

MIT OpenCourseWare
<http://ocw.mit.edu>

21H.601 Islam, the Middle East, and the West
Fall 2006

For information about citing these materials or our Terms of Use, visit: <http://ocw.mit.edu/terms>.

Islam, the Middle East, and the West

Méiriam Belli

Classes: MWF 11am-12pm

Course description

This course aims to provide students with a general overview of basic themes and issues in Middle Eastern history from the rise of Islam to the present, with an emphasis on the encounters and exchanges between the “Middle East” (Southwest Asia and North Africa) and the “West” (Europe and the United States).

First, we will examine the period which stretches from the 7th century (C.E.) to the end of the Abbasid Empire under the Mongol invasions of the 13th century. This saw the emergence of a new religion, Islam, the Christianization of Europe, and the flourishing of a Mediterranean world and culture. Second, we will study the period—between the 13th and the 17th century—characterized by the height of Ottoman territorial expansion, the flourishing of Northern European powers, European ventures into Asia, and the conquest of the Americas, which all redefined the physical and intellectual boundaries of both “East” and “West.” Finally, we will analyze European intrusion into, competition with, and colonization of Middle Eastern societies after the 18th century—typified by Napoleon’s invasion of Egypt in 1798—and Middle Eastern responses to Western hegemony and to the new social, economic, and political developments of the 20th century.

Assignments

Class participation: 20%.

Oral participation in class: While regular attendance is required, I expect you to demonstrate that you have read and critically analyzed the material in preparation for lectures and class discussions.

The professor will lead the discussions for the first two weeks of class, after which students will be responsible for facilitating discussions. Students will sign up on the second week of class for at least one discussion during the semester (depending on the size of the class). Facilitators might want to: 1) present the material to be discussed and its author; 2) raise a few topics for discussion in relation to the week’s or the course’s overall themes; 3) situate the reading within a historiographical debate (and its various historical perspectives); 4) relate the historical topic under discussion with current events. Students will receive a grade with comments from the professor as well as comments from their peers (5 min. will be allotted at the end of each discussion for that purpose, peer comments will remain anonymous).

Papers: 50%.

-Reaction papers 10%: Unless otherwise noted on the syllabus, you will be expected to submit a 1-2 p. reaction paper or reading review (typed, double-spaced) on any aspect of the week’s reading (totaling 10 papers). There will be no reaction paper for the first week of class or during the weeks in which the essays are due. Reaction papers will receive a check mark (plus/minus). Students are allowed to skip one reaction paper over the course of the semester, but they will be expected to actively participate in/lead the class discussion.

-Short essay 15%: This essay (5-7 p.) of Amin Maalouf’s account of the crusades (partially discussed in class) will be due on September 27th (week 4). You will be responsible for researching the author, and discuss 1) the construction of his narrative; 2) the underlying premises of this historical interpretation. Paper guidelines will be delivered in class. No internet sources allowed.

-*Final essay* 25% (paper 20% and oral presentation of the essay 5%): Your final essay (8-10 p.) will be about Tayeb Salih's novel, *Season of Migration to the North* (1969). See class handout for detailed description of essay requirements. A first draft (5 pages) of the essay is due on November 22nd. The final draft is due December 4th. No internet sources allowed. Oral presentations of the essay will be scheduled between the 4th and the 8th of December (you need to sign up in class at the beginning of the semester). Your oral presentation might not exceed 10 minutes.

Please note that late papers will lose 1 letter grade per day.

Final exam: 25%.

3 hour final exam. Single essay question and map (see below). During the last week of class, students will receive three broad-based essay questions covering the entire semester's work. On the scheduled exam date, you will be asked to respond to one of those questions.

Two map quizzes: 5%.

These quizzes will be straightforward. You will have one quiz on the second week of the semester (September 15) (modern Middle East states, capital cities, and rivers/seas), and one quiz at the end of the semester during the final exam (same as above plus demographic/population data).

Texts:

Jack Goody, *Islam in Europe* (Polity Press, 2004)--0745631932

Amin Maalouf, *The Crusades Through Arab Eyes* (Schoken, 1989)--0805240047

N.I. Matar, *In the Lands of the Christians: Arabic Travel Writing in the Seventeenth Century* (Routledge, 2003)--0415932289

Muhammad al-Saffar, *Disorienting Encounters: Travels of a Moroccan Scholar in France in 1845-1846* (University of California Press, 1992)--0520074629

Tayeb Salih, *Season of Migration to the North* (Heinemann, 1991)--0435909746

Recommended reference/textbooks on reserve at the library:

William Cleveland, *A History of the Modern Middle East* (2004)—a good reference for the 20th-century.

Ira Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies* (2002)—an elaborate and extensive history that includes Sub-Saharan Africa and Far East Asia, from the incipience of Islam to the 20th century.

James L. Gelvin, *The Modern Middle East: A History* (2004)—concise topical account with good resumes.

Please note that this syllabus is subject to modifications

Week 1: Introduction

No reaction paper.

September 6: Middle East, historiographical issues, and geography.

September 8: Discussion: Zachary Lockman, "In the Beginning," *Contending Visions of the Middle East* (Cambridge University Press, 2004): 7-37.

Week 2: Overview. "Islamic Civilization"

September 11: Jack Goody, "The West's Problem with the East," *The East in the West* (1996): 1-10.

September 13: Jonathan Berkey, "The Religions of Late Antiquity," *The Formation of Islam* (2003): 10-38.

September 15: Map quiz + discussion: Maalouf, 1989: prologue (xiii-xvi), 3-55, and 59-81.

Week 3: Islam in Europe: Andalusia

September 18 : Goody, 2004: “Introduction” and “Past Encounters,” 10-24 (end of first par.).

September 20

Pierre Guichard, “The Social History of Muslim Spain,” in *The Legacy of Muslim Spain*, ed. Salma Khadra Jayyusi (1992): 679-708.

September 22: Discussion: Maalouf, 1989: 82-158.

Week 4: Europeans in Islamdom: The Crusades

September 25: Student holiday, no classes

September 27: **Maalouf: essay due** and Goody, 2004: “Past Encounters,” 24-49.

September 29: Discussion: Maalouf, 1989: 159-259 & epilogue, and discussion.

Week 5: Europe and the Middle East: A Shared Renaissance

October 2: Goody, 2004: “Past Encounters,” 49-83.

October 4: Discussion: Jerry Brotton, “A Global Renaissance,” *The Renaissance Bazaar: From the Silk Road to Michelangelo* (2002): 33-61.

October 6: Discussion: Eric R Dursteller, “An Urban Middle Ground,” *Venetians in Constantinople. Nation, Identity, and Coexistence in the Early Mediterranean* (2006): 151-185.

Week 6: Early Modern Age: The House of Osman and the Expansion of the West

October 9: Columbus Day. Vacation

October 11: Goody, 2004: “Past Encounters,” 83-109.

October 13: Discussion: Matar, 2003: “Introduction” [xiii-xxxviii] and selection (chapters 1 & 4 [5-44, 197-214] or chapter 2 [45-111]).

Week 7: The Middle East in the Age of Napoleon’s Invasion

October 16: David Ayalon, “The Historian al-Jabartī and his Background,” in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London*, Vol. 23, No. 2. (1960): 217-249 [J-STOR] & Al-Jabarti, selection (13 pages).

October 18: Film (proj.): Youssef Chahine, *Adieu, Bonaparte!* (Egypt/France, 1985—113 min.)—selection

October 20: Discussion: Matar, 2003: ch. 3 [113-195].

Week 8: Islam and the Middle East in European Thought

October 23: Albert Hourani, “Islam in European Thought,” *Islam in European Thought* (1991): 32-60 [sections 6 to 11].

October 25: Edward Said, *Orientalism* (1978): 1-9, 31-49.

October 27: Discussion: Saffar, 1992: 3-69.

Week 9: Empires, Race, and Modernity

October 30: Goody, 2004: “Bitter Icons and Ethnic Cleansing,” 110-132.

Eric Hobsbawm, “Introduction: Inventing Traditions,” in *The Invention of Tradition*, eds. E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger (1983): 1-14.

November 1: Film (in class): Annie Coombes, *The Colonial Encounter* (2002, 25 min.).

Susan Bayly, “Racial Readings of Empire: Britain, France, and Colonial Modernity in the Mediterranean and Asia,” in *Modernity & Culture: From the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean*, eds. Leila T. Fawaz and C.A. Bayly (2002): 285-313.

November 3: Discussion: Saffar, 1992: 73-150.

Week 10: When Turkey Went West: From *Tanzimat* to Atatürk

November 6: Erik J. Zürcher, “The Ottoman Legacy of the Turkish Republic,” in *Die Welt des Islams* 32 (1992): 237-253.[J-Stor]

Mustafa Kemal, excerpt.

November 8 : Discussion: Saffar, 1992: 150-212 (end).

November 10: *Veteran’s Day. Holiday*

Week 11: Resistance and Independence

November 13 : James Jankowski, “Arab Nationalism in ‘Nasserism’ and Egyptian State Policy, 1952-1958,” in *Rethinking Nationalism in the Arab Middle East*, eds. J. Jankowski and I. Gershoni (1997): 150-167.

November 15: Film (proj.): Chahine, *Salah al-Din the Victorious* (1964, 180 min.) (or *Nasser 56*)—selection.

November 17: Reading: Salih, 1991: 1-69.

Week 12: Migrations

November 20: Joel Benin, “Post-populist Reformation of the Working Class and Peasantry,” *Workers and Peasants in the Modern Middle East* (2001): 114-141.

Michael Humphreys, “Migrants, Workers and Refugees: The Political Economy of Population Movements in the Middle East,” in *Middle East Report*, No.181, *Radical Movements: Migrants, Workers and Refugees* (March-April 1993): 2-7. [J-Stor]

November 22: **Discussion: Salih, 1991: 70-169 (end—and first draft of final essay due)**

November 24: *Thanksgiving vacation*

Week 13: Islamic Revolution, Terrorism, and Us

November 27: Ali Mirsepassi,-Ashtiani, “The Crisis of Secular Politics and the Rise of Political Islam in Iran,” in *Social Text*, No.38 (Spring 1994): 51-84.[J-Stor]

November 29: Bruce Russett, John Oneal, and Michaelene Cox, “Clash of Civilizations, or Realism and Liberalism Déjà vu? Some Evidence,” in *Journal of Peace and Research*, Vol. 37, No.5 (Sep. 2000): 583-608.[J-Stor]

Ervand Abrahamian, “The US Media, Huntington and September 11,” in *Middle East Report*, No.223 (Summer 2002): 62-63.[J-Stor]

(Optional reading as reference to his ideas, Samuel Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations,” in Foreign Affairs, Summer 1993, vol. 72, No.3, available online at <http://www.alamut.com/subj/economics/misc/clash.html>)

December 1: Goody, 2002: “Islam and Terrorism,” 133-145, and “The Taliban, the Bamiyan and Us,” 146-160.

[Proj. film: Christian Frei, *The Giant Buddhas* (2005)]

Week 14: Final essays & oral presentations

Final essays (due 12/4) and December 4, 6, and 8: Students' presentations

FINAL EXAMINATION

DATE & TIME TBA