Lectures: Monday & Wednesday 12:30-1:45
Location: Silver Center for Arts and Science, Room 206.

Professor: Ismail Fajrie Alatas
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Office Hours: Monday 3-5, or by appointment

Recitation Instructors:
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Course Description

From the Taliban Emirate of Afghanistan to the Islamic Republic of Iran, from al-Qaeda to ISIS, (the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria), Islam as both religion and political ideology has motivated diverse individuals and groups in different parts of the world. While recent political developments have driven people to posit Islam as the antagonist of Western values, the media has paid little attention to the history of Islamic politics. Key political terms like caliphate, emirate, sultanate and jihad, as well as categories like dar al-Islam (abode of Islam), and dar al-harb (abode of war) have continued to be used by journalists without taking into account their histories and discursive complexities, thereby exacerbating common misunderstandings. Contemporary Islamic political and social movements are at least partly grounded on historical
precedents and earlier forms of Islamic political models. Consequently, to understand different figurations of Islamic politics today, we need to understand their multifaceted histories.

This course is an introduction to Islamic societies from the birth of Islam (c. 622) to the present. It aims to equip students with a comparative understanding of different configurations of Islamic politics and society that have taken shape in different cultures and contexts. Throughout the course, students are introduced to the historical milieu, meaning, and significance of Islamic political cultures and societal practice as well as the various internal and external contestations that have continued to shape Islamic societies. Students are exposed to the thoughts and activism of different Muslim leaders, thinkers, educators, and ideologues and their attempts to define Islam against internal and external difference. Different materials and perspectives are juxtaposed to highlight the diverse streams of Islamic politics and the divergent ways in which the relationship between Islam and society have been imagined due to various socio-cultural determinants. By the end of the course students will hopefully develop a historical and comparative understanding of Islamic societies that will also allow them to make sense of the latest trends in Islamic political thinking and practice, whether of reformist, modernist, liberal, or islamist bent. By taking this course, students will in turn develop a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between Islamic and Western political and social thinking, which has become a matter of urgency in the current sociopolitical climate. As such, this course prepares students for life in a globalized world by introducing them to the ways in which humans come to understand themselves as members of social, religious, national, and regional collectives and by fostering their appreciation of the dynamics of cultural flows, interaction, and influence. As a part of the College Core Curriculum, this class is designed to extend your education beyond the focused studies of your major, preparing you for your future life as a thoughtful individual appreciative of cultural diversities and active member of national and global society.

Students should be aware from the start that this is a class in history and social science not theology, religious studies, or psychology. As an empirical discipline, social science is concerned with the observable phenomena of religion as actually practiced. Thus, in certain respects social science does not necessarily take religions on their own terms — as a working method, for example, the comparative approach cannot accept the claims of any religion to be the sole possessor of truth. Moreover, social science does not treat religions as transcending this world, but endeavors to situate them in their social and historical contexts. We appreciate that these are not the only ways in which religions can be understood, but these are the limits within which we work. At the same time, social scientists make special efforts to understand society and culture as insiders actually experience them. The minimal demand this places on the student is to leave intolerance, partisanship, or the claims of supra-rational insight or other special sources of authority behind when entering the classroom, and to accept the basic premises of scholarly analysis. Students and instructors are required to work together to create an educational atmosphere of mutual trust and respect in which differences of opinion can be subjected to deliberate and reasonable examination.
Expectations, Academic Integrity, Special Needs

Being in the classroom means taking part in a collective effort, and your presence there must be mental as well as physical. When you are distracted, it is not your learning alone that suffers, it distracts those around you. Laptops are allowed during lectures for the sole purpose of note-taking. Other electronic devices (iPads, phones) may not be used. Note that electronic devices including laptops are not allowed during recitation sections. This policy will be strictly monitored and enforced.

The readings, lectures, and recitation sections go together, and none is sufficient in itself for understanding the class and for preparing you for the midterm and final exams. Students must attend lectures and recitations having read the assigned readings, and turn in all assignments on time. Attendance in both lectures and recitation are mandatory. There will be an attendance sheet to be initialed at lectures and recitation. More than two absences from lecture or more than two from recitation will result in a one-letter grade reduction.

We take academic honesty to be a non-negotiable requirement for passing this course. Cheating in any manner will result in a failing grade for the entire course. This includes plagiarism. For information about plagiarism and academic integrity, you may start with this:

https://www.nyu.edu/about/policies-guidelines-compliance/policies-and-guidelines/academic-integrity-for-students-at-nyu.html

and

http://cas.nyu.edu/page/academicintegrity

On proper way to cite, see:

http://guides.nyu.edu/c.php?g=276562&p=1844731

All cases of plagiarism will be reported to the Dean. Do not jeopardize your career for one college course. If you have any doubts about what is or is not plagiarism, please ask the recitation instructor or the professor for clarification.

We are always happy to accommodate students with special needs, according to the guidelines of the University’s Moses Center for Students with Disabilities; please consult the center’s website for more information:

Course Requirements and Grading

Participation (20%)
Three short analytic papers (20%)
Paper on visit to the Metropolitan Museum of Art (20%)
Midterm Exam (20%)
Final Exam (20%)

Participation (20%)
Your final participation grade is made up of:

1. **Attendance.** Attendance in both lectures and recitation sections are mandatory.
2. **Discussion participation.** Active participation in recitation is mandatory. Discussion participation involves not only attending recitations, but coming to class prepared — having read the assigned readings — and taking active part in the discussions. When participating in discussion, students should focus on discussing the assigned readings. Note that it will be quite evident to the instructor who has done the reading and who has not.
3. **Six one-page response paper on the primary-source readings.** These response papers should be submitted in hard copy to your recitation instructors in the beginning or recitation meeting. The paper will be returned at the next meeting, and each will be graded on a √/ √+/ √- basis. If you cannot come to class, you should email your response paper to your instructor prior to the class meeting. Submission will not be accepted after your recitation meeting.

Three short analytic papers on primary source (20%)
Three-page essays discussing a particular section of the primary readings will be due three times in the course of the semester. The specific question for each assignment will be specified in lecture six days before it is due. Submission is to be made through NYU Classes. The first paper is due on 02/08, the second on 02/22, and the third on 04/12.

Paper on visit to the Metropolitan Museum of Art (20%)
Each student will be required to visit the Islamic galleries at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and submit a five-page essay dealing with how Islam is represented in three material objects or works of art of your own choosing, and how that enhances our understanding of the relationship between Islam and society. More specific instructions will be available later in the semester. The paper is due on 03/29.

Mid-Term Exam (20%): 02/28
In class mid-term exam (insert date) consisting of both objective and essay components.

Final Exam (20%)
Final exam (insert date) consisting of both objective and essay components.

- No make-ups permitted for either the mid-term or the final except in cases of dire necessity -
Policy on the use of electronics

Being in the classroom means taking part in a collective effort, and your presence there must be mental as well as physical. When you are distracted, it is not your learning alone that suffers, it distracts those around you. Only laptops used to take notes are allowed during lectures. Note that no electronics are allowed in the recitation sections. Any other devices present in the room must not be used and must remain on silence during the class. Usage of social media and accessing websites irrelevant to the class will impact badly on your participation grade. This policy will be strictly monitored and enforced.

Readings

One book is required for purchase for this course:


***Please make sure that you purchase the third edition.

Readings for the recitation sections are available on the class website on NYUclasses under the “Resources” tab.

*** Readings should be completed prior to coming to the class***

Schedule

Week 1

Lecture 1 (1/22)   Introduction, Pre-Islamic Arabia
   • Lapidus. History of Islamic Societies, 26-32.

Lecture 2 (1/24)   The Prophetic Mission
   • Lapidus, History of Islamic Societies, 33-45.

Primary Source:
   • The Constitution of Medina. In W. Montgomery Watt, Muhammad at Medina, 221-225.

Week 2

Lecture 1 (1/29)   Caliphs and Conquerors
   • Lapidus, History of Islamic Societies, 46-47, 48-53, 54-64.
Lecture 2 (1/31)  Patrimonial Monarchs and their Opponents

Primary Source:
• Abu Hamzah. Comments on the Caliphs, 129-132.
• Walid II. Letter. 116-126.

***Response paper 1 on the primary source due during recitation meeting***

Week 3

Lecture 1 (2/5)  The Abbasid Empire: Power and Politics of Patronage
• Lapidus, *History of Islamic Societies*, pp. 74-84.

Lecture 2 (2/7)  The Abbasid Empire: Caliphs, Scholars, and Mystics

Primary Source:

***First analytic paper: Imperial court and Pietist circles: Compare and contrast the description of Baghdad social life in al-Ṭabarī and Ibn al-Jawzī. Due on NYUClasses 2/8 11:55PM***

Week 4

Lecture 1 (2/12)  Jihad, Frontiers, and Expansions I

Lecture 2 (2/14)  The wonder that was Andalusia
• Lapidus, *History of Islamic Societies*, 298-315.
• In-class Screening: When the Moors ruled in Europe

Primary Source:
**Response paper 2 on the primary source due during recitation meeting**

Week 5

Lecture 1 (2/19) Two Caliphates? The Fatimids in Egypt

Lecture 2 (2/21) Caliphs and Sultans

Primary Source:

**Second analytic paper: Imams and Caliphs.**

*Compare and Contextualize Sunni and Shiʿī political authority in al-Mawardi and Idrīs ʿImad al-Dīn. Due on NYUClasses 2/22 11:55PM***

Week 6

Lecture 1 (2/26) The Khans and the Fall of Baghdad

***In Class Mid-term exam (2/28)***

Week 7

Lecture 1 (3/05) Amirs and Saints of the Maghreb

Lecture 2 (3/07) Clerisy and Kings of West Africa

Primary Source:

**Response paper 3 on the primary source due during recitation meeting***
Week 8

Lecture 1 (3/19)  The House of Osman
• Lapidus, *History of Islamic Societies*, 331-358.

Lecture 2 (3/21)  The Safavid Shahs and the Shiʿī Clerics

Primary Source:
• Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq. *The Turkish Letters, 1555-1562.*
• The Status of Jews and Christian in Muslim Lands, 1772.
• The Poetry of Shāh Ismāʿīl I.

***Response paper 4 on the primary source due during recitation meeting***

Week 9

Lecture 1 (3/26)  The Millennial Sovereign
• Lapidus, *History of Islamic Societies*, 391-413.

Lecture 2 (3/28)  Muslim Sultans in the Lands below the Winds
• Lapidus, *History of Islamic Societies*, 432-446.

Primary Source:

***Paper on visit to the MET due on NYUClasses 3/29 11:55PM***

Week 10

Lecture 1 (4/2)  The Wahhabi Mission and the Saudi State
• Lapidus, *History of Islamic Societies*, 611-617.

Lecture 2 (4/4)  The Decline and Abolishment of the Ottoman Caliphate
• Lapidus, *History of Islamic Societies*, 524-533.

Primary Source:
Week 11

Lecture 1 (4/9)  Islam and Political Modernity: Egypt
• Lapidus, History of Islamic Societies, 561-578.

Lecture 2 (4/11)  Islam and Political Modernity: The Indian subcontinent
• Lapidus, History of Islamic Societies, 698-721.

Primary Source:
• Sir Muhammad Iqbal. “Presidential Address to the 25th Session of the All-India Muslim League” Allahabad, 29 December 1930.

***Third analytic paper: Choose two from the three thinkers we read in week 11 (ʿAbd al-Raziq, Iqbal, and Maududi). Analyze and compare their thoughts on the role of Islam in modern politics and society. Due on NYUClasses 4/12 11:55PM***

Week 12

Lecture 1 (4/16)  Islam and Political Modernity: Iran
• Lapidus, A History of Islamic Societies, 544-560.

Lecture 2 (4/18)  Islamism
• Lapidus, A History of Islamic Societies, 832-841.

Primary Source:

***Response paper 6 on the primary source due during recitation meeting***

Week 13
Lecture 1 (4/23)  
Al-Qaeda: New or Old Politics?

Lecture 2 (4/25)  
ISIS
- In-Class Screening: The Secret History of ISIS

Primary Source:

Week 14

Lecture 1 (4/30)  
Shiʿa Revival: Iraq

Lecture 2 (5/2)  
Shiʿa Revival: Lebanon

Primary Source:
- Sayyed Muhammad Hussein Fadlullah, “Zein al-Abideen (a.s.): The Imam of Knowledge, Piety, and Jihad” (Sermon 1 & 2).
- The New Manifesto of the Hezbollah
- Sayyed Ali Sistani, Fatwa on ISIS and other statements.

Week 15

Lecture 1 (5/7)  
Islam and the Secular State & Final Review