

## HISTORY 435

### POLITICS AND SOCIETY IN THE MEDIEVAL ISLAMIC WORLD

Semester II 1990

Professor Humphreys  
Tuesday-Thursday, 1:00-2:15  
Humanities 2125

#### I. Course Description

In this course we examine the manifold ways in which medieval Muslims (ca. 610-1500 A.D.) organized their political life. That is, we will ask how political decisions were made, who participated in these decisions, and who benefited from them. We will conduct this examination in part through a chronologically organized survey of institutions, crucial events, and central or exemplary actors. But we will also examine certain topics and themes which persist throughout the coming and goings of conquerors and dynasties: (1) government's obligation not only to bring prosperity to its subjects but also to lead them to salvation; (2) the search for legitimacy; (3) the constant oscillation between charismatic and bureaucratic authority; (4) ethnicity and politics; (5) the role of the military; (6) tensions between central power and local autonomy. To help us explore issues of this kind, a substantial proportion of the reading will consist of original sources in translation -- i.e., we will be breaking into, and trying to understand, the conversation that medieval Muslims held with one another.

#### II. Course Requirements and Grading

Every undergraduate should take the course for four credits if at all possible. Undergraduates are expected to complete the following assignments:

1. A short essay on an assigned topic (ca. 1200 words), due Tuesday, March 6; this is in lieu of a mid-term exam.
2. A longer paper, of 10-15 pages, on a topic chosen by you in consultation with the instructor. This paper may involve research in primary sources (translated, in most cases), or a critical synthesis of existing scholarship on a given topic.
3. A final examination.

For graduate students, course requirements will be individually negotiated, but all students must take the final exam.

### III. Assigned Readings

You are to purchase two books, as follows:

1. Hugh Kennedy, The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates
2. N. J. Dawood, transl., The Koran

In addition, two items will be available at Kinko's in due time: (1) a reading packet (Selected Readings, History 435), and (2) a xeroxed version (with permission) of R. P. Mottahedeh, Loyalty and Leadership in an Early Islamic Society, which is unfortunately out of print.

For those who wish to pursue certain topics in greater detail, the following titles will be on three-hour reserve in Helen C. White:

1. F. M. Donner, The Early Islamic Conquests
2. C. E. Bosworth, The Ghaznavids
3. Cambridge History of Iran, vol. 5 (in Graduate Reading Room, Memorial Library)
4. I. M. Lapidus, Muslim Cities in the Later Middle Ages

### IV. Schedule of Lectures and Class Meetings

1. (Jan. 23) Initial Meeting:
  - (a) Course structure and requirements
  - (b) An overview of medieval Islamic history

#### A. THE REALM OF MEDIEVAL ISLAM

2. (Jan. 25) Physical Geography, Human Adaptations

#### B. THE MIDDLE EAST IN THE SIXTH CENTURY

#### Required Readings, Section B:

Kennedy, pp. 1-28

#### Optional Readings:

Donner, Early Islamic Conquests, 11-50

3. (Jan. 30) The Later Roman Empire
4. (Feb. 1) (a) The Sasanian Empire of Iran  
(b) "The Thirty Years' War," 602-628
5. (Feb. 6) The Arabian Frontier Zone

### C. THE BEGINNINGS OF ISLAM

#### Required Readings, Section C:

Kennedy, 29-49

The Koran, pp. 9-32, 214-220, 226-233, 268-271, 314-320, 334-366

Selected Readings: (a) Ibn Hisham, "The Life of Muhammad"

(b) "The Constitution of Medina"

#### Optional Readings:

Donner, Early Islamic Conquests, 51-82

6. (Feb. 8) The Qur'an as Text and Revelation
7. (Feb. 13) A People Called to Repentance: Muhammad in Mecca
8. (Feb. 15) The Founding of a New Community: Muhammad in Medina

### D. THE EARLY CALIPHATE AND THE CONQUEST OF THE MIDDLE EAST

#### Readings, Section D:

Kennedy, 50-81

Selected Readings: (a) "The Election of Abu Bakr"

(b) "Conquest"

(c) "History of al-Tabari: the Revolt against Uthman"

#### Optional Readings:

Donner, Early Islamic Conquests, 221-278

9. (Feb. 20) The Succession Crisis of 632 and the Foundation of the Caliphate
10. (Feb. 22) The Early Conquests: The Fertile Crescent, Egypt, and Iran (634-651)
11. (Feb. 27) Civil War and Religious Schism: Shi'ites, Kharijites, and Sunnis

### E. THE HIGH CALIPHATE: THE Umayyad Phase (660-750)

#### Readings, Section E:

Kennedy, 82-123

Selected Readings: (a) "Letter of al-Walid II"

(b) "History of al-Tabari: Accession Sermon of Saffah"

12. (March 1) The Consolidation of Power: Arabization and Islamization
13. (March 6) The Abbasid Revolt



F. THE HIGH CALIPHATE: THE ABBASID PHASE (750-945)

Readings, Section F:

Kennedy, 124-199

- Selected Readings: (a) "History of al-Tabari: Foundation of Samarra"  
(b) Humphreys, "Mamluk"  
(c) Mawardi, "Contract of the Caliphate"

14. (March 8) The Early Abbasid Regime (750-809): Bureaucratic Absolutism  
15. (March 13) From Baghdad to Samarra: The Decline of Abbasid Power, 809-908  
16. (March 15) Islamic Society vs. Islamic State: The Ulama and the Shari`a  
17. (March 27) The Ideology of the Abbasid Caliphate: Mawardi

G. THE HIGH CALIPHATE: THE FATIMID CHALLENGE (909-1171)

Readings, Section G:

Kennedy, 309-345

- Selected Readings: (a) "History of the Caliph al-Hakim"  
(b) "The Army of the Fatimid Caliph"  
(c) Qadi Nu`man, "The Book of Faith"

18. (March 29) Revolutionary Shi`ism and the Fatimid Seizure of Power in North Africa  
19. (April 3) The Struggle for the Messianic Kingdom and its Failure

H. THE IRANIAN INTERMEZZO AND THE COMING OF THE TURKS

Readings, Section H:

Kennedy, 200-211

Mottahedeh, ch. 2 (40-96)

- Selected Readings: (a) Humphreys, "Legitimacy and Political Instability"  
(b) Cahen, "Pre-Ottoman Turkey"  
(c) Cahen, "Ikta`"  
(d) Bayhaqi, "Gibbeting of the Minister Hasanak"  
(e) Nizam al-Mulk, "The Book of Government"

20. (April 5) Military Dictatorship: Buyids and Ghaznavids  
21. (April 10) The Seljukid Invasion and the Reunification of the Middle East  
22. (April 12) The Seljukid Synthesis: Institutions and Ideology

## I. URBAN SOCIETY IN MEDIEVAL ISLAM

### Readings, Section I:

Mottahedeh, ch. 3 (97-174)

Selected Readings: Lapidus, "Muslim Cities and Islamic Societies"

### Optional Readings:

Bosworth, The Ghaznavids, 145-202

23. (April 17) Urban Topography in the Medieval Middle East
24. (April 19) Citadel and Mosque: The Formal Institutions of Urban Life ("Isfahan of Shah Abbas")
25. (April 24) Class, Status, and Political Autonomy

## J. THE MONGOL OCCUPATION

### Readings, Section J:

Selected Readings: (a) "The Founding of the Empire"

(b) Juvaini, "History of the World-Conqueror"

### Optional Readings:

Petrushevsky, "The Socio-Economic Condition of Iran under the Il-Khans," In Cambridge History of Iran, Vol. V, 483-537

26. (April 26) From Chingiz Khan to Hulegu: The Conquest of Iran and Iraq
27. (May 1) The Empire of the Il-Khans: Partial Assimilation, Socio-Economic Transformation

## K. THE MAMLUK EMPIRE OF EGYPT AND SYRIA (1250-1517)

### Readings, Section K:

Selected Readings: (a) "Mamluk Dynasty"

(b) Ayalon, "Mamluk"

(c) Ibn Taghribirdi, "History of Egypt"

### Optional Readings:

I. M. Lapidus, Muslim Cities in the Later Middle Ages, 44-115

28. (May 3) The Mamluk Institution and the Structures of Military Government
29. (May 8) The Political Elite of the Mamluk State
30. (May 10) Summary and Review