

# Cultures and Contexts: Muslim Spain Fall 2016

Lecture: M/W 12:30-1:45, Silver Center 101A  
Recitation: TBD

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Office hours TBD

Teaching fellows TBD



## Course description:

This course will treat medieval Spain as a laboratory for exploring the ways in which members of the three Abrahamic faiths — Judaism, Christianity, and Islam — lived in close contact over a sustained period of time (711-1615). During this time of coexistence, which was sometimes peaceful and productive while at other times was conflictive and destructive, people of different faiths participated in parallel and overlapping cultural activities, drawing upon the same poetic and philosophical traditions, creating similar liturgies, and preferring the same kinds of architecture and art. In this course, students will examine the role that religion played in the creation of culture and its artifacts. Through a close examination of primary sources, including historical chronicles, treaties, short stories and poetry, liturgy, art, and architecture, students will learn to pose and answer questions about the impact religion, religious expression, and coexistence in a multiconfessional society.

## Course Rationale and Skill Goals

By the end of this course, students will:

- Know the geography and history of Islam in western Europe
- Become familiar with major social, political, and cultural movements in Spain from 711-1614
- Distinguish between and analyze the roles of religion, language, race, and culture as social forces
- Read a wide variety of medieval texts in different genres and analyze their rhetoric
- Develop skills in assessing the value of different kinds of source materials
- Challenge the received wisdom about this period through critical analysis
- Form considered opinions about the role of tolerance in a multi-faith society

## Required Books and Readings

You are required to have access to the following books for use during the semester. They are available for purchase at the NYU Bookstore (and often at a lower cost online, at sites such as Amazon, Powell's, and ABE Books), and are also all on reserve at Bobst.

- 1) Olivia Remie Constable, ed. *Medieval Iberia*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania Press, 2012.
- 2) L.P. Harvey. *Muslims in Spain, 1500-1614*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005.
- 3) Richard Fletcher. *Moorish Spain*. London: Phoenix Press, 2004 reprint.
- 4) Richard Kagan, ed. *Inquisitorial Inquiries*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP, 2011 reprint.
- 5) María Rosa Menocal, Abigail Krasner Balbale, and Jerilynn Dodds. *The Arts of Intimacy: Jews, Christians, and Muslims and the Creation of Castilian Culture*. New Haven: Yale UP, 2008.
- 6) Mariam Rosser-Owen. *Islamic Arts from Spain*. London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 2009.
- 7) **One** of the following three for the book review assignment (your choice):
  - Simon Doubleday. *The Wise King*.
  - María Rosa Menocal. *The Ornament of the World*.
  - Marvine Howe. *Al-Andalus Rediscovered*.
- 8) Additional readings will be posted on the Classes page for this course.

## Assignments and Grading

### 1) Critical reactions (10 out of 12) 20%

Each week, questions will be distributed that will help to guide your reading. For 10 of the 12 weeks of the course with new readings (with the first week of the semester and the midterm week excepted because there are no new readings), students will be responsible for submitting a 1-2 page critical reaction paper that addresses one of these questions by reflecting on the assigned reading for the course and using the critical methodologies to analyze those readings. These responses will be due by email to your teaching fellow by 8pm on the evening before recitation sections. Critical reactions will be graded on a  $\sqrt{+}$ ,  $\sqrt{}$ ,  $\sqrt{-}$  scale.

## 2) Book review (10%)

The book review assignment will afford students extra practice in engaging with and challenging secondary sources before using these skills in the more open-ended essay assignment. Book reviews will be graded on a letter scale and will receive feedback from the teaching fellows.

## 3) Essay (preparatory work 5%, first draft 5%, second draft 10%, final draft 20%)

Essays will provide students with an opportunity to reflect broadly on the themes of the course while developing careful arguments based upon precise use of textual, artistic, and material evidence. This assignment is structured in a scaffolded format to encourage thoughtful revisions and to afford the students the opportunity to receive extensive feedback on their writing from their peers and the course staff. First drafts will be graded on a  $\sqrt{+}$ ,  $\sqrt{}$ ,  $\sqrt{-}$  scale and will receive feedback in a peer critique session and from either the professor or teaching fellow. Second and final drafts will be graded on a letter scale and will receive feedback from the professor or teaching fellow; grades will take into account the overall quality of the final draft as well as the improvement and substance of revisions over the trajectory of the assignment.

## 4) Midterm 10%

## 5) Final 10%

The midterm and final will assess your mastery of the material and your analytic skills.

## 6) Active participation and class attendance: 10%

Participating actively in class means asking great questions or making insightful observations. It means preparing for class carefully and in advance so that you can participate in the discussion with specific reference to the readings for the week. It means bringing your copies of the readings to class. It also means not using electronics in ways that are not related to class. Some class discussions will be based on short, pass/fail, in-class writing assignments that cannot be made up.

**Nota bene:** Active participation is also predicated upon regular class attendance. This class does not distinguish between excused or unexcused absences. Instead, students are allowed up to three no-questions-asked absences. The reason for this policy is to allow students with personal, medical, family, or other emergencies to maintain their privacy in dealing with these matters, to allow students to attend to their religious observances without needing to go to any extra lengths to document them, and to afford students some flexibility in prioritizing work, academic, family, and other commitments; however, this also means that a student who chooses to use his or her absences frivolously will not be allowed any extra penalty-free absences should an emergency, family event, or any other need arise late in the semester. In other words, deploy your absences strategically and wisely. More than three absences, and/or regular tardiness to class, will have a negative impact on your final grade.

## Guidelines for Written Work

- Before you submit any written work, spell-check and proofread it.
- Each assignment should be typewritten using 12-point Times New Roman (or similar), double-spaced, and with a 1" margin on all sides.
- Papers should be submitted by email in both .doc/.docx AND .pdf formats.

## **Academic Integrity**

Students will adhere to the guidelines set forth in NYU's academic integrity policy, which may be found on the following web site: <http://cas.nyu.edu/page/ug.academicintegrity>. **Any instance of plagiarism or academic dishonesty will result in a failing grade for the course at a minimum**, per the process outlined in the policy. Ignorance of the policy in general or of its specifics will not mitigate against any penalty. Any student who has any question about whether an aspect of his or her work might constitute academic dishonesty is encouraged in the strongest possible terms to consult with the instructor **before** handing in the assignment in question.

## **Civil Discourse**

This course deals with cultural, artistic, political and personal relationships between members of the three Abrahamic faiths in a historical context. At times, texts and discussions will challenge the perspectives that students bring into the class based on their own experiences. I encourage you to ask questions and to develop strong and thoughtful opinions about the course materials and to express them in class and in your papers, while respecting the thoughtful opinions and perspectives of your classmates and the ideas expressed by the authors we will read.

## **Students with Disabilities**

Students with disabilities are welcome to speak with me before the end of the second week of the semester to request accommodations that will facilitate their successful completion of the course requirements. In order for accommodations to be made, students must register with the Center for Disability Services.

## Schedule of Readings and Assignments

The readings listed for each week of class must be completed prior to that week's recitation section.

### Week 1: Reading the City

September 7 (Lecture): Overview. Seeing Muslim Spain through the Great Mosque of Córdoba.  
Reading: *Arts of Intimacy*, chapter 1.

### Week 2: What is Tolerance?

Readings: *Medieval Iberia*, texts 7 and 8.  
*Moorish Spain*, chapter 1.

Kenneth Baxter Wolf. "Convivencia in Medieval Spain: A Brief History of an Idea," *Religion Compass* 3:1 (2009): 72-85

September 12 (Lecture): Islam before Spain, Spain before Islam  
September 13 (Recitation): Working with secondary sources  
September 14 (Lecture): Tolerance Enforced

### Week 3: Conquest and Reconquest

Readings: *Medieval Iberia* texts 6, 22, and 51.  
*Moorish Spain*, chapters 2-3.

September 19 (Lecture): Conquerers, invaders, native populations.  
September 20 (Recitation): History as literature.  
September 21 (Lecture): Using tales to assign blame.  
(Content note: During lecture on 9/21, we will be discussing historical narratives in which rape comes into play as both a weapon of war and a rhetorical device. If you have any concerns about this, please feel free to speak with the professor in advance.)

### Week 4: Shaping Identity: Language, Ethnicity, Nation

Readings: *Medieval Iberia* text 12a.  
Ross Brann, "The Moors?" *Medieval Encounters* 15 (2009): 307-318.  
Thomas Glick, "On Converso and Marrano Identity," in *Crisis and Creativity in the Sephardic World*, ed. Benjamin Gampel. Columbia: UP, 1997. 59-74.

September 26 (Lecture): The Languages of Religion and Culture  
September 27 (Recitation): Topic TBD. Book review due.  
September 28 (Lecture): "Moorish" Spain?

### Week 5: Greek Thought, Arabic Culture

Readings: *Medieval Iberia* texts 42 and 43.  
Josef Puig Montada, "Philosophy in Andalusia," in *The Cambridge Companion to Arabic Philosophy*, eds. Peter Adamson and Richard Taylor. Cambridge: UP, 155-78.

October 3: No class. Rosh Hashannah.

October 4: (Recitation): *Destiny*, dir. Yusuf Chahine. (If you will be absent from recitation in observance of the second day of *Rosh Hashannah*, check the film out of the Avery Fisher Center at Bobst and watch it on your own before our class meeting on October 5. Please plan ahead because there are sometimes delays in retrieving film requests.)

October 5 (Lecture): Greek logic, Islamic theology, Spanish culture.

### **Week 6: Midterm**

October 10: No class, fall recess.

October 11 (Recitation): Midterm. In-class or take-home options.

→ Inform your teaching fellow, by email before noon on 10/5, whether you will opt for the in-class or the take-home midterm.

October 12: No class, Yom Kippur.

### **Week 7: The Davids of Their Age**

Readings: *Medieval Iberia*, texts 20, 25, 41, 46

*Moorish Spain*, chapter 5

*Arts of Intimacy*, chapter 4

Raymond P. Scheindlin, “The Battle of Alfuente by Samuel the Nagid,” in *History as Prelude*, ed. Olivia Remie Constable, et al. Baltimore: Lexington Books, 2011. 55-70.

October 17 (Lecture): Jewish and Muslim Poets Reinventing Andalusí Literature

October 18 (Recitation): Close reading. How and why do we read poetry?

October 19 (Lecture): Troubadours and Singers of Songs

### **Week 8: The Writing on the Wall**

Reading: *Arts of Intimacy*, chapter 7.

*Moorish Spain*, chapters 6-7.

October 24 (Lecture): The writing on the walls at the Alhambra.

October 25 (Recitation): Essay first draft due. Peer critique.

October 26 (Lecture): Models and contacts in Morocco. (Guest lecture?)

### **Week 9: City on a Hill**

Readings: *Medieval Iberia*, texts 45, 60, 62-65 (selections).

*Arts of Intimacy*, chapters 2 and 6.

October 31 (Lecture): King of Culture. Guest lecture?

November 1 (Recitation): Cultural and intellectual biography.

November 2 (Lecture): Frametales in a walled city.

### **Week 10: The view from the north**

Readings: *Medieval Iberia*, texts 32-4, 57

*Muslims in Spain*, chapters 1-3

Eric Lawee, “Sephardic Intellectuals: Challenges and Creativity,” in *The Jew in Medieval Iberia*, ed. Jonathan Ray. Brighton, MA: Academic Studies Press, 2012. 352-94.

November 7 (Lecture): Barcelona and the Crown of Aragon  
November 8 (Recitation): TOPIC.  
November 9 (Lecture): The 1391 Turning Point

### **Week 11: Polemic**

Readings: TBD

November 14 (Lecture): Arguing For and Against.  
November 15 (Recitation): Topic TBD. Essay second draft due.  
November 16 (Lecture): Case Studies in the Paradoxes of Polemic.

### **Week 12: Nobody Expects the Spanish Inquisition!**

Readings: *Inquisitorial Inquiries*, testimonies 6 and 7  
*Muslims in Spain*, chapters 4 and 5

November 21 (Lecture): Redefining Religion through Race.  
November 22 (Recitation): Topic TBD.  
November 23: No class. Thanksgiving recess.

### **Week 13: Writing the End**

Readings: Medieval Iberia, texts 84 and 85  
Excerpts from *Don Quixote*  
*Muslims in Spain*, chapter 8  
*Moorish Spain*, chapters 8-9

November 28 (Lecture): “Language has always been the companion of empire.”  
November 29 (Recitation): Fiction and Forgery.  
November 30 (Lecture) : Quixote, Cide Hamete, and Morisco literature.

### **Week 14: Spain After Islam**

Readings: *Islamic Arts of Spain*

December 5 (Lecture): Production and Preservation of Knowledge  
December 6 (Recitation): Topic TBD. Final draft of essay due.  
December 7 (Lecture): Medieval Spain in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

### **Week 15: Conclusions**

December 12 (Lecture): Whence Tolerance?  
December 13 (Lecture\*): Metropolitan Museum visit

\*Classes meet as on Monday.

The final exam will be held during the exam block scheduled by the College of Arts and Sciences for this course.