Maidservants of Allah:  
The Spirituality of Muslim Women  
9:00am-5:30pm  
June 16-20, 2014

Instructor: Dr. Ingrid Mattson  
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In this class we will explore the spirituality of Muslim women past and present. We begin with a study of the portrayal of women in the Qur’an and the lives of female companions of the Prophet Muhammad whose concerns and perspectives helped shape the spiritual development of the early Muslim community. In later centuries, we will look at the roles women have played in the establishment of religious discourses and institutions and discuss challenges Muslim women have faced in fulfilling their spiritual needs in diverse societies. We will consider many more questions, such as how spirituality is embodied by women and the impact of such practices as gender segregation and hijab. Does the elevation of “the feminine” in traditional spirituality contribute to Muslim women’s spiritual empowerment or the contrary? What are the spiritual practices and understandings of major life cycles? How do women understand the spiritual dimensions of marriage and celibacy, motherhood and childlessness, intimacy and abuse?

Learning Goals:

- To know what the Qur’an says about women and gender
- To understand different hermeneutical approaches to the Qur’an and the Sunnah and various legal methodologies that impact women
- To be able to identify at least a dozen prominent Muslim women religious leaders in history or contemporary society
- To be able to discuss the ways in which Muslim women’s spirituality is the same or different as men’s spirituality
- To identify the way culture and social structures shape and impact Muslim women’s spirituality.
Course Requirements:

1. **Participation:** Students are expected to respond in class to required readings and engage in discussions. Students will lose 5 points/day for unexcused absences from class.

2. **Pre-Reading Notes:**
   
   A. Students must submit notes on the following readings on the first day of class. The notes can be in point form and are extensive enough to demonstrate that you have read these selections. The notes do not need to be exhaustive or comprehensive:
      
      
   B. Notes for the following reading must be submitted on Thursday morning:
      

3. **Presentation:** Each student will make a 15 minute presentation in class about a historical or contemporary Muslim woman religious or spiritual leader, religious scholar or activist who expresses herself through Islamic religious discourse. The presentation should be accompanied by a one-page handout and will be scheduled by the instructor on the first day of class once we see how many people are in the class. Presentations will take place Thursday and Friday. You must request approval for the subject of your presentation from the instructor. A list of possible subjects is below, or you may suggest your own subject. No Sahabah or women in the Qur’an will be approved as subjects.

4. **Book report:** Students will submit one 1200-word book report on a book approved by the instructor. A list of possible books for review is below, or you may suggest your own title. **The book review is due July 10, 2014**

5. **Research paper or project:** The research paper of 10-15 pages must be on a topic approved by the instructor. In addition to any monographs the student may find on the paper topic, he or she should also consult the *Index Islamicus*, the *Religion Index* or another source to search for relevant scholarly articles. Students should follow Hartford Seminary guidelines for writing research papers. A copy of these guidelines are available from the course instructor or the Dean’s office. In lieu of a paper, students may develop projects in which they integrate and apply what they have learned in the course. Examples of possible projects
include: A presentation designed for and delivered to a community group, writing a piece of historical fiction, interviewing Muslim women on a specific topic etc. All projects must be approved in advance.

**Final paper/project due: July 24, 2014**

**Grading:**

- Pre-reading Notes: 20%
- Presentation: 20%
- Book report: 20%
- Research paper/project: 40%

*NO LATE PAPERS, PROJECTS OR BOOK REVIEWS WILL BE ACCEPTED*

*Note: D. Min. students need to contact the instructor for their assignments.*

*Students must inform themselves about the definition of plagiarism and the sanction that will be applied to those who plagiarize, including by copying text from internet sites.*

**Required Readings:**

The following books must be purchased. Other readings (many articles) will be available in the library on the reserve shelf.

1. A copy of a Qur’an translation. I recommend Muhammad Asad or Muhammad Abdul Haleem’s translation. If you know any Arabic, make sure you have the Arabic Qur’an handy as well.
Non-Exhaustive List of Women for In-Class Presentations  
(confirm selection with instructor)

Historical:

- Any 2nd or 3rd generation Muslim woman (i.e., a “Successor” or a “Successor to the Successors”), such as Asma bint Talha
- Sufi shaykha or ascetic, such as Rabia al-Adawiyya of Basra
- Hadith scholar, legal scholar or preacher such as Nana Asma’u of West Africa
- Patron of religious institutions, such as Fatima al-Fihriyya

Modern:

- Fatima al-Yashrutiyya, Sufi teacher of Palestine
- Zaynab al-Ghazali, Islamist activist of Egypt
- Munira al-Qubaysi, global spiritual leader
- Bint al-Shati’, scholar of the Qur’an
- Mukhtart Mai, activist of Pakistan
- Malala Yousafzai, activists of Pakistan
- Amina Wadud, scholar of the USA
- Sharifa Ahmad Alkhateeb, d.v. activist of the USA
- Mohja Kahf, poet and author of USA and Syria
- Tawwakul Karman, human rights activist of Yemen
- Amina Rasul-Bernardo, peace activist of the Philippines

Non-Exhaustive List of Books for Review  
(Check with instructor for final selection)


Ali-Karamali, Sunbul. *The Muslim Next Door: The Qur'an, the Media and that Veil Thing.*


