

**ISLA 300**  
**OTTOMAN STATE AND SOCIETY TO 1800**  
**Fall 2021**  
**McGill University**

Instructor: Dr. Aslihan Gürbüzeli  
Class Time and Location:  
*M W 11.35 am-12.55 pm; Morrice Hall 017*  
Office Hours: By Appointment  
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### **Course Description:**

This course traces the emergence and development of the Ottoman Empire from its beginnings up until the first nationalist and separationist movements in the early nineteenth century. The course aims to provide a trajectory of Ottoman history from a small principality to a centralized empire, then to a decentralized governmental structure. While following the chronological development, the course is attuned to questions of imperial ideology and the management of ethnically and religiously diverse communities across a vast territory. In addition to questions of internal diversity and social organization, the course explores the place of the Ottomans in the early modern world, and their ideological and diplomatic rivalry with other major empires, i.e. the Mamluks, the Safavids, the Habsburgs and—as of the early eighteenth century—the Russian Empire.

### **Readings**

- There are no required textbooks for this course. The following three books are recommended for interested students. You may find them on Reserves at the IIS Library.
  - Caroline Finkel, *Osman's Dream*
  - Donald Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire: 1700-1922*
- Course readings for any week will be uploaded on the course website two weeks in advance.

### **Grading System:**

Participation and Attendance: 10%

6 Discussion Posts: 5%

Podcast Assignment: 5 %

Mid-Term Examination (Take Home): 25%

Final Exam (Take Home): 35%

Research Paper: 20%

### **NOTICE:**

The following class policies apply to all cases and students, except those who need Covid-related or other medical accommodations. *If you experience any difficulties during the semester, please get in touch with the instructor at your earliest convenience.* I will do my best to come up with accommodations for your specific case. All information shared with the professor for this purpose will be strictly confidential.

### **Participation and Attendance: 10%**

Attendance and participation in class discussions are not only key to your learning, but also an important part of your grade. Therefore, please kindly notify the instructor if you must exceed one (1) unexcused absence per semester.

With the exception of a few sessions, the syllabus identifies a (Discussion Piece) for each week. A section of each week is devoted to in class discussions of this particular piece. The other readings of the week provide the necessary context in which to understand the discussion piece.

The discussion pieces are in many cases primary sources. Close examination of these pieces will help you understand not only a particular subject (i.e., the experience of Ottoman women), but also essential historical questions (i.e., Who writes the history of Ottoman women? What is the writer's particular perspective? What are the limitations of this particular perspective?).

The in-class discussions will therefore focus on questions of historical writing and develop insights about how to write a research paper.

### **6 Discussion Posts: 5%**

Throughout the semester, each student is expected to write a total of 6 discussion posts on the assigned readings and post them on the discussion board. A discussion post on the readings of November 25 is expected from all students. You are free to choose the remaining five set of readings you would like to respond to and write a post of approximately 200 words for each reading. There are no strict guidelines for this assignment. Think about (a) What aspects of the text did you find striking or challenging? (b) What aspects of the text would you like to discuss further in class? Why?

Deadline for each response: 10 am on the day of the respective class discussion (i.e. 1.5 hours before the start of the class discussion)

Grading of the Discussion Post: Each post will receive one of the following three grades: **(0,1,2,3)**. (3) is reserved for posts that show close engagement and a perceptive understanding of the reading. (1) is reserved for posts that are of appropriate length, but demonstrate a careless reading of the text.

### **Podcast Assignment: 5% (Due October 25)**

Each student will be asked to visit (<https://www.ottomanhistorypodcast.com/>) and select one podcast about a topic of their choice. The goal of this assignment is to help students explore their interests and start thinking about a final exam topic. Guidelines on the assignment are posted on the course website, under “Assignments.”

### **Research Paper (Due: December 2)**

Each student will write a 10-12 page research paper on a topic of interest. Research papers are an opportunity for students to pursue their own interests, practice academic research and writing, and receive feedback on their research and writing skills.

Each student will meet with the instructor during November 8-10 to discuss a proposed research topic. You are welcome to schedule an earlier meeting, or multiple meetings during the semester.

### **Important Dates**

- Take Home Mid-Term Exam: Delivered on October 20, Due on October 27
- Podcast Report and Presentations Due: October 25
- Office Hours for the Research Paper: November 8-10
- Take Home Final Exam: Delivered on December 7, Due on December 10
- Final Paper Due on: December 15

### **Policy on Make-Ups and Late Submission:**

Late submissions will be penalized by taking one letter grade down per each extra day, unless there is a documented emergency.

### **Email Policy**

I will respond to emails within 2 workdays during the weekdays. Please plan accordingly when emailing for office hours and other requests.

**Students with Disabilities:**

If you have any disabilities that require accommodation, please discuss your situation early on with the instructor. Any such discussion will be strictly confidential, so please do not hesitate to contact me.

The Office for Students with Disabilities provides professional help and counseling if you need guidance in assessing and requesting accommodations. For more information, see <https://www.mcgill.ca/osd/>.

-----**CLASS SCHEDULE AND READINGS**-----

*All discussion pieces are posted on the course website under "Contents," arranged by due date.*

**WEEK 1:**

**September 1** (Wednesday): INTRODUCTION

**WEEK 2:**

September 6: LABOR DAY

September 8: Film Discussion: Honeyland

**WEEK 3:**

September 13: Lecture: The Scene: Middle East and Asia Minor After Rome

September 15: Discussion Piece: Geoffrey Lewis (tr.), "The Story of Kan Turali", in *The Book of Dede Korkut*, pp 117-32.

Ahmet Karamustafa, "'Islamisation through the lens of the Saltuk-name.'" *Islam and Christianity in Medieval Anatolia*. Routledge, 2016. 371-386

**WEEK 4:**

September 20: Lecture: The Timurid Challenge

Discussion Piece: The Scholar and the Sultan: A Translation of the Historic Encounter between Ibn Khaldun and Timur," available online at <https://ballandalus.wordpress.com/2014/08/30/the-scholar-and-the-sultan-a-translation-of-the-historic-encounter-between-ibn-khaldun-and-timur/>

September 22: Lecture: The Fall/Conquest of Constantinople

**WEEK 5:**

September 27: Lecture: The Rise of the Safavids and the Beginnings of the Ottoman-Safavid Rivalry

September 29: Discussion Pieces:

İnalçık, "Mehmed the Conqueror (1432-1481) and his Time", *Speculum*, XXXV, Cambridge 1960, s. 408-427.

Ahmedi, *History of the Kings of the Ottoman Lineage*. pp 1-24.

"Letters from Selîm to Ismâ'îl," in William H. McNeill, Marilyn Robinson Waldman, *The Islamic World*, pp 338-345.

### **WEEK 6:**

October 4: Lecture: Imperial Rivalries: The Ottomans in Europe, Mediterranean, and the Indian Ocean

October 6: Discussion Piece: [Excerpt from the First Ottoman Account of the New World]  
Goodrich, Thomas D. 1990. *The Ottoman Turks and the New World : A Study of Tarih-I Hind-i Garbi and Sixteenth-Century Ottoman Americana*. Near and Middle East Monographs, New Ser., Vol. 3. Wiesbaden: O. Harrassowitz. pp 71-75; pp 114-117; 143-174; pp 267-304.

### **WEEK 7: State Institutions**

October 11: (Thanksgiving Day)

October 13: Fall Reading Break

**October 14 (Thursday): Monday Schedule:** The Imperial Court and Central Administration  
H. Inalcik, *The Classical Age*, pp 65-118. (Ch. 9-12), pp 65-104.

Discussion Pieces:

Ogier Ghislain de Busbecq, *The Life and Letters of Ogier Ghiselin De Busbecq*. Selections.  
[Available Online at: <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/mod/1555busbecq.asp>]

Translation of an imperial justice decree (Adaletname). See mycourses.

### **WEEK 8: Social and Economic Institutions**

October 18: Lecture: The *Waqf* (Charitable Endowments)

Discussion Piece: Amy Singer, "The 'Michelin Guide' to Public Kitchens in the Ottoman Empire," *Starting with Food*, pp 69-92.

October 20: The Ottoman Scholar-Bureaucrats ('Ulamā): Law, Science and Education

Discussion Piece: J. Mandeville, "Usurious Piety: The Cash-Waqf Controversy," *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 10, pp 289-308.

### **WEEK 9:**

**October 25: STUDENT PRESENTATIONS ON PODCASTS**

October 27: Lecture: Labor, Guilds, and Slavery

Discussion Piece: Evliya Çelebi, Selection: Description of Guilds

### **WEEK 10: Religion and Ethnicity**

**November 1: Library Session (on Zoom)**

November 3: Lecture: Religious Communities and Inter-Confessional Relationships

## **WEEK 11: Gender and Family**

November 8: Discussion Pieces:

Rachel Goshgarian, "Blending in and Separating Out: Sixteenth Century Anatolian Armenian Food and Festivities"

Rossitsa Gradeva, "Orthodox Christians in the kadi courts: The practice of the Sofia shariat court, seventeenth century"

November 10: Lecture: Gender and Family

Discussion Pieces

Elise Semerdjian: "Because He is So Pretty: Sexual Deviance and Heresy in 18th Century Aleppo."

Dror Ze'evi- "Women in Seventeenth Century Jerusalem,"

## **WEEK 12:**

November 15: Lecture: Economic Change and Social Unrest: Urban and Rural Rebellions

November 17: Crisis and Conflict across Communities: Religious Movements

Discussion Pieces: M. Zilfi. "The Kadizadelis: Discordant Revivalism in Seventeenth-century Istanbul."

Jane Hathaway, "The Grand Vizier and the False Messiah: The Sabbatai Sevi Controversy and the Ottoman Reform in Egypt", *Journal of the American Oriental Society* (1997).

## **WEEK 13:**

November 22: Coffeehouses and New Sociabilities

Discussion Pieces: R. Hattox. *Coffee and Coffeehouses*, pp. 72-130.

Fikret Yılmaz, "What about a Bit of Fun? Wine, Crime and Entertainment in Sixteenth-Century Anatolia" in S. Faroqhi and Arzu Öztürkmen, "*Celebration, Entertainment and Theatre in the Ottoman World*"

Selected Primary Sources on the Tobacco Debates (Course Website)

(\*) November 24: The Debate around Ottoman Decline

Discussion Pieces: B. Lewis. "Ottoman Observers of Ottoman Decline," pp. 71-87.

Leslie Peirce, "Changing Perceptions of the Ottoman Empire: The Early Centuries". *Mediterranean Historical Review* 19/1 (June 2004), pp 6-28.

Discussion Pieces: Cemal Kafadar, "The Question of Ottoman Decline."

Andreas Tietze, "The Poet as a Critique of Society."

## **WEEK 14:**

November 29: Lecture: Provincial Elites and Local Governance I

Discussion Piece: The Ottoman Deed of Agreement (Sened-i Ittifak) in *The Modern Middle East: A Sourcebook for History* [available through library.mcgill.ca].

December 1: The “New Order” of the Eighteenth Century: Beginning of the Age of Westernizing Reforms

Discussion Pieces: “Chapter 1: Reading Clocks, Alaturca” in Wishnitzer, Avner. *Reading Clocks, Alla Turca : Time and Society in the Late Ottoman Empire*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016.

Podcast: Kathryn Schwartz, Printing Press on [Ottoman History Podcast](#)

## **WEEK 15**

December 6: Review Session and Discussion: Legacies of Empire

**Important Note on Academic Integrity:** “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 [www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/](http://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/) for more information).

*« L’université McGill attache une haute importance à l’honnêteté académique. Il incombe par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l’on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon le Code de conduite de l’étudiant et des procédures disciplinaires (pour de plus amples renseignements, veuillez consulter le site [www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/](http://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/)). »*

**Language of Submission:** 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). »*

