

Fall 2007
History 127A
Islamic Civilization I

Prof. Sebouh Aslanian

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Tues/Thurs 2:30-3:50

This course will examine the rise of Islam as a religion and a political and cultural system from the time of the Prophet Muhammad in the 6th century to the rise of the Ottomans in the 15th century. Attention will be given to Muslim dynasties and states from Central Asia to Spain and the spread of the Islamic religion to Africa and South Asia. The course will begin chronologically then it will divide into thematic discussions such as: the interaction between nomad and sedentary groups, dissenting groups and minorities, the relations between Muslims and Europeans, slavery and social organization, and developments in science and literature. The format of the course will be lecture and discussion. Readings will include both primary and secondary sources. Written work will include a geography quiz, response papers and final exams.

I highly recommend and encourage you to come to my office hours, to discuss any questions you might have about the issues raised or to talk about problems you might be having (or just to give us an opportunity to get to know each other better), so that we can work together in providing sufficient explanations to questions and resolutions to problems. For most, if not all of you, this course covers unfamiliar regions and periods and will involve learning new concepts; please do not wait until the end of the semester to see me.

REQUIRED READINGS:

You should acquire the texts listed below. Other required readings are available through electronic reserve or online. An asterisk next to the reading marks reserve material.

- Vernon O. Egger, *A History of the Muslim World to 1405: The Making of a Civilization*
- Amin Maalouf, *The Crusades through Arab Eyes* (1984)
- Ross E. Dunn, *The Adventures of Ibn Battuta: A Muslim Traveler of the 14th Century*

Useful References Found in Penrose Library:

Albert Hourani, *A History of Arab Peoples* (Comprehensive reference guide of Middle East History)
John Esposito, *Islam, The Straight Path* (Background on Islam and its tenets)

Assignments and Grades:

Geography Quiz 10%

Sept. 13

Mid-Term Examination 20%	Oct. 16
Analysis Paper 20% (<i>Crusade Readings</i>)	Oct. 30
Analysis Paper 20% (<i>Ibn Battuta Readings</i>)	Dec. 4
Final Examination 20%	Dec. 11
Participation (non-negotiable)	10%

The geography quiz for Islamic Civilization will focus on natural geographical markers necessary for the course. Students will be given a geography handout the second week of class to help prepare for the quiz.

Guidelines for analysis papers will also be provided at least two weeks in advance. Essays are to be written with proper citations and footnoting, see Diana Hacker, *A Pocket Style Manual*, 3rd ed or the *Chicago Manual of Style* for guidelines [www.chicagomanualofstyleonline.org]. After a paper is handed back, the student must look over the comments carefully and if he/she chooses to discuss the matter further must be prepared to respond to every comment. ***I will not discuss a paper until 24 hours after the paper has been passed back.***

The mid-term and final examinations are intended to test the comprehension of factual information that should be acquired in this course. Participation is an important component of this class. Texts are to be brought to class and referenced in the course of discussions. In class work will include the analysis of primary source texts.

Extra Credit:

For extra credit of 3 to 5 points, you may write a 3-page essay comparing Maalouf's book to the film, *Kingdom of Heaven*. How does the Maalouf source compare to the representation of the Crusades in the film *Kingdom of Heaven*? On what issues do both the book and film agree? On what points do they disagree? Do you think the film was an accurate representation of this episode of history? Why or why not? Does the film's twenty-first-century agenda take away from its value as a representation of the past? Similarly, how does Maalouf's own agenda and the context in which he wrote his book, reflect on his book's historical value. Due on the Tuesday of the last week of instruction.

Notes, Cautionary and Otherwise:

- Students are expected to express themselves openly and participate in creating a non-intimidating classroom environment that contributes to open discussion. They are expected to attempt to think objectively and historically and to listen attentively and respectfully to others' remarks.
- Students are expected and required to be present at **every** class session and to be prepared for class. Unexcused absences will be penalized. You must inform me of these absences as soon you are aware of them. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class. If you have more than three absences, I will begin deducting points from your grade, at a rate of 2% per absence. If you are absent, please contact me through email. Excuses will not be accepted unless they are submitted promptly before or the same day of class. Be sure to contact me then and not days or even months afterward. If you have unavoidable

circumstances, please explain them to me. Make-up exams will be substantially different than the original exams and will only be given under proven exceptional circumstances.

- All cellular phones, pagers, and alarms must be turned off during class.
- **Cheating and plagiarism** are serious offenses and will not be tolerated. They are violations of university regulations. All work is to be treated in accordance with the academic policies of Whitman College. Students in this class will be held to a high standard of academic integrity, which is defined as "the pursuit of scholarly activity free from fraud and deception." Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarizing, fabricating of information or citations, facilitating acts of academic dishonesty by others, having unauthorized possession of examinations, submitting work of another person or work previously used without informing the instructor, or tampering with the academic work of other students. Such actions will be subject to disciplinary action. If you have any questions about academic integrity, please talk with me. A single instance of cheating and plagiarism will result, at the very least, in a failing grade for that assignment. Depending on the severity of the case, other consequences may follow.
- All assignments are due at the beginning of class on the day assigned. I will not accept an assignment turned in at my office if the student has not attended class that day unless prior permission has been granted.
- Electronic submission and late assignments will not be accepted without prior permission.
- Late assignments will be penalized.
- Unless otherwise advised, most class sessions will consist of a combination of lecture and discussion. Please bring appropriate readings and texts to class with you.
- Give yourself sufficient time to complete the reading and prepare before coming to class. Moreover, give yourself sufficient time to understand assignment guidelines, complete writing assignments accordingly, and seek help early if you are having difficulties.
- The schedule below is subject to revision at any time. Changes will be announced in class ahead of time. You are responsible for keeping yourself updated on those changes. Ignorance or absence is not an excuse.

SCHEDULE:

WEEK 1: August 28 and 30

Topic: **Introduction to the course, region, and history.**

Reading: Egger 4-16

Begin reading Maalouf

WEEK 2: September 4 & 6**Topic: Origins of Islam in Arabia and the Prophet Muhammad***Readings:*

1. Egger, pp. 16-32
2. Ibn Ishaq: Selections from the *Life of Muhammad*:
<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/muhammadi-sira.html>
3. *Quran*: three translations side by side: <http://www.usc.edu/dept/MSA/quran/>
[Read the following and others of your choosing: (1) The Opening, (2) The Cow; (23) The Believers; (56) The Event, The Inevitable; (96) The Clot; (109) The Disbelievers]

WEEK 3: September 11 & 13**Topic: Arab Conquests and Caliphate; Formation of Empire and Society***Readings:*

1. Egger, pp. 33-61
2. Richard Eaton, *Islamic History as World History**

Assignment:

Geography Quiz on September 13

WEEK 4: September 18 & 20**Topic: The Abbasid Revolution and Secterianism***Reading:*

Egger, pp.62-84

WEEK 5: September 25 & 27**Topic: The Decline of the Abbasid Caliphate & Formation of Regional Dynasties***Reading:*

Egger, 85-112.

WEEK 6: October 2 & 4**Topic: Turkish Ascendancy**

Readings:

1. Egger: pp. 139-179
2. Nizam al-Mulk, *The Book of Government* [Siyasat-nameh], excerpts*

WEEK 7: October 9 & 10 -- NO CLASS

WEEKS 8 and 9: October 16 & 18, 23 & 25

Topic: The Crusades*Readings:*

1. Egger: pp. 172-198.
2. Carole Hillenbrand, *The Crusades: Islamic Perspectives*, 257-63, 273-96*
3. Ibn Munqidh: <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/usamah2.html>
4. A Christian/Muslim debate of the 12th Century:
<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/christ-muslim-debate.html>
5. Amin Maalouf, *The Crusades Through Arab Eyes*
[read in whole but focus on pp. xiii-55, 82-96, and 176-217]

Written Assignment:

Midterm examination October 18.

WEEK 10: October 30 & November 1

Topic: Science and Medicine*Readings:*

1. Egger: pp. 199-224.
2. Esposito, pp. 155-213.*
3. Islamic Culture and the Medical Arts in science section
http://www.nlm.nih.gov/exhibition/islamic_medical/islamic_00.html

FILM: *Empire of Faith**Written Assignment:*

Analysis Paper on Crusade Readings due October 30.

WEEK 11: November 6 & 8*Topic:* **The Mongols and Timurids***Readings:*

1. Egger: pp. 257-288.
2. Obeyd-e Zakani, *The Ethics of the Aristocrats*, excerpts*
3. Ibn al-Athir on Mongols in Iran:
<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/1220al-Athir-mongols.html>

WEEKS 12 and 13: November 13 & 15 and 20 & 22*Topic:* **Intellectual life and Travel: Ibn Battuta and Ibn Khaldun***Readings:*

1. Egger: pp. 290-317
2. Ross Dunn, *The Travels of Ibn Battuta*, pp. 1-137; and 310-321.
(A helpful online guide to this text can be found at
http://www.sfusd.k12.ca.us/schwww/sch618/Ibn_Battuta/Ibn_Battuta_Rihla.html)
3. Ibn Battuta, Selections of his travels online @
<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/1354-ibnbattuta.html>
4. Ibn Khaldun's *Muqadimmah*, excerpts*

Thanksgiving Holiday: November 26 to 30**WEEK 14: December 4 & 6***Topic:* **Women and Islam***Readings:*

1. Leila Ahmed, "Early Islam and the Position of Women"*
2. Leila Ahmed, "Medieval Islam"*
3. Al-Ghazali's views on sexuality*
4. Story from 1001: <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/med/1001.html>

Written Assignment:

Analysis Paper on Ibn Battuta Readings on December 4.

FINALS' WEEK: Final exam on December 11.