

H300E: Women in Islamic History

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Office Hours: Tues. and Thurs.: 1 pm – 2pm.

Course Objective: The primary purpose of this course is to examine the role of women in Islamic history, from the earliest Islamic period, i.e. 7th century Arabia to the present. The course will focus on Africa and the Middle East, however predominately Muslim regions such as Malaysia and Indonesia will also figure into the course narrative. The course seeks to offer insight into how Muslim and empower themselves and into the constantly changing gender boundaries. The course will use both primary and secondary source material in order to explore these topics.

Course Format: Grades will be based on class participation in discussions and written assignments and class presentations.

Response papers- There will be a response paper (between one and three pages) due at the beginning of each Thursday. The papers are worth three points each and comprise 20 percent of the total grade. These papers are to be written in response to a question from that week's readings. These questions are all found on the syllabus and are specific to that week's readings. The papers will be given a check, check-plus or check-minus based upon how adequately the question is answered and how clearly articulated the response is. A check-plus warrants that the student answer the question utilizing historical context, the paper is very clearly-written and is original, creative and analytical in its presentation. The student who receives a check has answered the question in a very basic manner, but the response is neither creative nor analytical in its presentation. A paper that receives a check-minus failed to answer the question and contains paragraphs that do not focus on the question, are anachronistic, and rife with factual errors.

Class participation is worth 30 percent i.e. It has been documented that active involvement in learning increases what is remembered, how well it is assimilated, and how the learning is used in new situations. Thus, students are expected to participate actively and in a meaningful manner in class discussions. Reading assignments should be prepared for each class meeting. Every class meeting on Thursday will be devoted to discussing subjects that are germane to that week's readings, lectures and class discussions. All students are expected to participate actively in these discussions. The questions to be discussed during these sessions will be posted on Sakai on the Wednesday prior to Thursday's meeting. Students will be evaluated for class participation on a scale of 0 to 4, with 4 being the highest. The class participation grades will be assessed on a weekly basis in the following manner:

Class Presentations on Research Topics: The last two weeks of the semester will be devoted to class presentations on the individual research topics. These presentations should last for about 15 minutes each and each student should prepare an outline and a bibliography. Prior to the due date I will send you further instructions how to

successfully complete this requirement. These presentations comprise the Class participation portion of the class.

4 A student receiving a 4 comes to class prepared. Contributes consistently (meaning: every class period) to the conversation but doesn't dominate it: makes thoughtful contributions that advance the conversation; shows interest in and respect for others' views; participates actively in small groups. A student in this category is engaged with the topic and takes an active role in explaining a concept by participating in a dialogue of **historical significance**.

3 A student receiving a 3 comes to class prepared and makes thoughtful comments when called upon, contributes without prompting; shows interest in and respect for others' views; participates actively in small groups. A 3 score is appropriate to an active participant whose contributions are less developed or cogent than those of a 4 but still advance the Conversation.

2 A student receiving a 2 comes to class prepared, but does not voluntarily Contribute to discussions and gives only minimal answers when called Upon.

1 A student receiving a 1 makes rambling or tangential References, continually interrupts the instructor with digressive questions, Attempts to bluff their way when unprepared, or otherwise dominate discussions, not Recognizing cues of annoyance from the instructor or students.

0 A student receiving a 0 is absent or overtly rude or disruptive. Disruptive behavior entails the following: inattentiveness (this includes sleeping), text messaging, talking when the instructor is lecturing or when a classmate is making a point. If I am forced to reprimand anyone, then that person will receive a 0 for their final class participation grade.

Class Presentations: Everyone one is expected to lead at least one class discussion on a Thursday class meeting. The class discussion will revolve around that week's readings. I will assist the students in this endeavor. These presentations account for a portion of the class participation grade.

Mid-term critical essay paper on March 17th is worth 20 percentage points. This essay must be interpretive in scope and encompass a topic treated in class or in the readings. The essay should be 5 pages, typed-written, using normal-sized fonts. The topic of the essay should be chosen in consultation with the professor.

Final Essay can be an expanded version of the Mid-term essay and is due May 5th This essay should be at least 10 pages typed-written, and using normal sized fonts. It is worth 30 percent of the final grade. Students must cite their sources using **Chicago Style** and class notes are not to be used as credible citation references.

Policy concerning Submission of Late Assignments and Use of the Internet as a Research Tool:

Cheating and Plagiarizing: All students should observe the University's standards of academic honesty. In the event that a student is found cheating or plagiarizing he/she will automatically fail the course and will be reported to the Dean's office. Acts of Plagiarism include:

- Turning in a paper that was written by someone else, i.e., papers written by another student, a research service, or downloaded off the Internet.
- Copying, verbatim, a paragraph or significant portion of text from the work of another author without properly acknowledging the source through a commonly accepted citation style and using quotation marks.
- Paraphrasing, i.e., restating in your own words, text written by another author without citing that author.
- Using a unique idea or concept, which you discovered in a specific reading, without citing that author.

Cell phone and laptop computer use is prohibited during class time. This includes texting, so please turn off your cell phones prior to entering the classroom. **Laptop** computer use is only permitted if you have special needs that warrant the use of a laptop during class time. If you do have such needs, then you must present me with an official letter stating such.

Please do not eat your lunch during the class period. You can eat a small snack, but to bring lunch to the class and eat it is disruptive and culturally it is offensive to many.

Grading:

Class participation:	30
Mid-term	20
Final Paper	30
Response papers	20
Total Number of Points:	100

Grading Scale

I compute grades based on a percentage point system. The response papers, class participation, mid-term exam and final paper are assigned a certain number of percentage points (see above). For each exercise you will receive a number out of the total points possible based on your performance. These will be totaled at the end of the semester and a number grade out of 100 points will be the result. This will be converted to the final letter grade according to the scale below.

A 95-100	C 72-74
A- 90-94.	C-67-71
B+ 86-89	D+ 64-66
B 82-85	D 61-63
B- 80-81.5	F below 57

C+ 75-79

Assessment of Final Paper:

A: A paper in the “A” range has original and creative ideas and has a tight argumentative structure, i.e. it has a very focused thesis statement. The body of an “A” paper supports the thesis statement and has a conclusion that ties the evidence and thesis together. Factual evidence, i.e. primary and secondary source material is used to buttress the argument throughout the paper. The argument of an “A” paper is clear and not disjointed; the writing style is elegant, meaning that it is free of grammatical errors.

B: A paper in the “B” range might have brilliant ideas but contain sections of sloppy, loose prose. Or it might be tightly argued and well written but not challenging or particularly imaginative or daring. A “B” paper might be technically flawed. A typical “B” paper will consist of a thesis statement followed by a series of examples connected by “and another,” with no variation to the pattern.

C: A paper in the “C” range will have lazy pointless paragraphs, with few transitions. A “C” paper makes over generalized claims such as, “what they thought in the early twentieth century” or “what Aisha bint Abi Bakr really thought was. . .” A “C” paper extrapolates, speculates, or provides an anachronistic reading rather than locating its argument within a particular source. A paper without a thesis statement will summarily receive a “D.”

Required Texts:

Ahmed Leila, *Women and Gender in Islam*

Baron B. and Keddie Nikki eds., *Women in Middle Eastern History: Shifting Boundaries in Sex and Gender.*

Boyd J. and Mack, B. *One Woman’s Jihad: Nana Asma’u Scholar and Scribe*

Mernissi, Fatima, *The Veil and the Male Elite: A Feminist Interpretation of Islam.*

As Saadawi Nawal, *Woman at Point Zero*

Smith Margaret, Rabi’a *The Mystic and Her Fellow Saints in Islam*

Spellberg, Politics, *Gender and the Islamic Past: the Legacy of A’isha bint Abi Bakr*

Week 1-

January 19th: Introduction of course. Review Syllabus. What is the role of Women in society? Discussion on the role of women in pre-Islamic Arabia

January 21st-Handout of selection of chapters from the Quran and traditions of the Prophet (Hadith). There will be a discussion on this literature. There will be a lecture on the origins of Islam in the Arabian peninsula and the Five Pillars of Faith.

Assignment for January 23rd: Read Chapters 2 and 3 in Mernissi's, *The Veil and the Male Elite*. How does Mernisi characterize the Prophet Muhammad?

Week 2

January 26th- The Prophet in Medina and his relationship with Aisha bint Abi Bakr.

January 28- Response paper due. Discussion question: Is the Prophet's treatment of women misogynistic? If so, can this treatment of women be explained within the context of the time and place? If not, then why does Islam have a reputation as being a misogynistic religion?

Assignment for Feb.2 - Read the book, *Politics, Gender and the Islamic Past: the Legacy of Aisha bint Abi Bakr*. Question: Why is Aisha considered a controversial figure in Islamic history?

Week 3

Feb. 2nd- The role of women during the Orthodox Caliphate.

Feb.4th- Discussion: is the author's analysis concerning Aisha nuanced? That is, does an examination of Aisha's life shed light on Muslim women during that time and place?

Assignment for Feb. 9th: Read *Rabia The Mystic and Her Fellow Saints in Islam*. Compare and contrast Rabia with Aisha. Who is the most empowered of the two women in your opinion, why?

Week 4

Feb. 9: The Umayyad and Abbasid Caliphates an overview. The Appearance of Sufism and the ostensible beginning of the marginalization of women.

Feb. 11- Class Debate: Aisha vs. Rabia who is the most feminist of the two?

Assignment for Feb. 16th: Read chapters 6 and 7 in *Women in Middle Eastern History* and chapter 6 in Leila Ahmed's, *Women and Gender in Islam*. In the former title, Huda Lutfi's chapter on 14th century Cairene Women, she notes that to the feminist social historian, Ibn al-Hajj's treatise is important in two respects. What are those two respects and why are they important?

Week 5

Feb. 16th: Egypt during the Medieval period. Treatment of Shajarat ad Dur(d.1257), the Sultana of the Mamluks.

Feb. 18th –Discussion: Were women more respected and any less marginalized during the time of the Mamluk dynasty?

Assignment for Feb. 23:

Read Chapter 6 in ‘The Veil and the Male Elite’ and chapter 8 in ‘Women and Gender in Islam.’ Reference Chapter 24 verse 30 Chapter 33 verse 59 in the Quran. Read the commentary accompanying each verse. What is Leila Ahmed’s position concerning the veil? Does it differ from that of Fatima Mernisi’s perspective?

Week 6

Feb. 23rd: The Discourse of the Veil.

Feb. 25th Is the veil a symbol of women’s oppression in Islam?

Assignment for March 1st- ‘Read One Woman’s Jihad.’ Question: How is Nana Asmau’s life similar to the other female historical figures we have treated so far; how is it different? There is no paper due, but please work on Mid term paper.

Week 7

March 1st- Islam in West Africa –The Medieval Western Sudanic Empires of Ghana, Mali and Songhay.

March 3- Discussion on the Sokoto Caliphate and review on how to write critical essays.

Week 8

March 15th Jihad in West and Central Sudan in the 18th and 19th century: The Fulani people and the Sokoto Caliphate.

March 17th: Mid term paper due. Discussion on Nana Asmau. Is she more empowered in your opinion than her Middle Eastern sisters? What does the book reveal about women’s role in governance during this time period in the Sokoto Caliphate?

Assignment for March 22nd: Read the following article found in jstor: Indonesian Women and Political Islam: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20071871>. Question what is Indonesia’s female population relationship with Political Islam, according to the article?

Week 9

March 22- Islam in the Malay Archipelago

Easter Break –March24-28

March 29th: Discussion on the perceived similarities and differences of female roles in society between Indonesian Muslims and the Muslims from Africa and the Middle East.

Assignment for March 31st- Read Chapter 13 in ‘Women in Middle Eastern History.’ Question : what is the *khul* divorce?

Week 10

March 31: Marriage and Divorce in Islam.

April 5th: Discussion on marriage and divorce within Islamic societies and how it is similar or different in regards to Christian and Jewish societies.

April 7-Discussion on Marriage and Family in Islam continued.

Read Chapter 14 in ‘Women in Middle Eastern History.’ Question: What is the *Rahmaniyya* order?

April 12- The Colonial Period: The Scramble for Africa and the Division of the Middle East between France and Great Britain.

April 14: Discussion on the Colonial period and how Muslim women were affected by the European colonial presence.

Assignment for April 19- Read *Woman at Point Zero*. Question: In your opinion does the book paint an even portrait or is it somewhat one-sided? Explain.

Week 12-Africa and the Middle East in the post Colonial period.

April 19th-Discussion on Africa and the Middle East in the post Colonial period.
Discussion on the book *Women at Point Zero*,

April 21- Class presentations.

Week. 13

April 26- Class Presentations

April 28- Class Presentations.

May 6th –Final Due before 3pm.