

ISLA 603: Research Materials in Islamic Studies

(Sep.4 - Dec.7, 2015)

Thursdays, 1:35-3.25, Room 328 Morrice Hall

Co-taught by: Rula Jurdi Abisaab & Prashant Keshavmurthy

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Description

This co-taught course is designed to introduce students to a broad range of materials in Islamic Studies as well as research theories, methods, approaches and skills. It is a small seminar style course. Students MUST attend all course sessions, actively participate in them, and be prepared for all classes.

Required Readings (available at Paragraphe bookshop on McGill College Street)

Timothy Mitchel, *Carbon Democracy: Political Power in the Age of Oil*
Ziba Mir-Hosseini, *Islam and Gender: The Religious Debate in Contemporary Iran*
Wael Hallaq, *The Impossible State: Islam, the State and Modernity's Moral Predicament*
Shaden M. Tageldin, *Disarming Words: Empire and the Seductions of Translation in Egypt*

Additional Suggested Readings

In this course, students will prepare themselves for graduate study by building their research skills in particular fields, areas of inquiry, which result in creating one's own bibliographical list or lists. This means that students will need to familiarize themselves with works beyond the required readings for this course. This task is student generated, for the most part, and not 'assigned' by the professors. Students are strongly encouraged to read supplementary sources that offer exemplary research ideas, plans, structures, models of research, and guidelines and styles of writing.

Evaluation and Assignments

(Specific guidelines for each assignment will be provided in class)

Four Book Reviews (5% each)	20%	Oct. 8; Oct. 22; Nov. 5; Nov. 19
Initial statement of field of study and 10 books	5%	Oct. 29
Revised statement of field of study and 10 books	5%	Nov. 12
Annotated bibliography 10-15 works	15%	Nov. 26
Synthetic essay	15%	Dec. 3
Attendance	10%	
Active class participation (including short assignments)	30%	

Official McGill University Statements

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see <http://www.mcgill.ca/integrity> for more information).

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In accord with McGill University's Charter of Students' Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.

Conformément à la Charte des droits de l'étudiant de l'Université McGill, chaque étudiant a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être noté (sauf dans le cas des cours dont l'un des objets est la maîtrise d'une langue)

Weekly Schedule

Week One: September 10

Introduction to the class

Explanation of First Book Review Assignment (Handouts given by Rula); Analysis of Book reviews (Led by Prashant & Rula).

Week Two: September 17

Library Session (At the Octagon room in the Library) (Prepared by Sean Swanick)

Week Three: September 24

Economics of Democracy and Political Islam

- Discussion of Book Review Assignment: What is the main project of a book? What are its aims? What is its audience(s)? What is the theoretical framework of a book? What is a concept? What is a methodology? (Introductory remarks by Rula)

Reading: Start Timothy Mitchel, *Carbon Democracy* (first half) (Led by Prashant)

Week Four: October 1

Economics of Democracy and Political Islam

- Full Discussion of Mitchel's *Carbon Democracy*: What are the book's main arguments, theses, themes, and conclusions? How do you assess this work critically? (The difference between a book report and a book review)

Reading: *Carbon Democracy* (finish the book) (Led by Prashant)

Week Five: October 8

- Fields of Study, Connections and Synergies in the study of Gender and/in Islam

What is a Field of Study? What is "Islamic Studies"? What fields/disciplines/areas of study are relevant to Mir Hosseini's book. How does she understand the connection between Islamic Studies and Gender Studies?

Reading: Start Ziba Mir Hosseini, *Islam and Gender: The Religious Debate in Contemporary Iran* (first half) (Led by Rula)

Due: First Book Review of *Carbon Democracy*, which like all other reviews is part of your participation mark. (Corrected by Prashant)

Week Six: October 15

- Religion, Law, Women and Gender

Reading: Finish reading *Islam and Gender*. Discussion of the book follows earlier guiding questions. (Led by Rula)

- Book Reviews and Evaluation of Scholarship

The rest of the session will be devoted to reading two different book reviews in class and assessing various aspects of them, their audiences, styles, and aims. The class will be divided into 3-4 groups and each group will examine these reviews then we will open up the discussion for the whole class. (Provided & Led by Rula)

Week Seven: October 22

- Religion, Law and Modernities

Reading: Introduction and 1st Chapter of, Wael Hallaq, *Impossible State: Islam, the State and Modernity's Moral Predicament*. We will devote the first 40 minutes to the discussion of *Impossible State* before we move to our exercise in class (see below). (Led by Rula)
Due: Second Book Review on Mir Hosseini's *Islam and Gender* (Corrected by Rula)

- **Defining Your Field of Study. Constructing a Bibliography.**

Start preparing the Initial Statement of field of study and 10 books for bibliography. Come to class prepared to present it orally. Discuss it with your classmates and exchange ideas and suggestions. We will offer you sources, tools and methods to help you put it together. We will also address your questions and concerns. (Prepared and Led by Prashant)

Week Eight: October 29

- **Religion, Law and Modernities**

Reading: Wael Hallaq, *Impossible State: Islam, the State and Modernity's Moral Predicament* (first half of the book). Come prepared to discuss *Impossible State* (its fields, literatures, ideas....) while drawing connections/comparisons with *Islam and Gender* and *Carbon Democracy* (Led by Rula)

Due: Submit Draft of Initial statement of field and 10 book bibliography. (It will be corrected and returned to you during the following session and you will resubmit the final corrected draft Nov. 12) (Corrected by Rula)

Week Nine: November 5

- **Imperialism, Translation and Power**

Reading: Shaden M. Tageldin, *Disarming Words: Empire and the Seductions of Translation in Egypt* (Read until end of Chapter 2). Come prepared to discuss these chapters drawing upon earlier inquiries. (Led by Prashant)

- **Revisiting Book Reviews and Statements of Fields**

The rest of the session will be devoted to reading in class two different book reviews and assessing various aspects of them, their audiences, styles, and aims. The class will be divided into 3-4 groups and each group will go over these reviews then we will open up the discussion for the whole class. (Prepared by Prashant)

Due: Third Book Review on Hallaq's *Impossible State* (Corrected by Rula)

Week Ten: November 12

- **Imperialism, Translation and Power**

Reading: *Disarming Words* (Finish reading most of it). Discussion. (Led by Prashant)

Due: Submit Corrected and Revised Statement of Field of Study and List of 10 books (Given a final grade by Rula)

Week Eleven: November 19

- **Imperialism, Translation and Power**

Reading: *Disarming Words* (Finish reading it). Final Observations. (Led by Prashant)

- **Geography, Language, Themes and Islamic Studies**

We will discuss how each of the books we covered fits with your understanding of “Islamic Studies”. Does the field or entity we call “Islamic Studies” cohere somehow with a set of expectations, practices, rituals, scholarships... presented here at the Institute. (Led by Prashant & Rula)

- **What is an Annotated Bibliography?**

We will present different samples of annotated bibliographies and discuss how these can be developed and turned into synthetic essays. (Prepared and led by Rula)

Due: Fourth & Final Book review of *Disarming Words* (Corrected by Prashant)

Week Twelve: November 26

Writing Workshop & Course Readings in Conversation

All students will *provide us with two copies of their final annotated bibliography* for redistribution among students in class. We will remove all names from them then ask you to evaluate each other's assignments both in terms of content and style. (Led by Rula)

Students will also read in class two examples of synthetic essays, then discuss them in groups and raise questions about them later for all the class. (Prepared by Prashant)

Due: Annotated Bibliography (Corrected by Rula)

Week Thirteen: December 3

Final Reflections on the Course [Rula: I will be away for this final session. I will be in Beirut for the opening of the International Book Fair of Beirut)

Due: Synthetic essay (Corrected by Prashant)