Discussions about women’s rights in the Middle East and in Islamic communities have become increasingly prevalent, revolving around hot-button subjects such as veiling. However, many modern politicians and writers have little understanding of how issues surrounding gender and sexuality in Islam have developed and changed, including the plurality of ideas and opinions over time and place. This course analyzes the status of women and various topics related to gender and sexuality in the Islamic world from the emergence of the religion in the 7th century until today. Such themes allow students to think critically and historically about controversial matters, conduct research, and develop arguments in both writing and speech. The course is arranged thematically, including the discussion of women in the Quran; the various roles of women in early Islamic, medieval, and modern societies; how Islamic law conceptualizes gender (including eunuchs and intersex individuals); and masculinity and homosexuality. Throughout the class, the readings and discussion will emphasize the variety of approaches to these topics in different sociocultural contexts and how scholars – writers of both primary and secondary sources – have differed in analysis and description of gender and sexuality.
Course Objectives
This course provides an overview of fundamental issues relating to women, gender, and sexuality in the Islamic world, acquainting students with the multiplicity of methodologies used to analyze these topics, different historical developments, and variation over time and place. Students will learn how to read primary documents and consider what people living in a place and time very different from their own had to say about gender and sexuality. They will evaluate primary and secondary sources, not arguing whether or not the sources are “right” or “wrong” but rather placing them in their proper historical context and considering authors’ arguments, evidence, and biases. In reading book chapters and articles, students will assess the different methods used by modern scholars to understand gender and sexuality in the Islamic world. Students will produce their own arguments about texts and learn the difference between an observation and a thesis statement. They will also be introduced to proper citation practices through reading responses and a short research project. Lastly, students will practice synthesizing information through in-class presentations.

Course Requirements
Students are required to attend classes and read the required readings for each week. We will discuss the readings together, and those discussions will also affect the participation grades. In addition, students will be responsible for presenting one reading to the class and leading their own discussion. Written assignments include short papers (see the course schedule below) and one research project. There will also be a midterm and final exam. Lastly, students are to show respect toward their fellow students and to the instructor, as we should all aim to foster a productive and sensitive learning environment.

Attendance
Attendance is crucial because we only meet once a week. Therefore, missing more than one class will result in a grade deduction.

Classroom Policies
- Food and drink are permitted, as long as they are not disruptive.
- Cheating and plagiarism are not tolerated. Quoting, paraphrasing a source, or copying an argument without attribution is plagiarism. Please contact the instructor if you have any concerns about citing your sources. We will also cover this topic in class.
- You are always free to email me or meet with me. However, I may need up to 24 hours to respond to emails, especially close to exams or due dates. Plan your study/writing time accordingly if you think you may need help.
  *All emails need a subject line!*
- All students are required to come to office hours one time during the semester.

Grading Rubric
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Range</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>94 – 100</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90 – 93</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87 – 89</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83 – 86</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80 – 82</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77-79</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>73-76</td>
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<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70-72</td>
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<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67-69</td>
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<td>D</td>
<td>63-66</td>
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<td>D-</td>
<td>60-62</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>below 63%</td>
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</tbody>
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**Disability Disclosure Statement:** Academic accommodations are available for students with disabilities. The Moses Center website is [www.nyu.edu/csd](http://www.nyu.edu/csd). Please contact the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities (212-998-4980 or mosescsd@nyu.edu) for further information. Students who are requesting academic accommodations are advised to reach out to the Moses Center as early as possible in the semester for assistance.

**Assignments**

- **Participation – 10%**
  - Active participation is required – asking questions, engaging in class discussion, participating in activities.

- **Discussion board posts – 10%**
  - Each week, you are to write a short (3-5 sentence) reaction to that week’s readings.
  - What surprised you? What confused you? Did the readings connect with material from the previous week?
  - These posts will be used as part of the weekly class discussion.

- **Leading class discussion/presentation – 10%**
  - At the beginning of the semester, you will sign up to present one of the class readings and lead a short discussion on that reading with the class.
  - Your analysis of the reading, discussion of the author’s arguments and evidence, and your discussion questions will be evaluated.

- **Short essays – 20%**
  - Each essay is to be approximately 3 pages, double-spaced, and will ask you to critically evaluate material covered in class. They are worth 5% of the essay grade each.
  - The first essay is an evaluation of secondary source materials.
  - The second essay is an evaluation of primary source materials.
  - The third essay is an evaluation of art seen at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.
  - These essays are meant to challenge you to develop arguments and provide evidence; they are not meant to be simply reproductions of what class discussion or what is in the texts. The goal is steady improvement in your writing throughout the semester, so do not be concerned if your first essay grade is lower than what you might expect.

- **Midterm Examination – 25%**
  - Content questions and two short essays

- **Research paper – 25%**
  - Early in the semester, with the consultation of the instructor, you are to develop a topic for a research project on a topic of your interest. This paper will be 8-10 pages. On one of the last days of class, you will have the opportunity to present your analysis to the class.
  - Description of topic and short bibliography – 5%
  - First draft – 5%
  - Presentation on research topic – 5%
  - Final draft – 10%
Course Schedule

January 29th: Introduction to Islamic history; the study of women and gender in Islam
- Leila Ahmad, “Introduction,” in *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate*, pp. 1-9
- Art from Mary Roberts, *Intimate Outsiders: The Harem in Ottoman and Orientalist Art and Travel Literature* [in class]

*Presentations assigned.

Women, Gender, and Sexuality in the Medieval and Early Modern Periods

Week of February 4: Women in the Quran and Hadith; the roles and representations of the Prophet’s wives
- Leila Ahmad, “Women and the Rise of Islam,” in *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate*, pp. 41-63
- Barbara Stowasser, “The Mothers of the Believers in the Hadith,” in *Women in the Quran, Traditions, and Interpretations*, pp. 104-118
- Searchable Quran and hadith databases [in class]

*Essay 1 topic assigned.

Week of February 11: Women’s Legal Status
- Judith Tucker, “The Law, the Courts, and the Muftis,” in *In the House of Law: Gender and Islamic Law in Ottoman Syria and Palestine*, pp. 1-22
- Yossef Rapoport, “Marriage, Divorce and the Gender Division of Property,” in *Marriage, Money and Divorce in Medieval Islamic Society*, pp. 12-30
- Translated early modern court cases from Judith Tucker, *In the House of Law* [in class]

*Essay 1 due one hour before class starts.

Week of February 18: Sexuality; the Cases of Eunuchs and Intersex Individuals
• Paula Sanders, “Gendering the Ungendered Body: Hermaphrodites in Medieval Islamic Law,” pp. 74-95

Week of February 25: Women’s Education and Religious Lives
• Laury Silvers, “Early Pious, Mystic Sufi Women,” in The Cambridge Companion to Sufism, pp. 24-52
• Biographical notices about women in Devin Stewart, “Women’s Biographies in Islamic Societies,” pp. 128-136
*Essay 2 topic assigned.

Week of March 4: Women and Political Power
• Fatima Mernissi, “Fifteen Queens,” in The Forgotten Queens of Islam, pp. 88-114
• Leslie Peirce, “The Imperial Harem Institution” and “The Display of Sovereign Prerogative,” in The Imperial Harem, pp. 113-152, 186-218
• Selected translations from Mamluk-era chronicles, pp. 1-3
*Essay 2 due one hour before class.

Week of March 11: Same Sex Desire
• Khaled el-Rouayheb, “Pederasts and Pathics,” in Before Homosexuality in the Arab-Islamic World, 1500-1800, pp. 13-52
• Everett Rowson, “Homoerotic Liaisons among the Mamluk Elite in Late Medieval Egypt and Syria,” in Islamicate Sexualities: Translations across Temporal Geographies of Desire, pp. 204-230

Week of March 18: Spring Break, no class!

Week of March 25: Midterm Exam
*Description of research project and preliminary bibliography due one hour before class.

Week of April 1: Visit to the Metropolitan Museum of Art
*Essay 3 topic assigned.

Women, Gender, and Sexuality in the Modern Period

Week of April 8: Marriage and Divorce in the Modern World
• Beth Baron, “The Making and Breaking of Marital Bonds in Modern Egypt,” in Women in Middle Eastern History: Shifting Boundaries in Sex and Gender, pp. 275-291
• Interview of Zahrah Muhammad in Middle Eastern Muslim Women Speak, pp. 201-217

*Essay 3 due one hour before class.

Week of April 15: Modern Debates about Gender Segregation, Veiling, and Seclusion
• Nathalie Clayer, “Behind the Veil: The Reform of Islam in Interwar Albania or the Search for a ‘Modern’ and ‘European’ Islam,” in Anti-Veiling Campaigns in the Muslim World: Gender, Modernism, and the Politics of Dress, pp. 231-251
• Images of modern veiling from Anti-Veiling Campaigns in the Muslim World [in class]

Week of April 22: Islamic Feminism and Feminist Scholarship about Islam
• Rachel Rinaldo, “Islam and Feminism in Jakarta,” in Mobilizing Piety: Islam and Feminism in Indonesia, pp. 1-32
• Saba Mahmoud, “The Subject of Freedom” in Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject, pp. 1-39
• Documents by Huda Shaʿrawi, pp. 193-200

*First draft due.

Week of April 29: Sex and Sexuality in the Modern Islamic World
• Dror Ze’evi, “Conclusion: Modernity and Sexual Discourse” in Producing Desire: Changing Sexual Discourse in the Ottoman Middle East, pp. 167-171
• Afsaneh Najmabadi, “Introduction” and “Nineteenth Century Transformations” in Women with Mustaches and Men without Beards: Gender and Sexual Anxieties of Iranian Modernity, pp. 1-10, 26-60
• Hooria Hayat Khan, “Moral Panic: The Criminalization of Sexuality in Pakistan,” in Sexuality in Muslim Contexts: Restrictions and Resistance, pp. 79-97
• Images from Afsaneh Najmabadi, Women with Mustaches and Men without Beards [in class]

Week of May 6: Homosocial Relationships and LGBTQ in the Modern Islamic World
• Kecia Ali, “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell: Same-Sex Intimacy in Muslim Thought,” in Sexual Ethics in Islam: Feminist Reflections on Quran, Hadith, and Jurisprudence, pp. 75-96
• Shuchi Karim, “‘Living Sexualities’: Non-Hetero Female Sexuality in Urban Middle-Class Bangladesh,” in *Sexuality in Muslim Contexts: Restrictions and Resistance*, pp. 269-293

• Anissa Helie, “Risky Rights: Gender Equality and Sexual Diversity in Muslim Contexts,” in *Sexuality in Muslim Contexts: Restrictions and Resistance*, pp. 294-334

*Presentations on research projects

Week of May 13: Film: *Caramel* by Nadine Labaki
*Presentations on research projects

May 15-21: Final Exam
*Final draft of research project due one hour before the exam.