grade. Dates for both exams are absolutely non-negotiable so make sure to plan work, study, and vacations around these dates. There will be no exceptions made for these reasons. Study guides with further instructions for both papers and exams will be provided at the appropriate times.

Students are not allowed to eat, text, or use gadgets for any purpose other than taking notes during class. Cell phones must be turned off. Walking in late is rude and disruptive, as are bathroom breaks. Attendance of warm bodies alone does not qualify as participation.

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>

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.

Tentative Reading and Assignments Schedule

Week 1 Introduction

T: Introduction

R: Internet assignment

Which ultimately determines women's roles, their culture or their sex?

Week 2 Eastern Women through Western Eyes

T: #Said, selection from Orientalism

R: #Melman, "Harem Literature".

Which orientalist legacy has endured longer, the Orient as woman, or the obsession with women of the Orient? Why?

Week 3 The Rise of Islam

T: Ahmed, ch. 1-3

R: Ahmed, ch. 4, #Stowasser, "The Status of Women in Early Islam"

Did Islam initially reform or repress the role of women? Why and How?

Week 4 Tradition and Transition in the Medieval Period

T: Ahmed, chs. 5, 6

R: Petry, "Class Solidarity vs. Gender Gain"; Berkey, "Women and Islamic Education", Women in Middle Eastern History

To what extent did the reality of women's roles coincide with the theory about them in the medieval period of Islamic history?

Week 5 Harem and Household in the Early Modern Empire

T: #R. Lal, "Domesticity and Power in the Early Mughal World"

R: #Zarinebaf-Shahr, "Women, Law, and Imperial Justice in Ottoman Istanbul in the late Seventeenth Century", Quatert, "Ottoman Women, Households, and Textile Manufacturing", in Women in Middle Eastern History.

How exceptional was the power of women in the early modern period? Why?

Week 6 Modernize and Colonize: Egypt in the 19th century

T: Ahmed, ch. 7

R: Ahmed ch. 8

How did Nationalism change the discourse about women in the Middle East?

Week 7 Nationalism or Feminism?

T: Ahmed, ch. 9;

R: Nelson, "Biography and History" in Women in Middle Eastern History.

Was Feminism in the Middle East a Western or an Eastern invention? Why?

Week 8 Midterm Exam

T: Fall Break – No Class

R: MIDTERM EXAM

Week 9 Women and War

T: Fleischman, "The Other Awakening" in Women and Gender in the Modern Middle East

R: Alyan, Salt Houses

Does war create only oppression or certain opportunities for women? Why and How?

Week 10 Women, Modernity and the Veil

T Ahmed, ch. 10 and Conclusion; #A. Najmabadi, "Feminism in an Islamic Republic".

R: "L. Deeb, "An Enchanted Modern"

Is the veil tradition or innovation? Why?

Week 11 Women and Work

T: Danielson, "Artists and Entrepreneurs" in Women in Middle Eastern History

R: Film: Umm Kulthum.

How and why are women in the workplace?

Week 12 Women and the Nation

T: NYT documentary: Ladies First

R: Alsanea, Girls of Riyadh.

Does national identity shape the choices available to women? How and why?

Week 13 Women and the Law/Custom

T: #Abou el-Fadl, "Speaking in God's Name"

R: Khan, Trespassing

How does "tradition" impact women?

Week 14 Thanksgiving Break**Week 15 Conclusions**

T: TBD

R: Review for Final

Which is more important, generation or gender identity? Why?

FINAL EXAM: 12/12, 1:30-4:15. (Subject to change by Registrar, so please check Patriotweb)

