

## Gender and Islam

POLS 493-01/593-02  
WGST 493-03/593-02  
Monday 6-8:30pm  
McGannon Hall 122  
Fall 2014

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### Course Description and Objectives:

The primary goal of this course is to introduce students to the study of Islam and gender. As such, it takes the study of the central text of Islam, the Quran, as well as the life of the early Islamic community, seriously. The course opens with an intensive two weeks of reading textual analyses of gender in Islam's scriptures, followed by a look at what is known about gender prior to the advent of Islam in the Arabian peninsula. After we are better grounded in the history and textual tradition of Islam, we then move on to issues of interest to contemporary social scientists. Though the class reflects the bias in scholarship toward the study of women and femininity in Islam, the class also addresses masculine and transgendered perspectives.

A second goal of the course is to capture the diversity of contemporary Islam, and therefore relationships between gender and Islam, by emphasizing Muslim communities outside the Middle East. This is accomplished by considering ethnographies from non-Arab Muslim communities from Northern Nigeria, southeast Asia, Eastern Europe and elsewhere.

In addition to our empirical focus on Islam and gender, this class also seeks to develop students' oral communication skills through rigorous spoken assignments including class participation, serving as a discussion leader, an oral midterm, and participation in the class conference. While most graduate classes/senior seminars focus on the need to develop critical writing skills, we will focus on communicating critical analysis about scholarship in conversation with one another.

### Required Books:

Please note that all books (except Mahmood, 2012) are available on reserve in Pius Library on 2-hour loans.

Ahmed, Leila. 1992. *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate*. Yale University Press.

Barlas, Asma. 2002. *Believing Women in Islam: Unreading Patriarchal Interpretations of the Qur'an*. 1st ed. University of Texas Press.

Mahmood, Saba. 2012. *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Wadud, Amina. 1999. *Quran and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective*. New York: Oxford University Press.

*Available electronically through SLU catalog and on reserve in Pius Library.*

### Grade Scale:

|    |        |    |       |    |       |   |          |
|----|--------|----|-------|----|-------|---|----------|
| A  | 93-100 | B+ | 87-89 | C+ | 77-79 | D | 60-70    |
| A- | 90-92  | B  | 83-86 | C  | 73-76 | F | below 60 |
|    |        | B- | 80-82 | C- | 70-72 |   |          |

**Grade Breakdown:**

- 30 Participation/Attendance/Office Hours
- 10 Discussion leader role
- 30 Oral Midterms (week of 13 October)
- 30 Conference role (whether paper presenter or discussant)

The grade for this course is comprised of four elements. The first, **participation and attendance**, is the foundation for successful completion of the other three. As most students are taking the course as a senior seminar, attendance is essential for socializing into the norms of the graduate classroom. Students should plan to attend every course session. There are thirteen weeks of discussion in this course, other than the course conference. Students will receive one point for attendance, and one point for making a substantive comment during course discussion that demonstrates understanding of the assigned reading for the day. Random comments unrelated to course literature do not fulfill this expectation. Each absence will thus incur a two-point deduction on one's final grade. The remaining four participation points can be earned by coming to office hours (2 points) once during the course of the semester and by completing the course evaluation (2 point). Though I am unable to see the comments you make you on your evaluation, I can see a record of who completes an evaluation.

The **discussion leader** role gives each student the opportunity and responsibility to guide course conversation. Discussion leaders should prepare a list of questions (3 points) meant to spark conversation among colleagues, not to test retention of minor details of texts. Appropriate discussion questions will focus on the main argument of texts. Discussion leaders will also prepare introductory (3 points) and closing remarks (3 points). In the introductory remarks, the discussion leader will place that week's assigned reading in context of other course readings. Introductory remarks must be at least five minutes long. Concluding remarks will assimilate and integrate comments made throughout the course drawing conclusions about the significance of the assigned text(s) to our understanding of gender and Islam. The final point is given if the discussion leader is at least five minutes early for class. Discussion leaders are encouraged to treat these remarks as preparation for the conference presentation at the end of the semester. Students will select the week that they will lead discussion the first day of class. Days where in-class movies will be shown are not eligible. The week of oral midterms is also not eligible.

The **oral midterm** gives students practice in discussing course literature with the professor through a fifteen-minute interview. Students can prepare for this midterm by drafting one-page summaries of all texts read prior to the midterm and by making flashcards with one-sentence summaries of the central arguments of each text. I encourage you to create these materials each week and to study them along the way rather than to try to "cram" in the week before the midterm. The purpose of the oral midterm is to train students to discuss scholarly literature with no notes in front of them. Students will receive a copy of the grade sheet with a breakdown of the thirty points the week prior to the exam.

During the class conference scheduled for week fifteen, we will simulate an academic conference. Students will either give presentations or serve as discussants for their **conference role**. Since many academic conferences have strict twelve-minute presentation limits, paper presenters are expected to speak for exactly twelve minutes (5 points). Paper presenters are encouraged to prepare power point presentations, where appropriate, and to speak from outlines (20 points). Students who read from a paper word-for-word will lose five points on the conference grade.

Discussants will read student papers and prepare ten minutes of remarks (20 points). Discussants will speak about the strengths and weaknesses of each paper for three minutes, and sum-up the panel in the final minute of their time. They will then facilitate the Q&A session, which will last for fifteen minutes (5 minutes). They will also welcome the panel and introduce the participants at the beginning of the panel (5 points). Discussants will lose five points for inability to keep time.

All participants are reminded that the professor will at no point read the actual hard copy paper presented or remarks prepared for the conference; grades will be based strictly on presentation. Students are thus advised to prepare for these presentations with care. Finally, all presenters on panel one are required to ask one question during the Q&A of panel two, and vice versa (5 points). The question must demonstrate careful listening during presentations.

**Research Librarian:**

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**Academic Honesty:**

The University is a community of learning, whose effectiveness requires an environment of mutual trust and integrity. Academic integrity is violated by any dishonesty such as soliciting, receiving, or providing any unauthorized assistance in the completion of work submitted toward academic credit. While not all forms of academic dishonesty can be listed here, examples include copying from another student, copying from a book or class notes during a closed book exam, submitting materials authored by or revised by another person as the student's own work, copying a passage or text directly from a published source without appropriately citing or recognizing that source, taking a test or doing an assignment or other academic work for another student, securing or supplying in advance a copy of an examination or quiz without the knowledge or consent of the instructor, sharing or receiving the questions from an on-line quiz with another student, taking an on-line quiz with the help of another student, and colluding with another student or students to engage in academic dishonesty.

All clear violations of academic integrity will be met with appropriate sanctions. In this course, academic dishonesty on an assignment will result in *an automatic grade of 0 for that assignment* and a report of academic dishonesty sent to the Academic Honesty Committee of the College of Arts and Sciences. In the case of Class B violations, the Academic Honesty Committee may impose a larger sanction including, but not limited to, assigning a failing grade in the course, disciplinary probation, suspension, and dismissal from the University.

Students should refer to the following SLU website for more information about Class A and B violations and the procedures following a report of academic dishonesty: <http://www.slu.edu/x12657.xml>

**Student Learning Statement:**

In recognition that people learn in a variety of ways and that learning is influenced by multiple factors (e.g., prior experience, study skills, learning disability), resources to support student success are available on campus. Students who think they might benefit from these resources can find out more about:

- Course-level support (e.g., faculty member, departmental resources, etc.) by asking your course instructor.
- University-level support (e.g., tutoring/writing services, Disability Services) by visiting the Student Success Center (BSC 331) or by going to [www.slu.edu/success](http://www.slu.edu/success).

Students who believe that, due to a disability, they could benefit from academic accommodations are encouraged to contact Disability Services at [314-977-8885](tel:314-977-8885) or visit the Student Success Center. Confidentiality will be observed in all inquiries. Course instructors support student accommodation requests when an approved letter from Disability Services has been received and when students discuss these accommodations with the instructor after receipt of the approved letter.

### **Reading Schedule:**

*Readings and assignments are due the day they are listed. Materials with \*\*\* are on print reserve at the library. Students may check out books for two hours. Reading assignments may change on the discretion of the professor in consultation with the class.*

### **Unit One: Introduction**

Week One (25 August 2014): Introductions, Syllabus, and Introduction to Islam lecture

Week Two (1 September 2014): *no class*

### **Unit Two: Textual, Ethnographic and Pop Culture approaches to the study of Women and Femininity in Islam**

Week Three (8 September 2014): Textual Approaches

- Barlas, Asma. 2002. *Believing Women in Islam: Unreading Patriarchal Interpretations of the Qur'an*. 1st ed. University of Texas Press.\*\*\*
- Wadud, Amina. 1999. *Quran and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective*. New York: Oxford University Press.\*\*\*

Week Four (15 September 2014): Gender in Early and Medieval Islam

- Ahmed, 1992 Parts I and II\*\*\*
- Sanders, Paula. 1993. "Gendering the Ungendered Body: Hermaphrodites in Medieval Islamic Law." In *Women in Middle Eastern History: Shifting Boundaries in Sex and Gender*, eds. Nikki R. Keddie and Beth Baron. Yale University Press. *Online resource*

Week Five (22 September 2014): The Classic

- Mernissi, Fatima. 1987. *Beyond the Veil: Male-Female Dynamics in Modern Muslim Society*. Indiana University Press.\*\*\* Both Introductions and Part I
- In-class movie: *Wadjda*

Week Six (29 September 2014): The Veil and Beyond

- Ahmed Ch. 8\*\*\*
- Mernissi, Fatima. 1991. *The Veil and the Male Elite: A Feminist Interpretation of Women's Rights in Islam*. Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley Pub. Co.\*\*\*

Week Seven (6 October 2014): Orientalism and Neo-Orientalism

- Said, *Orientalism*, Introduction\*\*\*
- Mahmood, Saba. 2012. *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- In-class movie: *Persepolis*

Week Eight (13 October 2014): Case Studies

- Ghodsee, Introduction, Chapter five and six
- Metcalf, B. D. (1996). Islam and Women: The Case of the Tablīghī Jamā'at. *Stanford Electronic Humanities Review* 5(1) [No pagination.] (Special Issue, *Contested Politics: Religious Disciplines and Structures of Modernity*, edited by Nancy Reynolds and Saba Mahmood.) Available online: <http://web.stanford.edu/group/SHR/5-1/text/metcalf.html>
- **Oral Midterms this week (Date/Time TBD)**

### **Unit Three: Masculinity, Men and Transgender People in Islamic Communities**

Week Nine (20 October 2014):

- Connell, R. W. 2005. "Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept." *Gender & Society* 19(6): 829–59.
- Janson, Marloes. 2008. "Renegotiating Gender: Changing Moral Practice in the Tabligi Jamiat in The Gambia." *Journal for Islamic Studies: Reconfiguring gender relations in Muslim Africa* 28: 9–36.
- Ghodsee, 2009, Chapter One, Two and Three

Week Ten (27 October 2014):

- Gaudio, Rudolf Pell. 2009. *Allah Made Us: Sexual Outlaws in an Islamic African City*. 1 edition. Chichester, U.K. ; Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.\*\*\* Chapters 1, 3, 4, 5
- Safra Project. 2003. Initial Findings. Safra Project. 2003. *Initial Findings*. [http://www.safraproject.org/Reports/Safra\\_Project-Initial\\_findings-2002.pdf](http://www.safraproject.org/Reports/Safra_Project-Initial_findings-2002.pdf) (August 17, 2014).

Week Eleven (3 November 2014):

- Najmabadi, Afsaneh. 2013. *Professing Selves: Transsexuality and Same-Sex Desire in Contemporary Iran*. Durham: Duke University Press Books. *online resource through SLU library*

### **Unit Four: Sex in Contemporary (Arab) Islam**

Week Twelve (10 November 2014): Pop culture representations

- al-Shaykh, Hanan. 1992. *Women of Sand and Myrrh*. New York: Anchor.\*\*\*
- In-class movie: Caramel

Week Thirteen (17 November 2014): Post-Arab Spring

- Feki, Shereen El. 2013. *Sex and the Citadel: Intimate Life in a Changing Arab World*. New York: Pantheon.

Week Fourteen (24 November 2014): *no class*

### **Unit Five: Concluding the Conversation**

Week Fifteen (1 December 2014): Class Conference

- 6:00-6:05 Welcome
- 6:05-7:10 Panel 1
  - 6:05-6:17 Paper 1
  - 6:18-6:30 Paper 2
  - 6:31-6:43 Paper 3
  - 6:44-6:54 Discussant
  - 6:55-7:10 Q&A
- 7:10-7:25 Coffee Break
- 7:25-8:30
  - 7:25-7:37 Paper 4
  - 7:38-7:50 Paper 5
  - 7:51-8:03 Paper 6
  - 8:04-8:14 Discussant
  - 8:15-8:30 Q&A

Week Sixteen (8 December 2014): End of semester roundtable discussion