

Women and Islam: History, Politics, and Culture [WS H296]

MW 3:30-5:15

Room: UH 0151

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DESCRIPTION OF COURSE

This course examines women and gender in Islamic societies from historical, political, and cultural perspectives. Beginning with a brief overview of pre-modern societies, we will focus on the 19th and 20th centuries. Our geographical scope spans the Middle East, South Asia, Europe, and the Americas. Topics include: women's roles in production and reproduction, representations of Muslim women by Muslims and non-Muslims, and the development of feminist, nationalist, and Islamist movements.

Throughout the course, we will also interrogate our own categories of analysis. What makes a particular society "Islamic" and is this the best way to define our topic? Is there a necessary connection, as some have claimed, between Islam and women's oppression? How does our position in the U.S. shape our understanding of Muslim women? How do culture and politics come together to shape women's roles and rights?

COURSE TEXTS

1. Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: The Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).
2. Margot Badran and Miriam Cooke, eds. *Opening the Gates: An Anthology of Arab Feminist Writing* (Indiana University Press, 2004, 2nd edition).
3. Fawzia Afzal-Khan, ed. *Shattering the Stereotypes: Muslim Women Speak Out* (Olive Branch Press, 2005).
4. Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain, *Sultana's Dream: A Feminist Utopia* (Feminist Press, 1988).
5. Nawal el Saadawi, *Woman at Point Zero* (Zed Press, 1997).
6. Additional readings will be made available to students via the library's system of electronic reserve (marked ER on the syllabus).

SCHEDULE OF READING AND ASSIGNMENTS

September 21 (W)

Introduction

Early Islam and Women

September 26 (M)

Leila Ahmed, "Women and the Rise of Islam," (ch. 3)

Mohja Kahf, "Muslim Women Rule and other little known facts," in *Shattering the Stereotypes*, pp. 179-183.

Assignment: Select an image or article in the popular press about Muslim women, and write a one-paragraph description/analysis of it. How does it represent Muslim women? Do you think it reinforces existing stereotypes and/or challenges them? We will discuss the image/article in class to begin thinking about Western representations of Islam. ** If possible, please bring the image/article to class **

September 28 (W)

Ahmed, "The Transitional Age," (ch. 4), and "Elaboration of the Founding Discourses," (ch. 5)

October 3 (M)

Ahmed, "Medieval Islam," (ch. 6)

Arabian Nights: <http://www.arabiannights.org/index2.html> [selections: Chapter 1 (Prologue); Chapter 28 "Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp) in the Lang translation.]

Orientalism, Imperialism, and Gender

October 5 (W)

Edward Said, *Orientalism* (1978) [selections, ER]

Assignment: View several of the paintings at <http://www.orientalist-art.org.uk/index.html> How do these painters represent Islamic societies and women? Do you think Edward Said would call these paintings 'orientalist'? Why or why not? Select one of the paintings and write a one-paragraph description/analysis of it.

Film: (screened in class): *Hollywood Harems*

October 10 (M)

Ahmed, "Social and Intellectual Change," (ch. 7)

Aisha Ismat al-Taimuriya, "The Results of Circumstances in Words and Deeds," and "Family Reform comes only through the education of girls," in *Opening the Gates*, pp. 125-133.

RESPONSE PAPER #1 DUE

October 12 (W)

Ahmed, "The Discourse of the Veil" (ch. 8)

Nazira Zain al-Din, "Unveiling and Veiling: On the Liberation of Women and Social Renewal in the Islamic World," in *Opening the Gates*, 272-276.

Feminism and Modernity in Islamic Societies

October 17 (M)

Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain, *Sultana's Dream*

Film: (screened in class): *Covered*

October 19 (W)

Ahmed, "The First Feminists," (ch. 9)

Huda Sharaawi, "Pan-Arab Feminism," in *Opening the Gates*, pp. 337-340.

Bahithat al-Badiya, "Bad Deeds of Men: Injustice," and "A Lecture in the Club of the Umma Party," in *Opening the Gates*, 134-136; 227-238.

Nabawiya Musa, "The Difference between men and women and their capacities for work," in *Opening the Gates*, ed. pp. 257-258; 263-269.

October 24 (M)

Nawal el-Saadawi, *Woman at Point Zero*
October 26 (W)
Nawal el-Saadawi, *Woman at Point Zero*
Film: (screened in class): *Beyond Borders*

Feminism and Nationalism

October 31 (M)

Tamar Mayer, ed. "Women and the Israeli Occupation: The Context," in *Women and the Israeli Occupation: The politics of change* (1994). ER

Orayb Aref Najjar, *Portraits of Palestinian Women*, narrative of Umm Ibrahim Shawabkeh. ER

November 2 (W)

Ebba Augustin, ed. "Developments in the Palestinian Women's Movement During the Intifadeh." ER

Rabab Abdulhadi, "Where is Home? Fragmented Lives, Border Crossings, and the Politics of Exile," in *Shattering the Stereotypes*, 71-83.

Nathalie Handal, "Detained," in *Shattering the Stereotypes*, 103-104.

RESPONSE PAPER #2 DUE

Globalization, Islamization, and Women's Lives

November 7 (M)

Sharon Smith, "Using Women's Rights to sell Washington's War," in *International Socialist Review* (2002). Available at:

http://www.isreview.org/issues/21/afghan_women.shtml

Documents about the U.S. intervention and the position of women in Afghanistan, available at the website of the Revolutionary Association of Women in Afghanistan. Available at: <http://www.rawa.org>

Assignment: Select one document from the RAWA website and write a one-paragraph summary and analysis of the text. Be prepared to discuss your document in class.

November 9 (W)

Film: *Afghanistan Unveiled* (screened in class, followed by discussion)

November 14 (M)

Nadia Ali Maiwandi, "9/11 and the Afghan-American Community," in *Shattering the Stereotypes*, 29-32

Bina Sharif, "An Afghan Woman," in *Shattering the Stereotypes*, 246-253.

November 16 (W)

We will not hold our regular class meeting. Instead, all students are required to attend at least one session of the conference, "Afghan Women Speak! Conflict Mitigation and Social Reconstruction," held at OSU from 11/16-11/19. I will give you more details about registration and procedures as we get closer to the conference.

November 21 (M)

Discussion of "Afghan Women Speak!"

Documents from the website of the Organization of Women's Freedom in Iraq, available at their website: <http://www.equalityiniraq.com/>

November 23 (W)

Documents from the website of the Organization of Women's Freedom in Iraq,
available at their website: <http://www.equalityiniraq.com/>
RESPONSE PAPER #3 DUE

Muslim Diasporas after 9/11

November 28 (M)

Suheir Hammad, "first writing since," in *Shattering the Stereotypes*, 90-94

Mohja Kahf, "Little Mosque Poems," in *Shattering the Stereotypes*, 116-123

Nadirah Z. Sabir, "The Adventures of a Muslim Woman in Atlanta," in *Shattering the Stereotypes*, 127-141

November 30 (W)

Azizah al-Hibri, "Muslim Women's Rights in the Global Village: Challenges and Opportunities," in *Shattering the Stereotypes*, 158-178

Fawzia Afzal-Khan, "Unholy Alliances: Zionism, U.S. Imperialism, and Islamic Fundamentalism," in *Shattering the Stereotypes*, 20-28

COURSE EXPECTATIONS AND GRADES

Your final grade for the course will be based on the following three components:

1. Response papers: (15% each) I will assign three response papers during the quarter, each of which will require that you address questions related to the course readings. Each paper will be 3-4 pages, and no outside research is required.
2. Take-home final exam: (35%) For the final exam, I will ask you to discuss the main themes arising from our readings and class discussion over the course of the quarter. The exam will be due on the university-scheduled final exam date. Students may choose to substitute a research paper for the final exam. We will discuss this option in class.
3. Class participation: (20%) this is a discussion based course, so please be prepared to raise questions about the course material and to participate actively in discussion. Students are expected to attend all class sessions and to arrive on time. Students absent from more than two classes may receive a grade penalty. Your grades on short assignments and any quizzes will be included in the participation grade.

COURSE POLICIES

1. Academic Integrity: Plagiarism is the representation of another's work or ideas as one's own. It includes the unacknowledged word for word use and/or paraphrasing of another person's work, and/or the inappropriate unacknowledged use of another person's ideas. All cases of suspected plagiarism, in accordance with university rules, will be reported to the Committee on Academic Misconduct.
2. Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately to discuss your specific needs. Please contact the Office for Disability Services at 614-292-3307 in room 150 Pomerene Hall to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

3. **Class Cancellation Policy:** In the unlikely event of class cancellation due to emergency, I will contact you via e-mail and request that a note be placed on the door. In addition, I will contact you as soon as possible following the cancellation to let you know what will be expected of you for our next class meeting.