ISLA 511

The Islamic Civilization-Medieval Period, 945-1500

Course Description
The course explores the formation of medieval Islamic cultures in distinct geographical settings, particularly Arabia, Mesopotamia, Persia, the Fertile Crescent/Syria, Egypt, and North Africa. It examines the transformation of the Caliphate and the evolution of provincial dynasties under new socio-economic and political conditions. It sheds light on diverse and shifting notions of piety, religious orthodoxy, and political authority. The integration of Arab, Berber, Mongol, Persian, and Turkish dynasties into the context of a unified Islamic history represents a noteworthy historiographical problem: How can the major historical shifts of the medieval period and the co-existence of caliphate(s) and sultanate(s) be adequately conceptualized and understood? How do different original historical documents (tarikh, adab, rihla/safarnamah, nasihat-nameh, ...etc) of the period represent and articulate these shifts? In this respect, the course offers students the chance not only to study the trajectory of medieval Islamic history, but also to examine the way modern historians, particularly in the West, have theorized about Islamic states and societies. It gives them an opportunity to investigate the arguments, which dominate the field today.

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).

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 http://www.mcgill.ca/integrity ).

In accord with McGill University’s Charter of Students’ Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or French any written work that is to be graded. This right applies to all written work that is to be graded, from one-word answers to dissertations.

Required Reading: Texts, Articles and Excerpts

A. Books (on reserve shelf, Islamic Studies Library)
B. Articles and Chapters (Coursepack/Online reading)

Wael Hallaq, “The Formation of Legal Schools” Chapter 7 in The Origins and Evolution of Islamic Law, pp. 150-177. (on-line)

_________. “Was the Gate of Ijtihad Closed?” IJMES, 16 (1984), pp. 3-41. (on-line)

Leila Ahmed, Women and Gender in Islam (New Haven, 1992), Chapters 5 and 6.


Poetry of Ibn 'Arabi, see the article by Claude Addas, The Ship of Stone.
http://www.ibnarabisociety.org/articles/shipofstone.html


http://www.iis.ac.uk/SiteAssets/pdf/What%20is%20Islamic%20Art-%20Minaz%20Kerawala.pdf

Kroger & Najjar, “Figurative Decoration” in Museum with No Frontiers, Discover Islamic Art in the Mediterranean, pp. 51-58.


C. Primary Sources (Excerpts of the sources below will be discussed in class. They are in package or placed on reserve at the Islamic Library)

. On Social Life and the Lower Classes
1-“al-Jahiz,” Islamic Philosophy Online
http://www.muslimphilosophy.com/ei2/JAHIZ.htm
2- Kitab al-Bukhalá’ (The Book of Misers at the Islamic Library PJ7745 J3 B78 2000), The Story of Maryam al-Ṣ annā’.

. On the Caliphate

. On Army Composition, Hostages, Slaves (Optional)

. On al-Batiniyya (Shi’ites, Isma’ilis, Nizaris)


. On the Making of a Medieval Sultan: Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi


**General Reference Works**

*Encyclopaedia of Islam*

J. Sauvaget & C. Cahen, *Introduction to the History of the Muslim East* (an annotated bibliography)


R. Roolvink, *Historical Atlas of the Muslim Peoples*

W. C. Brice, *An Historical Atlas of Islam*

**Course Requirements and Evaluation**

Students are expected to attend class regularly, prepare the assigned readings, respond to questions, participate in the discussion of assigned materials, and inquire about central historical points. One student will lead the discussions of a main part of the readings each session. S/he will summarize the main points of the reading as well as raise a set of questions, to which students should respond and add their own comments.

There will be one Exam on **Wednesday, March 17th**. It will be a comprehensive written exercise, combining One essay question and 15 specific questions. A week before each exam students will receive a list of two essay questions, one of which will come in the exam.

By late February you should have a paper topic and start researching. **The paper is around 12-15 pages long Only.** It should have a well-defined area or theme in Medieval Islamic history. Students can focus on a socio-political/religious/intellectual development or a military event, a figure, or a distinct feature of a historical epoch. **Your paper is due April 18th, 2016.**

Your final grade is based on the following division:

- Attendance & Active Participation (15%)
- Class Presentation & Leading Discussion (25%)
- Exam (25%)
- Final Paper (35%)

In terms of style, use a consistent form of citation for notes and bibliography, preferably *The Chicago Manual of Style*. A simplified and concise sample for endnotes, footnotes and bibliography in historical writing is provided by Mary Lynn Rampolla’s, *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History*, 4th edn., St. Martin’s Press, 2004, 77-134.

**Week 1**

Friday, Jan. 6

Introduction to the Course

Geo-historical Overview

*Map of the Islamic empire in the Umayyad period*
On the *hajj* (pilgrimage)

**Week 2**
Friday, Jan. 13
Geo-historical Overview
*Film, “Islam, Empire of Faith” Part 1*
*Map of the Islamic empire in the Abbasid period (1)*
*Map of the Islamic empire in the Abbasid period (2)*


**Week 3**
Friday, Jan. 20
Caliphal Authority, Provincial States, Shi‘ism, and Sunnism: *Venture*, 32-61


**Student Presentation**: Wael Hallaq, “The Formation of Legal Schools” in *The Origins and Evolution*, pp. 150-177.

**Week 4**
Friday, Jan. 28
**Student Presentation**: Nomadization, Agrarian Economy, and Government; Pre-Modern Social Order; Urban Life, and the *shari‘a*: *Venture*, 81-108

**Student Presentation**: Military Slavery and *iqta‘* during the Post-‘Abbasid Era: Lapidus, 137-161

**Week 5**
Friday, Feb. 3
**Student Presentation**: Social Life and Popular Culture (*Futuwwa*, Sexuality, and Gender): *Venture*, 125-151

1- “al-Jahiz”, an early 9th-Century medieval literary figure and Mu‘tazilite theologian
http://www.muslimphilosophy.com/ei2/JAHIZ.htm
2- *Kitab al-Bukhala*’ (*The Book of Misers*), Story of Maryam al-Sanna’

**Student Presentation**: Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender*, Chs. 5 & 6

**Week 6**
Friday, Feb. 10

*Islamic Library Orientation Session by Ms. Anais Solomon.*

**Week 7**

Friday, Feb. 17

*Student Presentation: Ya`ghoubi & Montazerolghaem, “The Shi`a of Baghdad at the time of the `Abbasid Caliphs and the Seljuq Sultanate (447-575 AH) 53-74”.*

The Sufi *tariqa(s)* (Ibn `Arabi, Rumi), *Venture*, 201-254

Poetry of Ibn `Arabi, see link to Addas, *The Ship of Stone*

Friday, Feb. 24


**Reading Week: February 27-March 3**

**Week 8**

Friday, March 10

*Student Presentation: Farhad Daftari, “Hasan-i Sabbah and the Origins of the Nizari Isma`ili movement” in *Medieval Isma`ili History* *

*Student Presentation: The Almoravids and Almohads, Venture, 268-279.*

The Rise of Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi

Baha` al-Din ibn Shaddad, *Al-Nawadir al-Sultaniyya; Rare and Excellent History*, pp. 35-8; 42-3.


**Week 9**

Friday, March 17

*Exam*

**Week 10**

Friday, March 24

*Student Presentation: Wael Hallaq, “Was the Gate of *Ijtihad* Closed?” *IJMES*, 16 (1984): 3-41.*

On al-Batiniyya (Shi`ites, Isma`ilis, Nizaris)


**Week 11**

**Friday, March 31**

**Student (2) Presentation:** The Mongol Catastrophe-The Turks as a Universal Military Elite
Hodgson, Venture, 286-92, 318-23, 362-373, 386-400.

**Week 12**

**Friday, April 7**

**Students (2) Presentation:** Kerawala, “What is Islamic Art?” 1-3; Kroger & Najjar, “Figurative Decoration”, 51-58; Brend, “The Legacy of Empires,” 20-45.

Audio-Visual Presentation: Themes in Islamic Art and Architecture

Prophet Muhammad: Face Revealed/Face Hidden
http://zombietime.com/mohammed_image_archive/islamic_mo_full/

http://www.zombietime.com/mohammed_image_archive/islamic_mo_face_hidden/