Overview

Islam (6th to 18th centuries) aims to provide an historical overview of Islamic history from its beginnings in Arabia to the spread of the large Islamic empires of 18th century. However, the course’s main purpose is not to cover every event in Islamic history but rather to familiarize students with several important aspects of Islamic history: religious practices and theology, Quran and Hadith, law and jurisprudence, science and technology, philosophy, Muhammad and political history, art and architecture, relations with non-Muslims. The sixth to the eighteenth centuries serves as a loose time frame within which we examine these various aspects of our topic.

One portion of the class will concentrate on Islam in different regions of the world, outside the core Islamic world (and will, at times, also exceed the original timeframe). These regions include Africa, China and Central Asia.

Structure of Course

The course proceeds and develops as a mix of thematically and chronologically organized topics. While some of the lectures will be more “historical” or “chronological” in nature, others will be more “thematic” but will still revolve around the above time span. While the lectures introduce a topic in a more general manner, the recitations will be dedicated to close readings and discussion of primary source material in translation. In many cases readings include many short primary sources discussing the same theme and students will be encouraged to compare them. Each week’s readings are grouped together and appear on Blackboard’s “Course Documents.”
Requirements and policies

Attendance is mandatory. You are required to attend both lectures and recitation sections.

The Students are strongly encouraged to participate in classroom discussion (both in lectures in recitations). One must do so, however, with respect for fellow students and teachers, and with no tedium (that is to say, without dominating discussion or interrupting or intimidating others).

Class preparation (reading and writing): You must read assignments before lectures and recitation sections. Occasionally, I will call on one of the students to warm the class up by answering a basic question pertaining to the relevant reading. Papers must be handed in on time, unless a prior extension has been given. They must conform to the Style Sheet Guidelines available online. All projects must be submitted in order to earn a final grade. NO LATE PAPERS ARE ACCEPTED! DO NOT PLAGIARISE! DO YOUR OWN YOUR WORK!

Written requirements and final grade breakdown:

Papers – students will write two short exercises (3-5 pp. each) analyzing and discussing the readings- each assignment worth 20% of the grade. First paper is due on Feb 25: the second on Apr 7.

Midterm Exam (identifications and multiple choice questions) on March 9th – (15% of total grade)

Final Exam - 30% of total grade (date TBA)

Participation in class and recitation discussions- 15% of total grade.

Reading Requirements:

The main textbook for this course is John L. Esposito ed., The Oxford History of Islam, OUP, 1999; (available in the NYU bookstore). As mentioned above, all additional readings and the primary source are available on blackboard.
Schedule of Classes


**Week of Jan. 24-26: Pre-Islamic World.**


Monday, Jan 22nd: Guest Lecture, “Pre-Islamic Arabia” (Professor Barnard Haykel). Wednesday Jan. 26th: Guest lecture “The Cultural Setting Before the Rise of Islam: Judaism and Christianity” (Professor Katherine Fleming).

**Week of Jan 31-Feb 2: Muhammad.**


**Week of Feb. 7-9: Qur’an and Hadith**

Readings: Esposito, chap. 2; and weekly readings on Blackboard.

**Week of Feb 14-16: Law and Jurisprudence/ Shi’a and Shi’ism.**

Readings: Esposito Chap. 3; and Weekly Readings on Blackboard.

**Week of Feb. 21-23: Early Caliphs and Early Conquests**

Readings: Esposito, Chap. 1; and Weekly Readings on Blackboard.

**Week of Feb 28-March 2: Early Caliphates—the Umayyads**

Readings: Esposito Chap. 1; and Weekly Readings on Blackboard.

**Week of March 7-9: Early Caliphates—the Abbasids and their rivals**

Weekly Readings on Blackboard.

**Week of March 21-23: Philosophy, Education, and Theology**

Esposito Chap. 5; and Weekly Readings on Blackboard.
Week of March 28-30: Science, Medicine and Technology

Esposito Chap. 4; and Weekly Readings on Blackboard.

Week of April 4-6: Jews, Christians and Islam

Esposito Chap. 7; and Weekly Readings on Blackboard.

Week of 11-13: Later Islamic Empires—Ottomans, Safavids, and Mughals

Esposito Chap. 8; and Weekly Readings on Blackboard.

Week of 18-20: Other forms of Islamic Expansion—Africa, Central Asia and China

Esposito Chapters 10 & 11; and Weekly Readings on Blackboard.

Week of 25-27: Islam in World History


May 2: Conclusion