

Course title and number: Women and Islam: History, Politics, and Culture
WS 359/ History 359 3 Credits

Course prerequisites
WS 110 or 150 OR AACS 150

Grading: A-F

Course Description

This course examines women and gender in Islamic societies in the Middle East, North Africa, and Asia. Beginning with an overview of pre-modern history, the course focuses on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Topics include: women's roles in production and reproduction, gender ideologies and representations of Muslim women, 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? 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 Objectives

This course will:

1. Investigate the history of women and gender in Islamic societies.
2. Examine feminist, nationalist, and Islamist movements.
3. Critically consider representations of Muslim women in the West, especially in the U.S.
4. Explore the relationship between culture, politics, and gender ideologies in Islamic and Western contexts.
5. Require written and oral presentations that demonstrate critical thinking.

Student Learning Outcomes

Students will:

1. Learn about the history of women and gender in Islamic societies.
2. Know about feminist, nationalist, and Islamist movements.
3. Be able to analyze Western representations of Muslim women.
4. Understand the relationship between culture, politics, and gender ideologies in Islamic and Western contexts.
5. Demonstrate critical thinking through written and oral presentations.

Topical Outline of the Course Content

- a. *Introduction to Islam and women* (weeks 1-3)
An overview of early Islamic history with a focus on women's lives and gender norms.
- b. *Islam and the West: Colonialism, Imperial Feminism, and Women* (weeks 4-7)

An examination of the interaction between Islamic ideologies and colonialism, with special attention to the pivotal role of gender in shaping this interaction. To focus our discussion, we consider how notions of womanhood became linked to questions of culture, tradition, and westernization. We will select case studies from among the following regions: Egypt, Turkey, India, and Indonesia.

c. *Nationalism, Feminism, and Pan-Islamic movements* (weeks 8-11)

We consider each of these movements as they challenged both colonialism and dominant gender norms. Our focus is on how “Islam” became linked to broader movements for social change. We will select case studies from the regions listed above, as well as consider movements in Israel/Palestine.

d. *Globalization, Islamization, and Women’s Lives* (weeks 12-15)

We consider the rise of Islamist ideologies in their historical and political contexts, with a focus on their impact on gender norms and women’s lives. We will draw upon case studies from among the following regions: Iran, Egypt, Pakistan, and Afghanistan.

Teaching Methods and Student Learning Activities

- Lectures
- Small group discussions
- Plenary discussions
- In-class presentations
- Essays (responses to the reading)

Student Assessment

Students will be evaluated based upon the following:

- Attendance in class
- Participation in discussion
- Oral presentations on reading and research
- Written assignments

Suggested Reading and Texts

Ahmed, Leila. *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (1993).

Badran, Margot and Miriam Cooke, eds. *Opening the Gates: A Century of Arab Feminist Writing* (1990).

Hossain, Rokeya Sakhawat. *Sultana’s Dream* (1988).

Additional Bibliography

General Studies and Collections

Abou El Fadl, Khaled, *Speaking in God’s Name: Islamic Law, Authority and Women*. Oxford: One World Press 2001.

Ahmed, Leila. *Women and gender in Islam*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992.

Afkami, Mahnaz, ed. *Faith and Freedom: Women's Human Rights in the Muslim World*. Editor: Mahnaz Afkami. Syracuse University Press, 1995.

Afshar, Haleh, ed. *Women in the Middle East: Perceptions, Realities and Struggles for Liberation*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993.

Ask, K. and Marit Tjomsland, eds. *Women and Islamization: Contemporary Dimensions of Discourse on Gender Relations* (1998).

El Saadawi, Nawal, *The Hidden Face of Eve: Women in the Arab World*. Boston: Beacon Press 1980.

Faqir, Fadia, *In the House of Silence: Autobiographical Essays by Arab Women Writers*. Reading: Garnet, 1998.

Fernea, Elizabeth and Basima Bezirgan, eds. *Middle Eastern Muslim Women Speak*, editors Elizabeth Fernea and Basima Bezirgan. University of Texas 1977.

Kandiyoti, Deniz, "Contemporary Feminist Scholarship and Middle East Studies," in *Gendering the Middle East: Emerging Perspectives*, edited by D. Kandiyoti. Syracuse University Press, 1996.

Kandiyoti, Deniz (ed.). *Women, Islam and the state*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991.

Keddie, Nikki R. and Beth Baron (eds.), *Women in Middle Eastern history: Shifting boundaries in sex and gender*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1991.

Lerner, Gerda, *The Creation of Patriarchy*. [Volume I of the two volume series *Women and History*]. Oxford University Press 1986.

Mernissi, Fatima, *Beyond the Veil: Male-Female Dynamics in Modern Muslim Society*. Indiana University Press. Revised edition, 1985.

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Mernissi, Fatima, *Women and Islam: an Historical and Theological Enquiry*. Blackwell 1991.

Moghadam, Valentine M. 1993a. *Modernizing women: Gender and social change in the Middle East*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.

Nashat, Guity, and Judith Tucker, *Women in the Middle East and North Africa*. Series: Restoring Women to History. Indiana University Press 1998.

Women and Islam, pre-1800

Awde, Nicholas, ed. *Women in Islam : an anthology from the Quran and Hadiths Translated*. Oneworld, 2000.

Barlas, Asma. "Believing women" in *Islam: unreading patriarchal interpretations of the Qur'an*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2002.

Berkey, Jonathan, "Circumcision Circumscribed: Female Excision and Cultural Accommodation in the Medieval Near East," in *IJMES* Vol. 28, no. 1, 19-38.

Berkey, Jonathan, "Women and Islamic Education in the Mamluk Period," in *Women in Middle Eastern History: Shifting Boundaries in Sex and Gender*, editors Nikki Keddie and Beth Baron. Yale University Press 1991. Pp. 143-157

Blanks, David R. and Michael Frassetto. *Western Views of Islam in the Medieval and Early Modern Europe: Perception of Other*. New York: Martin's Press, 1999.

Fadel, Mohammad, "Two Women, One Man: Knowledge, Power and Gender in Medieval Sunni Legal Thought," in *IJMES* Vol. 29, no. 2, 185-204.

Fernea, Elizabeth and Basima Bezirgan, "'A'ishah bint Abi Bakr," in *Middle Eastern Muslim Women Speak*, University of Texas 1977, pp. 27-36.

Fernea, Elizabeth and Basima Bezirgan, "The Koran on the Subject of Women," in *Middle Eastern Muslim Women Speak*, University of Texas 1977, pp. 7-26.

Hambly, Gavin, ed. *Women in the Medieval Islamic World*, ed. Gavin Hambly. St. Martin's Press 1998.

Peirce, Leslie P., *The Imperial Harem: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire*. Oxford University Press 1993.

Islam and the West: Colonialism, Imperial Feminism, and Women

Alloula, Malek. *The Colonial Harem*. Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1986.

Amanat, Abbas (translator), *Crowing Anguish: Memoirs of a Persian Princess from the Harem to Modernity 1884-1914*. Author: Taj al-Saltana. Washington: Mage 1993.

Amin, Qasim, *The Liberation of Women and The New Woman: Two Documents in the History of Egyptian Feminism*. Cairo: American University in Cairo Press 2000.

Burton, Antoinette, *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women and Imperial Culture 1865-1915*. University of North Carolina Press 1994.

Edwards, Holly. *Noble Dreams, Wicked Pleasures: Orientalism in America, 1870-1930*. Princeton: Princeton University Press in association with Sterling Francine and the Clark Art Institute, 2000.

Graham-Brown, Sarah. *Images of Women: The portrayal of Women in Photography of the Middle East 1860-1950*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1988.

Lewis, Reina. *Gendering Orientalism: Race, Femininity, and Representation*. London: Routledge, 1996.

Mackenzie, John M. *Orientalism: History, Theory, and the Arts*. Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 1995.

Minault, Gail. *Secluded Scholars: Women's Education and Muslim Social Reform in Colonial India*. Oxford University Press 1998.

Progler, J.A. "The Utility of Islamic Imagery in the West: An American Case Study." Brooklyn College at CUNY. www.themodernreligion.com/assult/imagery.html.

Stevens, MaryAnne. *The Orientalist, Delacroix to Matisse: European Painters in the Near East*. London: The Royal Academy of the Arts, 1984.

Nationalism, Feminism, and Pan-Islamic movements

Abu-Lughod, Lila. *Remaking Women: Feminism and Modernity in the Middle East*. Editor Lila Abu-Lughod, ed. Princeton University Press 1998. Series: Princeton Studies in Culture/Power/History.

Ali, Azra Asghar. *The emergence of feminism among Indian Muslim women, 1920-1947*.

Badran, Margot, *Feminists, Islam, and Nation: Gender and the Making of Modern Egypt*. Princeton University Press 1995.

Badran, Margot, *Harem Years: the Memoirs of an Egyptian Feminist (1879-1924)*. By Huda Shaarawi. New York: Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 1987.

Baron, Beth, *The Women's Awakening in Egypt: Culture, Society and the Press*. Yale University Press 1994.

Hatem, Mervat, "Modernization, the State, and the Family in Middle East Women's Studies," in *Social History of Women and Gender in the Modern Middle East*, editors Margaret Meriwether and Judith Tucker. Westview, 1999. Pp. 63-87.

Kabeer, Naila. *The quest for national identity: women, Islam and the state in Bangladesh*. Brighton, England: Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex, 1989.

Sabbagh, Suha, ed. *Arab Women: Between Defiance and Restraint*. Olive Branch Press, 1997

Sabbagh, Suha, *Palestinian Women of Gaza and the West Bank*, Indiana University Press 1998.

Shahidian, Hammed, "The Iranian Left and the 'Woman Question' in the Revolution of 1978-79," in *International Journal of Middle East Studies* Vol. 26 no. 2, 223-247.

Sharoni, Simona, *Gender and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: the Politics of Women's Resistance*. Syracuse University Press 1995.

Globalization, Islamization, and Women's Lives

Afary, Janet, "Feminism and the Challenge of Muslim Fundamentalism," in *Spoils of War: Women of color, cultures and revolutions*. Rowman and Littlefield, 1997, pp. 83-100.

Afkhami, M. (1995) *Faith and freedom: Women's human rights in the Muslim world*. L.B. Tauris & Co. London.

Ask, K. (Karin) and Marit Tjomsland, *Women and Islamization: Contemporary Dimensions of Discourse on Gender Relations*. Oxford: Berg Press 1998.

Aswad, Barbara and Barbara Bilge, eds.. *Family and Gender among American Muslims: issues facing Middle Eastern Immigrants and their Descendants*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996.

Bodman, Herbert and Nayereh Tohidi, *Women in Muslim Societies: diversity within unity*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner 1998.

El Guindi, Fadwa, *Veil: Modesty, Privacy and Resistance*. Berg Publishers, 1999.

Esfandiari, Haleh, *Reconstructed Lives: Women & Iran's Islamic Revolution*. Johns Hopkins University Press 1997.

Hale, Sondra (1996). *Gender politics in Sudan: Islamism, socialism, and the state*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1996..

Khan, Shahnaz, *Muslim Women Crafting a North American Identity*. University Press of Florida, 2000. pp. 105-123, "Selecting What to Believe" on Reserve.

Lazreg, Marnia, *The Eloquence of Silence: Algerian Women in Question*. New York: Routledge, 1994.

Messaoudi, Khalida, *Unbowed: An Algerian Woman Confronts Islamic Fundamentalism*. University of Pennsylvania Press 1998.

Mir-Hosseini, Ziba, *Islam and Gender: The Religious Debate in Contemporary Iran*. Princeton, 1999.

Mojab, Shahrzad, "Women and the Gulf War: A Critique of Feminist Responses," in *Spoils of War: Women of color, cultures and revolutions*. Rowman and Littlefield, 1997, pp. 59-82.

Mumtaz, Khawar and Farida Shaheed, *Women of Pakistan: Two Steps Forward, One Step Back?* London: Zed 1987.

Roald, Ann Sofie. *Women in Islam: the Western experience*. London ; New York: Routledge, 2001.

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