

McGill University
Faculty of Arts

Women in Islam
ISLA 310 | W 2020
Schedule: T,R - 2:35-3:55
Location: BIRKS 111

Instructor: Kausar Bukhari
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Office hours: MORRICE 313, Thurs 1:30-2:25 or by appointment

Introduction

This course explores the histories, conditions, experiences and intellectual contributions of various groups of women in Middle Eastern societies and beyond. The course highlights historical scholarship on women and Islam. The historical focus is then used as a background in discussions and debates over the experiences and status of Muslim women in the modern postcolonial world. Socio-economic divisions, state policies, patriarchy, and colonialism are investigated as factors in understanding continuations and transformations of gendered relations and women's roles. The frameworks of Islamic feminism and Western feminist discourses are also explored, with an examination of the tensions and conflicts between them.

Required Reading: All readings are available online through the McGill Library

Evaluations

Weekly Reflections **20%**

Participation **25%** *comprised of:*

Attendance 10%

In class discussion 5%

Question/comment on reading 10%

Profile of a Notable Muslim Woman **15%** *comprised of:*

Written Submission 10%

Oral Presentation 5%

Final Paper **40%** *comprised of:*

Proposal 5%

Paper presentation 10%

Final Paper 25%

Grading Information

Weekly Reflection

A weekly reflection of 200-250 words is due **every Sunday of the semester by 5 PM latest** (excluding Week 1 and March Break). It should pertain to the week's readings and class discussions. Your reflections can be open-ended and take a free-writing/journal entry form. All reflections should be submitted on MyCourses. Reflections are graded Excellent/Pass/Fail, with a grade of Fail only given to non-submissions. Your lowest 2 grades will be dropped.

Participation Grade

- 1) Attendance is mandatory as this course is discussion based. Students are granted 2 unexplained absences. Further absences will result in a zero for your attendance grade, unless they are due to a health-related condition or other valid reason. In this case please provide a medical or other relevant note as soon as possible.
- 2) In class discussion: Come to class prepared to discuss and raise questions on the readings. Participation involves active listening to peers and contributions to the weekly discussion topics.
- 3) Question/comment on reading: **Before 11:30 AM on the days we have class**, you are required to submit a brief (a few sentences will suffice) thought/comment/question about the day's assigned reading. Graded submitted/not submitted.

Profile of a Notable Muslim Woman

You will be expected to write and present a biographical style profile of a notable Muslim woman, either contemporary or historical. The entry should be 1-2 pages long, double spaced. The written profile is **due on March 12 at 2:00 PM** and should be submitted on MyCourses. Presentations will take place in class on **March 12**.

Final Paper:

- 1) Provide a 1-2-page double-spaced proposal of your final paper, including a preliminary bibliography. Due **Thursday February 20, 11:59 PM**. Proposals should be submitted on MyCourses.
- 2) Present the main themes, discussions and arguments of your paper to the class. You may use visual aids or other supporting media. Presentation should be 5-7 minutes. Presentations will take place in class on **April 7 and April 9**.
- 3) Final paper: The final evaluation is a term paper of 8-10 pages, double spaced, which considers any topic pertaining to women and Islam. The paper is due **Wednesday April 15, at 11:59 PM latest**, and should be submitted on MyCourses. Any paper submitted after the due date will not be accepted without a *valid and documented medical or psychological reason*.

Weekly reading schedule

Week 1: Introduction

TUESDAY JANUARY 7

Introduction to the course and syllabus run through

THURSDAY JANUARY 9

Lila Abu-Lughod's (2013) *Do Muslim Women Need Saving?* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. **Read Introduction "Rights and Lives" 1-26 (optional) and Chapter 1 "Do Muslim women (still) need saving?" page 27-53.**

Week 2: Early histories

TUESDAY JANUARY 14

Leila Ahmed's (1992) *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate*. New Haven: Yale University Press. **Read Part I: "The Pre-Islamic Middle East; The Mediterranean Middle East".**

THURSDAY JANUARY 16

Leila Ahmed's *Women and Gender in Islam*. **Read Part 2: "Founding Discourses; The Transitional Age"**.

Aisha Geissinger's (2011) "'A'isha bint Abi Bakr and her Contributions to the Formation of the Islamic Tradition." *Religion Compass* 5: pp. 37–49.

Week 3: Courts and politics

TUESDAY JANUARY 21

Fatima Mernissi and Mary Jo Lakeland (trans) (2003) *The Forgotten Queens of Islam*. Karachi: Oxford University Press. **Read page 1-25.**

THURSDAY JANUARY 23

Nadia Maria El-Cheikh's (2005) "Revisiting the Abbasid Harems." *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 1, no. 3: pp. 1-19.

Leslie P. Peirce's (2008) "Beyond Harem Walls: Ottoman Royal Women and the Exercise of Power." In Anne Walthall (ed.) *Servants of the Dynasty: Palace Women in World History*. University of California Press, pp. 81-95.

Week 4: Mysticism and Sufi practice

TUESDAY JANUARY 28

Arezou Azad's (2013) "Female Mystics in Mediaeval Islam: The Quiet Legacy." *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 56, no. 1: pp. 53-88.

THURSDAY JANUARY 30

Rkia Elaroui Cornell (trans and ed.) and Muhammad ibn al-Husayn Sulami (1999) *Early Sufi Women: Dhikr An-niswa Al-muta'abbidāt Aṣ-Ṣūfiyyāt*. Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae. **Read Introduction p. 15-20 and p. 54-70.**

Laury Silvers' (2010) "'God Loves Me": The Theological Content and Context of Early Pious and Sufi Women's Sayings on Love." *Journal for Islamic Studies* 30, no. 1: pp. 33-59.

Week 5: Social history and scholarly traditions

TUESDAY FEBRUARY 4

Yossef Rapoport's (2007) "Women and Gender in Mamluk Society." *Mamluks Studies Review* 11, no. 2: pp. 1-47 .

THURSDAY FEBRUARY 6

Jonathan Berkey's (1993) "Women and Islamic Education in the Mamluk Period" in Nikki R Keddie and Beth Baron (eds.) *Women in Middle Eastern History: Shifting Boundaries in Sex and Gender*. New Haven: Yale University Press, pp.143-157.

Omaima Abou-Bakr's (2003) "Teaching the Words of the Prophet: Women Instructors of the Ḥadīth (Fourteenth and Fifteenth centuries)." *Hawwa* 1, no. 3: pp. 306-28.

Week 6: Muslim women in the Americas

TUESDAY FEBRUARY 11

Sylvia Chan-Malik's (2019) *Being Muslim: A Cultural History of Women of Color in American Islam*. NYU Scholarship Online. New York: New York University Press. **Read Introduction (optional) and Chapter 1 "Four American Moslem Ladies"**

THURSDAY FEBRUARY 13

Bayyinah S. Jeffries (2014) *A Nation Can Rise No Higher Than Its Women: African American Muslim Women in the Movement for Black Self Determination, 1950-1975*. Lanham Md.: Lexington Books. **Read Introduction (optional) and Chapter 2: African American Muslim Women in the Nation of Islam Movement.**

Week 7: Muslim women in the modern Middle East

TUESDAY FEBRUARY 18

Malek Hassan Abisaab's (2010) *Militant Women of a Fragile Nation* (version 1st ed.) Middle East Studies Beyond Dominant Paradigms. Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press. **Read introduction p. xv-xxx, and conclusion p. 179-186.**

Video: Four Women of Egypt <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lcrAVNM6it8> published Aug 19, 2013 on YouTube by NFB

THURSDAY FEBRUARY 20

Loubna H Skalli's (2014) "Defying marginality: Young Women's Politics and Social Media in the Middle East" in Fereshteh Nourai-Simone (ed.) *On Shifting Ground: Muslim Women in the Global Era* (Second edition). New York: Feminist Press at the City University of New York, pp. 31-50.

Paper Proposals due 11:59 PM

Week 8: Reflections on writing history

TUESDAY FEBRUARY 25

H.G. Khalafallah's (2014) "Precedent and Perception: Muslim Records that Contradict Narratives on Women." *Hawwa* 11, no. 2/3: pp. 108-132.

THURSDAY FEBRUARY 27

Judith Tucker's (2008) "Pensée 2: We've Come a Long Way, Baby: But We've Got a Long Way to Go." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 40, no.1: pp. 19-21.

Leila J Rupp's (2006) "Is the Feminist Revolution Still Missing? Reflections from Women's History" *Social Problems* 53, no. 4: pp. 466-472.

---MARCH BREAK ---

Week 9: Muslim women and feminist discourse

TUESDAY MARCH 10

Saba Mahmood's (2014) "Feminist theory, agency, and the liberatory Subject" in Fereshteh Nourai-Simone (ed.) *On Shifting Ground: Muslim Women in the Global Era* (Second edition) New York: Feminist Press at the City University of New York, pp. 190-234.

THURSDAY MARCH 12

Short biographies due. In-class presentations.

Week 10: New approaches

TUESDAY MARCH 17

Lara Deeb's (2006) *An Enchanted Modern: Gender and Public Piety in Shi'i Lebanon*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. **Read chapter 6: "Public Piety as Women's Jihād" p. 204-219**

THURSDAY MARCH 19

Masooda Bano's (2017) *Female Islamic Education Movements: The Re-Democratisation of Islamic Knowledge*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. **Read Chapter 3 p. 84-127**

Week 11: New approaches

TUESDAY MARCH 24

Ndeye Adujar's (2014) "Feminist Reading of the Qur'an: Social, Political, and Religious Implications" in Ednan Aslan, et al. (eds.) *Muslima Theology: The Voices of Muslim Women Theologians*. Frankfurt: Peter Lang GmbH, pp. 59-80.

THURSDAY MARCH 26

Zahra Ayubi's (2019) *Gendered Morality: Classical Islamic Ethics of the Self, Family, and Society*. New York: Columbia University Press. **Read Introduction p.1-12 and conclusion p. 238-241.**

Week 12: Women in Islamic Studies

TUESDAY MARCH 31

Délice Mugabo's (2016), "On Rocks and Hard Places: A Reflection on Antiblackness in Organizing against Islamophobia" *Journal of Critical Ethnic Studies* 2, no. 2: pp. 159-183.

Video: Dr. Kecia Ali's "Muslim Scholars, Islamic Studies, and the Gendered Academy" Presentation for The International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) fourth annual Ismail Al Faruqi Memorial Lecture <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ai5XF-bP3KE>. Uploaded Dec 1, 2017 by IIITMedia.

THURSDAY APRIL 2

Ayesha Chaudhry's (2017) "Islamic Legal Studies: A Critical Historiography" in Ahmed, Rumea, Anver Emon (eds.) *Oxford Handbook of Islamic Law*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 1-40.

Week 13: Presentations

TUESDAY APRIL 7

Paper presentations

THURSDAY APRIL 9

Paper presentations

University Honor System and Students' Rights

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/ 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/).

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).