

SYLLABUS: HISTORY 137

The Traditional Middle East: Society, Politics, and Culture

Prof. Humphreys
Semester I, 1989-90

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION AND REQUIREMENTS

A. Topics and Goals of the Course

This course examines aspects of the social organization, cultural expression, and political institutions which evolved in the Middle East from the emergence of Islam down to early modern times (ca. 600-1500). The course will focus on five broad topics: (1) the geography and ethnography of the region; (2) religious orientations -- in particular law and mysticism -- within Islam; (3) the more durable institutions and ideologies which shaped political action; (4) the ideals of human conduct articulated by Islamic high culture; (5) patterns and values which inform everyday life. The latter topic will involve the study of a contemporary setting which preserves major elements of pre-modern social structure and cultural attitudes. When we get done, you will obviously not be an expert on medieval Islamic society. However, you should be broadly acquainted with the basic ideas, values, and institutions which guided the evolution of the Middle East over a period of nine centuries, and which have given this region its distinctive cultural identity.

B. Required Readings

The following items are to be purchased at University Bookstore or at Brown's. (I don't know how the purchase order was divided, so try both if you can't find something.)

Daniel Bates and Amal Rassam, Peoples and Cultures of the Middle East (Prentice-Hall)

N. J. Dawood, translator. The Koran (Penguin)

Ferdowsi, The Tragedy of Sohrab and Rostam.

Transl., J. Clinton (Univ. of Washington Press)

Lila Abu Lughod, Veiled Sentiments (Univ. of California Pr)

The following packet of original sources in translation is to be purchased at Kinko's. It will be available in late September. (You will not need it until the week of October 1.)

Selected Readings, History 137

C. Lectures and Sections

Attendance at lectures is optional, except as noted. However, the lectures do not repeat the readings, and you may find the readings quite unintelligible if you skip lectures. But that is up to you. ALL STUDENTS WILL BE ASSIGNED TO DISCUSSION SECTIONS; NO MORE THAN FOUR UNEXCUSED ABSENCES WILL BE PERMITTED.

D. Written Assignments

For all students:

- (1) A map exercise
- (2) Three short papers (3-4 pp.) to be written on an assigned topic or question. For each paper you will have a choice of three or so topics. These are not research papers. Obviously you may do extra reading if you wish. However, the assigned readings and your lecture and discussion notes should give you plenty of material to work with.
- (3) A final examination, but no mid-term.

Four-credit students: You have the option of a fourth short paper, or to substitute a 10-page research paper (i.e., a paper on a topic of your own choosing) for one of the short papers. If you choose the latter option, please confer with me early in the semester; doable topics are tough to find in this field. We will arrange discussion groups later in the term to go over your work.

E. Grading Policy

This is complex. Your TA will give you periodic in-class exercises of various sorts ("slush"); collectively these will constitute 10% of your grade. As to your papers, I give you one to learn on. That is, if the grade on your first paper is lower than the grade on your later ones, I will exclude the first paper from your final average. On the other hand, if the first paper is better than its successors, I will include it. The percentages given below assume that all your papers will be counted.

Three-credit students: Map -- 10%; each paper -- 20%;
final -- 20%; slush -- 10%

Four-credit students: Map -- 5%; each paper -- 15%;
final -- 20%; slush -- 10%

II. SCHEDULE OF LECTURES AND READINGS

1. Wed., Sept. 6. Initial Meeting: organization, requirements, principal themes of the course

A. The Human Geography of the Middle East (Wed. Sept. 6 - Friday, Sept. 22)

Assigned Readings for Section A:
Bates and Rassam, Peoples and Cultures (all)

2. Fri., Sept. 8. The Physical Characteristics of the Middle East: An Overview
3. Mon., Sept. 11. Basic Adaptations, I. Rainfall Agriculture in Libya, Lebanon, and Turkey
3. Wed., Sept. 13. Basic Adaptations, II. Irrigated Agriculture: Egypt, Iraq, Iran
4. Fri., Sept. 15. Basic Adaptations, III. Nomadism and Transhumancy: Fars, Baluchistan, and the Syrian Desert.
5. Mon., Sept. 18. Film: "Family Matters: The Role of the Family in the Middle East" (To be discussed in section meetings during this week. Attendance mandatory.)

MAP ASSIGNMENTS DUE!

Wed., Sept. 20 - Fri., Sept. 22: no lecture

B. The Roots of Islam: Muhammad and the Qur'an (Mon., Sept. 25 - Wed., Oct. 11)

6. Mon., Sept. 25. Film: "Mecca, the Forbidden City"
(To be discussed in section meetings this week. Mandatory)

Wed., Sept. 27 - Fri., Sept. 29: no lecture

Assigned Readings for Oct. 2-6
The Koran, pp. 15-38, 56-63, 75-82
Ibn Ishaq, Life of Muhammad (Selected Readings)

7. Mon., Oct. 2. The Religious Milieu of the Middle East ca. 600
8. Wed., Oct. 4. Who was Muhammad? What is the Qur'an?
An Introductory Sketch

9. Fri., Oct. 6. Recalling a People to Obedience: The Early Suras of the Qur'an and Muhammad's Vocation in Mecca

Assigned Readings for Oct. 9-13

The Koran, pp. 214-220, 314-320, 386-400, 408-425
 Tibrizi, Mishkat al-Masabih (Selected Readings) .
 Ibn Ishaq, Life of Muhammad (Selected Readings)

10. Mon., Oct. 9. Building a New Community: The Later Suras and Muhammad's Challenge in Medina
11. Wed., Oct. 11. The Sunna of the Prophet: Muhammad as Teacher, Lawgiver, and Perfect Exemplar

C. Servants of God: Law and the Mystics' Path
 (Fri., Oct. 13 - Wed., Oct. 25)

Assigned Readings for Oct. 13-18

Malik ibn Anas, al-Muwatta' (Selected Readings)
 Shaybani, The Islamic Law of Nations (Selected Readings)
 Shafi'i, al-Risalah (Selected Readings)

12. Fri., Oct. 13. Islam as a Religion of Law: What do God's Commandments encompass, and how does one know what they are?
13. Mon., Oct. 16. The Scholar as Religious Leader: The Development of Legal Studies in Medieval Islam
14. Wed., Oct. 18. Shari'a and State: the Roles of the Ruler

Assigned Readings for Oct. 20-25

Kalabadhi, Doctrine of the Sufis (Selected Readings)
 Ghazali, Deliverance from Error (Selected Readings)

15. Fri., Oct. 20. Islam as a Religion of the Heart: The Search for God's Presence
16. Mon., Oct. 23. The Politics of Sainthood: Pir, Khanqah, and Tariqah
17. Wed., Oct. 25. Harmonious Dissonance: Sufism and Shari'a

FIRST PAPER DUE: FRIDAY, OCTOBER 27

D. Politics and the Social Order in Medieval Islam
(Fri., Oct. 27 - Fri., Nov. 10)

Assigned Readings for Oct. 27 - Nov. 3

"A Debate between `Uthman and the Rebels" (Selected Readings)
"The Letter of `Uthman to Ibn `Abbas" (Selected Readings)
"The Letter of al-Walid II" (Selected Readings)
"Mu`tadid's Denunciation of Mu`awiyah" (Selected Readings)
Mawardi, The Contract of the Caliphate (Selected Readings)

18. Fri., Oct. 27. The Origins of the Islamic State: the Caliphate and the Arab Conquests, 632-644
19. Mon., Oct. 30. Crisis, Civil War, and Schism, 644-750
20. Wed., Nov. 1. The Abbasid Imperium and its Dissolution, 750-945
21. Fri., Nov. 3. The Emergence of an Islamic Society: Arabization and Conversion

Assigned Readings for Nov. 6-10

Nizam al-Mulk, The Book of Government (Selected Readings)
"Inscription of Kul-Tegin" (Selected Readings)
Jahiz, "On the Merits of the Turks" (Selected Readings)

22. Mon., Nov. 6. Sultans, Padishahs, and Mamluks: The Era of Military Dictatorship, 945-1500
23. Wed., Nov. 8. Ethnic Politics: The Turco-Mongol Invasions, 1000-1500
24. Fri., Nov. 10. Local Politics: Urban Society and Urban Government in Later Medieval Islam

SECOND PAPER DUE: WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 15

E. The Heroic Ideal

(Mon., Nov. 13 - Wed., Nov. 22)

Assigned Readings for Section E

Lyall, "Ancient Arabian Poetry" (Selected Readings)
Ferdowsi, Tragedy of Sohrab and Rustam (all)

25. Mon., Nov. 13. The Structures of Bedouin Society
26. Wed., Nov. 15. Nobility, Honor, and Shame in Bedouin Poetry

Fri., Nov. 17: no lecture

27. Mon., Nov. 20. The Rise of New Persian Literature, 950-1300

28. Wed., Nov. 22. Ferdowsi's Book of Kings

Fri., Nov. 25: no lecture or section (Thanksgiving)

F. Islamic Humanism

(Mon., Nov. 27 - Fri., Dec. 1)

Assigned Readings for Section F

Jahiz, "Essays" (Selected Readings)

Sa`di, Gulistan (Selected Readings)

29. Mon., Nov. 27. The Rise of Arabic Prose Literature

30. Wed., Nov. 29. Adab: Instruction and Entertainment

31. Fri., Dec. 1. Sa`di: The Irony of Sufism

THIRD PAPER DUE: MONDAY, DECEMBER 4

G. In the Company of Women

(Mon., Dec. 4 - Wed., Dec. 13)

Assigned Readings for Section G

Abu Lughod, Veiled Sentiments (all)

32. Mon., Dec. 4. Women: Legal and Religious Doctrines

33. Wed., Dec. 6. Women: Honor and Shame

34. Fri., Dec. 8. The Public Arena: Women and Politics
in Medieval Islam

35. Mon., Dec. 11. Women and Family among the Geniza People

36. Wed., Dec. 13. Summation and Review

Fri., Dec. 15. Reading Day