ISLAMIC HISTORY I (HI-624)

This course explores the history of Islamic societies and civilization from its beginnings in seventh century Arabia until the fall of Granada in 1492. Attention will be given to the expansion process of the Dār al-Islām, the changing nature of the caliphate and the development of regional powers, as well as to socio-economic realities, ideological evolutions and significant cultural achievements. Students will read and discuss selections of important primary sources available in English translation, such as Ṭabarī’s History, Ibn Munqidh’s Memoirs, Ghazālī’s Book of Counsel for Kings, Abū Dulaf’s Qasīda sāsāniyya, Ibn Baṭṭūṭa’s Travels, and Ibn Khaldūn’s Muqaddima.

Class will meet twice a week for 12 weeks: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 6:30-8:15 p.m., beginning Tuesday 8 September 2015. Each of these twelve classes will be divided in two sessions: A) Lecture; B) Discussion of the required readings.

Course Objectives

1) Students should be able to find their way around in the major reference works on Islamic history and civilization.

2) They are expected to gain an acquaintance with the most important political and civilizational developments in Islam up to the end of the 15th century.

3) They should also be able to have an informed opinion on major ideological debates concerning Islamic societies during these centuries.

4) They should be able to benefit from the methodological approaches adopted in these classes and apply them for their own studies and/or research projects.

Course Requirements

1) It is strongly recommended that the student arrive at the first class already having a general knowledge about the religion of Islam, as well as about the geography and ancient history of Europe and the Middle East.

2) Attendance in class is required. If you know you will be unable to attend a session please inform the professor in advance. Missing two sessions will result in an automatic lowering of your final grade by 30%. Missing three or more sessions will result in automatic failure of the course.

3) For each session A of weeks 2-12, students shall submit a summary of the reading assignments and be ready to speak about them in class. Each student can skip any two weeks during that time for a total of 10 submissions. Here are the guidelines for these summaries:
   - Approximately 2 pages (3 pages maximum)
   - One modern study must be used in each summary


Mernissi, Fatima, & Lakeland, Mary Jo, The Forgotten Queens of Islam (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993)


Class Schedule

Class I. A: Sept. 8. B: Sept. 10. 632

Topics: Introduction to the course. Historiography. Pre-Islamic Arabia. The world in the time of the Prophet.

General references:


Reading Assignments:


Topics: Succession. Expansion. *Fitna*.

General references:


Reading Assignments:


Topics: The Arab Dynasty. From the Indus Valley to France. A revolution.

General references:


Reading Assignments:


Topics: Baghdād. Califhs, ulemas.

General references:


Reading Assignments:


Topics: Regional powers. The Shi‘ite century. The Turkish normalisation.

General references:


Reading Assignments:


General references:
(PJ7510 .N5 1930)


(DS36.853 .K72 1992)


(DS38.6 .K463 2006)

Reading Assignments:


(HV4591.9 .A3 67)


Topics: Barbarian invasions. The Latin states. Saladin and the Ayyubids. After the fall of Akko.

General references:

(DS38.3 .H65 1986)


(D158 .K66 2002)

(DS38.6 .M3213 1985)


(DS38.4 .S2 N48 1992)


Reading Assignments:


d. IBN MUNQIDH, Usâma, *Memoirs of an Arab-Syrian Gentleman, or An Arab Knight in the Crusades. Memoirs of Usâmah
Class VIII. A: Nov. 3. B: Nov. 5. The ‘Abbāsids. IV: The Mongol World Order (13th-15th c.)

Topics: Genghis Khān. The fall of Baghdād. The conversion of Ghāzān. Tamerlane. India’s sultanates

General references:


Reading Assignments:


Class IX. A: Nov. 10. B: Nov. 12. Northern Africa, Spain, Sicily (710-1492)


General references:


Reading Assignments:


Class XI  


Topics: From the barracks to the throne. The “Champions of Islam”. The Muslim civil society. Black plague and starvation.

General references:


Reading Assignments:


(Class XI  


General references:


Reading Assignments:


General references:


Reading Assignments:


c. HERRIN, Judith, *Byzantium*. — Ch. 27: Better the Turkish Turban… & Ch. 28: *The Siege of 1453* (p. 299–320).

WRITTEN EXAMINATION. Tuesday, December 15.