COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

This course explores the anthropology and modern history of ‘Islamic societies’. For our initial purposes, ‘Islamic societies’ will be understood simply as those in which practices, beliefs, discourses and institutions regarded as Islamic play and have historically played significant and changing roles in people’s lives.

We will focus on the varying ways in which Islam practiced, performed, transmitted, negotiated and debated in the world from the mid-nineteenth century to the present. We will also critically examine the ways in which Islam is studied and represented by non-Muslims as well as by Muslims.

The required readings have been chosen to give you a range of voices and approaches, periods and places, cultures and persons. We will look at specific societies, institutions and movements in different historical periods in the Middle East (Egypt and Lebanon), West Africa (Mali, Senegal and Nigeria), East Africa (Tanzania), Pakistan and India, Indonesia and Southeast Asia (Singapore and Malaysia), Europe (England, France and Germany), and America.

The aim is to develop a deeper, critical understanding of contemporary ways of thinking and writing about aspects of ‘Islam’ and of our own unquestioned assumptions about ‘it’. It is intended to illuminate aspects of Islamic practices and beliefs in ordinary life and among ordinary people as well as studying variations in those practices and beliefs in the very different cultures of our complex, globalizing world. We have to learn how to identify and understand our own and others’ stereotypes and assumptions about ‘Islam’ and ‘Muslims’ at an extremely challenging historical moment. Such a process involves critical self-awareness. These are immensely complex subjects and the contemporary world political situation makes them even more relevant and hotly debated.

Major topics and themes include:

1. The varying importance for Islamic religious formations of the powers, policies and understandings of colonial and post-colonial states; their unintended as well as intended consequences for forms of Islam in societies.
2. Education systems and their transformations, the transmission of learning, the nature of pedagogical authority (Quran schools, madrasas, state schooling).
3. Sacred and vernacular languages in changing worlds.
4. Ritual occasions of the Islamic tradition, such as prayer, the Pilgrimage and pilgrimages, and sacrifice in different social and historical contexts.
5. Law and society; what the shari’a (Islamic law) and calls for its application entail for religious movements, authority and states.
6. Gender, private and public spaces, concealment and revealing, morality and sexuality in social life and political ideologies.
7. The varying nature of authorities and polities legitimated as Islamic; institutions such as Sufi Orders; forms of association, cultural, political and economic activity that have been crucial in Islamic networks of teaching, blessing, authority and social organization.
8. Debates between ‘modernist’ and ‘traditionalist’ Islamic movements in the twentieth century.
9. The roles of media, from the manuscript and the book to radio, films, videos, dvd’s, in the world flows of persons, images and meanings; the place of musical forms in those flows.
10. Migration patterns and the shifting boundaries of Muslim communities in the age of transnationalism.

COURSE WEBSITE:

We will be using NYU Blackboard for the course. Copies of the syllabus and readings will be posted as will general announcements (including any changes, so please check this regularly).

To access an NYU Blackboard Course Site:
1. Log in to NYUHome with a valid NYU NetID and password.
2. Click on the ‘Academics’ tab and look under the ‘Classes channel for the course name.
3. Click on the course name to enter the NYU Blackboard course site.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Attendance: Timely attendance at all lectures and recitations is mandatory. Attendance will be taken at every session.

A failing grade may be assigned to any student with three absences from lecture and/or recitation - no exceptions save for documented medical emergency or other comparably grave circumstances. Should such circumstances arise you should contact me or a TA as soon as possible by phone or e-mail.
Readings: It is crucial to your participation in recitations and to the success of your participation in the course as a whole that you do the weekly readings with critical attention, reading twice and taking notes as necessary.

Recitations: There will be weekly recitations.
Grading: Your final grade will result from the following components:
1. **Regular and timely attendance** at all lectures and recitations + class participation - 15%
2. **Weekly 1-page response papers** on assigned readings - 18%. These papers should be received by your TA **not later than 6 pm the day before your recitation. NO late papers are admitted, no excuses accepted.**
3. **TWO short (7 page) papers** during the course of the semester - 16% each. Topics will be assigned in the recitations.
4. **Final exam covering all course topics** - 35%.

**Plagiarism:** Do not plagiarize. It is unethical, a terrible waste of your intelligence and time and there are severe penalties. The penalty is to be failed in the course.

**Required Readings** (in bookstore and on reserve):

- Magnus Marsden West
- Michael Gilsenan
- D. Eickelman
- J. Anderson (eds.)
- Malise Ruthven

- **Recognizing Islam.** I.B. Tauris, 2005 (reprint)
- **New Media in the Muslim World: the emerging Public Sphere.** Indiana UP, 1999. (Chaps.1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9)

**Readings on Library Reserve** (see separate sheet)
Lecture Schedule

**Week 1**  Two introductory lectures, discussion of syllabus
Jan.16/18
Readings: Ruthven. *Islam: A Very Short Introduction* (pp.1-73; 143-48)  
Marsden. *Living Islam*, Intro. and Chap.2 (pp.1-50)

**Week 2**  Debating Islam
Jan.23/25
Gilsenan. *Recognizing Islam* Chaps. 1 & 2 (pp.9-54)

**Week 3**  Educating Muslims 1
Jan. 30/Feb.1

**Week 4**:  Educating Muslims 2
Feb.6/8
Timothy Mitchell. ‘An Appearance of Order.’ in *Colonizing Egypt*.  
Cambridge U.P.

**Week 5**  Muslim Networks
Feb.13/15
Film: On aspects of Islam and social life in Mali and Senegal
Readings: Monika Salzrurn. ‘The occupation of public space through religious and political events’. *Jrnl of Religion in Africa*, 34, 4, 468-492  
Mamadou Diouf. ‘The Senegalese Murid Trade Diaspora and the Making of a Vernacular Cosmopolitanism.’ *Public Culture*, vol.12, no. 3, 679-702  

**Week 6**  Forms of Religious Association and Practice
Feb.20/22

**Week 7** Pilgrimages  
Feb. 27/March 1  
‘Mecca’ and Chap.18 ‘El-Hajj Malik el-Shabazz’  
Michael Gilsenan. *London Review of Books*  

**Week 8** Aspects of Islam in Southeast Asia  
Mar.6/8  
U. Freitag et al.(eds.) *Hadrami traders, scholars, and statesmen in the Indian Ocean*. Brill, 1997:  
S. Mandel. ‘Natural leaders of native Muslims’  
Engseng Ho. ‘Hadramis abroad in Hadramaut’  
N. Kesheh. ‘Islamic modernism in colonial Java’

**Spring Recess**: March 12-18

**Week 9** Religious Law and Modernity 1  
Mar. 20/22  
B. Cohn. Chap.3 ‘Law and the Colonial State in India’ in *Colonialism and its forms of knowledge*. Princeton UP, 1996

**Week 10** Religious Law and Modernity 2  
Mar.27/29  
Chap.15. Barbara Metcalf. ‘Two fatwas on hajj in British India’  
Chap.19. W. Roff. ‘An argument about how to argue’  
Chap.20. M. Mudzhar ‘The Council of Indonesian Ulema on Muslims attendance at Christmas celebrations’
Week 11  The Discourse of the Veil
April 3/5
Film: Boys, Girls and the Veil
Readings: Malek Alloula. The Colonial Harem. Chap.2 ‘Women from the outside’
U.of Minnesota Press.
Franz Fanon. The Wretched of the Earth, pp.
Leila Ahmed. Women, Gender and Islam. Chaps. ‘The Discourse of the
Veil’
And ‘The First Feminists’.
Leila Ahmed. ‘Western ethnocentrism and perceptions of the harem’. In

Week 12  Questions of Gender
April 10/12
Film: Divorce Iranian Style
Readings:

Week 13  New Media
April 17/19
440
Eickelman and Anderson. New Media in the Muslim World. Chap.1
‘Redefining Muslim Publics’, pp.1-18; Chap. 4 ‘The Internet and Islam’s
New Interpreters’, pp.41-56; Chap. 5 ‘Muslim Identities and the Great
Chain of Buying’, pp.57-79.
R. Launay. ‘Spirit media: the electronic media and Islam among the Dyula

Week 14  Revision Lectures
April 24/26