History 435
Politics and the State in the Medieval Islamic World
Spring, 1992
Time: 2:25 MWF. Place: 1641 Humanities
Instructor: Michael Chamberlain

This course is about relationships among political power, society, and culture in the medieval Middle East. The period we will cover ranges from the life of Muhammad until the appearance of the Ottoman and Safavid Empires around 1500. The course is divided into three parts. In part one we examine long-term social and political continuities of the ancient Middle East, the foundation of Islam, and the establishment of the early Islamic empires. In part two we cover the political collapse of the empire, its replacement by regional courts, and the development of medieval Islamic political, social, and cultural institutions and practices. In part three we will focus on relationships between culture and politics in the Middle Period.

The course will consist of lectures and discussion sessions. Grading is based on a class participation during discussions (1/4), a mid-term exam (1/4), a 10-15 page paper (1/4: for more, see below), and a final (1/4).

Grading policy: I recognize that the subject matter of this course is difficult and unfamiliar to most of you, and feel strongly that students should be not be discouraged from taking difficult courses by a strict grading policy. If you do the work you should get a B, although an A will be difficult to obtain without dedication. A = excellent work in all respects. B = work that is excellent in parts and faulty in others or that is of a generally good quality. C = work that while acceptable lacks clarity, organization, or evidence of sustained research. If you are doing D work I hope you will drop the course to spare me the pain of giving you the humiliation of receiving a D or worse. In general I will not give grades such as AB or BC on tests or papers, and will use these grades only to average out grades. You and I both should be able to discern the difference between an A and a B paper. I am always willing to argue a grade, but you must be prepared to see your grade revised down as well as up.

All work must be done on time.

Office hours are Mondays and Wednesdays 3:30-4:30, 4118 Humanities, and by appointment. My telephone numbers are 265-2673 (office) and 233-7996 (home).

Do not take this course if you cannot meet these deadlines!

Texts:

Required:
Cook, M., Muhammad (Oxford, 1983).
Lapidus, I., Muslim Cities in the Later Middle Ages (Cambridge, MA, 1967).
Morony, M., Iraq after the Muslim Conquest (Princeton, 1983).
A History of Islamic Societies is available at the bookstore. The others, along with the other readings, are on three-hour reserve at Helen C. White. If you are unable to find something, ask me before you give up.

Holidays: March 7-15, Spring break. Good Friday/Passover recess: Apr 17-19; Last class day, May 8.

Course Outline and Reading List: (This is a tentative outline that will change once we have a chance to negotiate it).

1 (Jan 22). Introduction.

I. Human Geography and Political Power in the Ancient Middle East.

2 (Jan 24). Physical and Human Geography of the Middle East.
3 (Jan 27). Empires and Imperial Cultures, Societies, and Economies from Sumeria to Late Antiquity.
4 (Jan 29). The Middle East in Late Antiquity.
5 (Jan 31). Arabia in Late Antiquity: Tribal Politics I.
6 (Feb 3). Discussion.

Reading (full references are in the resources section below).

Donner, F., The Early Islamic Conquests, pp. 12-49.
Lapidus, I. M., A History of Islamic Societies, pp. 3-10.

Recommended:

Brown, P., The World of Late Antiquity, pp. 11-21; 96-112; 160-171.
McNeill, W. M., The Rise of the West, pp. 64-84; 110-144.
Shahid, I., Rome and the Arabs

II. The Early Islamic State

7 (Feb 5). Muhammad I. Prophecy and Power.
8 (Feb 7). Muhammad II. The Creation of the Islamic State.
9 (Feb 10). The Arab Conquests.
11 (Feb 14). Conquest State and Society to the Second Civil War: Tribal Politics II.
12 (Feb 19) Discussion.

Reading:

Lapidus, A History of Islamic Societies, pp. 11-53.
Cook, Michael, Muhammad.
Donner, F., The Early Islamic Conquests, pp. 43-90.
Recommended:

Bell, R., Introduction to the Quran.
Crone, P., Meccan Trade and the Rise of Islam.
Gabrieli, F., Muhammad and the Conquests of Islam, pp. 103-104, 143-184.
Grabar, O., The Formation of Islamic Art.
Ibn Hisham, The Life of Muhammad.
Morony, M., Iraq after the Muslim Conquest.
Pederson, E. L., 'Ali and Mu'awiya in Early Arabic Tradition.
Rodinson, M., Muhammad.
Watt, W. M., Muhammad at Mecca
Watt, W. M., Muhammad at Medina
Watt, W. M., Muhammad: Prophet and Statesman.

III. The Islamic Empire

13 (Feb 21). The Marwanid Caliphate, 692-750.
14 (Feb 24). The 'Abbasid Revolt.
15 (Feb 26). The 'Abbasid Caliphate, 750-820.
16 (Feb 28). Discussion.
17 (March 2). State and Society in the 'Abbasid Period: Bureaucracy vs. Coalition of Elites.
18 (March 4). Power and Culture: the Court, Imperial Architecture, Urbanism.
19 (March 6). Elite Alienation and Piety.
20 (March 16). Resistance.
21 (March 18). Discussion and Review.

Required:

Lapidus, I., A History of Islamic Societies, pp. 54-125.
Morony, M., Iraq After the Muslim Conquest.
Grabar, O., The Formation of Islamic Art (handout).

Suggested:

Marwanids:

Dennet, D. B., Conversion and the Poll-Tax in Early Islam.
Kennedy, Hugh, The Prophet and the Age of the Crusades: the Islamic Near East, from the Sixth to the Eleventh Century, pp. 51-123.
Shoufany, E., al-Riddah and the Muslim Conquest of Arabia.
Wellhausen, J., The Arab Kingdom and Its Fall.
Abbasids:

Bowen, H., The Life and Times of `Ali Ibn Isa
Crone, P., Slaves on Horseback.
Kennedy, H., The Early `Abbasid Caliphate: a Political History.
Kennedy, H., The Prophet and the Age of the Crusades: the Islamic Near East from the Sixth to the Eleventh Century, pp. 124-211.
Lapidus, I. M., "The Evolution of Muslim Urban Society."
Lassner, J., The Topography of Baghdad in the Early Middle Ages.
Pipes, D., Slave Soldiers, and Islam.

22 (March 20). MIDTERM

IV. Successor States: Collapse of Empire and the Transformation of Ancient Society

23 (March 23). The Political Collapse of the `Abbasid Caliphate.
24 (March 23). Successor States and Regional Courts, 945-1092.
25 (March 27). The Turkic movements of peoples, Ghaznavids, and Saljuks: tribal politics III.
26 (March 30). Discussion.

Reading:

Lapidus, I., A History of Islamic Societies, 126-161, 241-267; 344-358.
Mottahedeh, R., Loyalty and Leadership in an Early Islamic Society.

Recommended:

Bosworth, C. E., Sistan under the Arabs: from the Arab Conquest to the Rise of the Saffarids.
Bulliet, R., The Patricians of Nishapur.

V. Power, Culture, and Society in the Middle Period.

28 (April 3). Power and Society in the Middle Period I.
29 (April 6). Power and Society in the Middle Period II.
32 (April 13). Discussion.
34 (April 20). Imagining Politics II: Neo-Platonic Political Philosophy.
35 (April 22). Imagining Politics III: Shi’i Political Theory.
37 (April 27). Discussion
38 (April 29). Political Culture: Ceremonial, Patronage, and Political Theater.
39 (May 1). Power and Urban Form.
40 (May 4). Resistance.
41 (May 6). Discussion

Readings:

Lapidus, I., A History of Islamic Societies, 181-191.
Lapidus, I., Muslim Cities in the Later Middle Ages.
Ibn Khaldun, al-Muqaddima (handout).

Recommended:

Abu Lughod, J., Cairo: 1000 Years of the City Victorious.
Bagley, F. R. C., al-Ghazali’s Book of Counsel for Kings.
Cambridge History of Iran, vol. 4.
Coulson, N. J., A History of Islamic Law.
Coulson, N. J., Conflicts and Tensions in Islamic Jurisprudence.
Goldziher, I., Introduction to Islamic Theology and Law.
Goldziher, I., Muslim Studies, 2 vols.
Lapidus, I., Middle Eastern Cities.
Schacht, J., Introduction to Islamic Law.
Staffa, S., Conquest and Fusion

42 (May 8). Review.

Paper Topics:
Papers are due Friday, April 10, in class.

1. "The career of the prophet Muhammad can only be understood as a response to the social and economic transformation of Mecca caused by changing patterns of world trade." Comment.
2. Were the Arab conquests directed from Medina as a deliberate policy, or were they haphazard and unplanned? Account for the classical Muslim view, and for disputes among modern scholars. What does this issue tell us about the nature of the early Islamic state?


3. "The Arab conquests wrought a revolutionary transformation of the social, political, cultural, and economic structures of the ancient Middle East." Do you agree or disagree?


4. "As the Arabs conquered the settled peoples of the Middle East, they were in turn conquered by them." Comment.


5. How did the military elites who dominated the Middle East in the Middle Period exploit the societies they ruled? Were states held together by formal bureaucratic structures and hierarchies? If not, what accounts for the success of ruling groups in administering large complex societies over time?


6. "Muslim cities are not governed by city councils or bureaucratic administrations. Civilian elites had none of the landholdings, charters, or military training that guaranteed the autonomy of urban notables elsewhere. Artisans and craftsmen were without guilds or trade organizations to defend their interests." How did these societies hold together as complex human communities?


7. The written sources on the pre-Ottoman Middle East often express a partial and defective view of politics, and reflect the interests of a single group of literate elites. What can architecture and the planning of cities tell us about relations between power and society that written sources can not?

Resources in English:

I. General:

Encyclopedia of Islam. The major reference work for the field. Thousands of entries with bibliographies. The first edition, 4 vols and supplement, Leiden 1913-1942, is complete but dated. The second edition, Leiden, 1954- has reached the further reaches of the letter M. Entries are alphabetical, most under their Arabic, Turkish, or Persian word, so if you are looking for Cairo you will be directed to al-Qahira. Ignore the Arabic definite article al-

Cahen, C., Sauvaget’s Introduction to the History of the Muslim East. A useful guide to the literature, methods, and materials of the field.

The Cambridge History of Iran. IV. The Period from the Arab Invasions to the Seljuks, R. N. Frye ed. (Cambridge, 1975);

The Cambridge History of Iran. V. The Seljuk and Mongol Periods, J. A. Boyle ed. (Cambridge, 1968)


Roolvink, R., Historical Atlas of the Muslim Peoples (Amsterdam, 1957).

II. Economic History.


Byrne, E. H., Genoese Shipping in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries (Cambridge, MA, 1930).


III. The Prophet Muhammad and Late Antique and Early Islamic Arabia.


Bell, R., An Introduction to the Qur'an (Edinburgh, 1953).


Brown, P., Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity (Berkeley, 1982).


Cook, M., Muhammad (Oxford, 1983).

Trimingham, J., *Christianity and the Arabs in Pre-Islamic Times*, 243-286.

IV. The Arab Conquests and the Conquest State.

Pederson, E. L., *'Ali and Mu'awiya in Early Arabic Tradition* (Copenhagen, 1984).

V. The Umayyads and Umayyad Opposition Movements.

Because of the unreliability of the written sources, many of the best studies on the Umayyad period are treatments of non-narrative evidence, such as law, dogma, art, and architecture.

Wellhausen, J., *The Arab Kingdom and Its Fall* (Calcutta, 1927).

VI. ʿAbbasid Empire

Bowen, H., *The Life and Times of ʿAlī Ibn ʿIsā, the Good Wazir* (Cambridge, 1928).

VII. Middle Period Politics, Society, Culture.

Vryonis, S., Jr., *The Decline of Medieval Hellenism in Asia Minor* (Berkeley, 1971).