

History-200: Muslim Societies in Africa-Fall 2023

Professor: Khaled Esseissah

E-mail: esseissah@wisc.edu

Course Time: Mondays, 8:50-10:45AM

Class Location: Humanities Building 5245

Office Hours: Tuesdays, 9:00am-11:00am and by appointment

Office: 4110 Mosse Humanities Building

Course Description

Although Islam has been well established in Africa for many centuries, many simplistically associate “orthodox” Islam with the Middle East. Indeed, Africa was in the picture from the early days of Islam. In 617 CE, only six years after the birth of Islam, eighty-three Muslim men and women migrated from the city of Mecca to Abyssinia (now modern-day northern Ethiopia) to seek social justice and religious freedom. This course examines this Islamic heritage through a topical exploration of African history, while paying particular attention to continuing points of contact and exchange between Muslims in Africa across the Sahara as well as the Atlantic and Indian Ocean worlds.

The course is divided into five sections: (1) an introduction which discusses Islam as a world religion and introduces the main patterns of its introduction, transformation and amplification in Africa; (2) an overview of the imperial era (when African merchants and kings first converted to Islam); (3) an exploration of slavery, the slave trade and the role of Muslims in these processes; (4) an investigation of the nineteenth century when African Muslims fought in several jihads and then defended against European colonial expansion; and (5) a discussion of the contemporary era when Muslims coped with European colonialism and struggled to regain political and religious influence in an era of independent nation-states.

Through the study of secondary sources, in-class reading and discussions of primary sources, as well as documentaries, this course will provide students with the knowledge and skills they need to understand the diversity of Islamic practices on the African continent.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Please purchase the following books:

David Robinson, *Muslim Societies in African History* (New Approaches to African History)

Levtzion, Nehemia and Randall L. Pouwels, eds. *The History of Islam in Africa* (Ohio University Press, 2000).

The remaining required readings for the course will be available on Canvas.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

AFRICAN STUDIES EVENT (10%)

Students are required to attend at least one Africa-related event of their choice during the semester. This can be a seminar organized through African Studies Program organized cultural event, a film screening, a music concert, an art exhibit on campus or in Madison or a related talk on campus or elsewhere. Before attending the event, students should seek approval from the instructor to ensure the event fulfills the necessary African Studies requirement. After attending or participating in the event, students will then submit a short response paper (1 full and well-written page) contextualizing the event and writing any questions or reflections elicited during the experience.

PARTICIPATION (20%)

Participation means more than attending class. **You can only participate fully if you attend, if you have completed the readings, and if you are ready to engage with your fellow students.**

I will grade your participation on the basis of the contribution you make to the overall class discussion. I will note your efforts to engage critically not only the assigned materials but also the questions and observations of others in the class. You are expected to contribute to—but not dominate—class discussions, so please be sure that everyone has the opportunity to share thoughts, opinions, and questions.

An “A” grade for participation is earned by a student who enthusiastically attends all classes, gives evidence of having completed the assigned readings, and consistently engages the class in thoughtful and sophisticated critical analysis of the assigned readings, thus enhancing the level and depth of class discussions.

A “B” grade for participation is earned by a student who missed a class, whose contributions to class are inconsistent in terms of critical analysis and engagement of issues raised during the class.

Grades below “B” (i.e., “C”, “D”, “F”) for participation are given to students who remain passive and unwilling to contribute to class discussions, have clearly not read the assigned materials, and who fail to attend class regularly.

ONE 12–15-MINUTE ORAL CLASS PRESENTATION DUE ON A DATE SPECIFIC TO YOU: (10%)

In pairs, you will deliver a short 12-15-minute oral presentation about a reading of the syllabus *or* on a reading is NOT on the syllabus but which both you and Prof. Esseissah find important. I will ask you to pick a date and reading by way of a google doc; if you want to make your own choice, propose this to Prof. Esseissah early on so that we can decide where to fit it into the syllabus.

Prior to each class session, your team is responsible for (i) briefly summarizing the main arguments of assigned materials and (ii) producing a list of six questions about the author's approach to the material, the sources used, and arguments. When multiple readings/materials are assigned in a given week, your team is responsible for producing at least one question for each of the assigned readings/materials. Before you present, you must meet with Prof. Esseissah to discuss/brainstorm about the chosen reading. You must also run your outline or PowerPoint by Prof. Esseissah before you present to the class. Your PowerPoint must be emailed to me by 6:00am the day of class (10% of the course grade).

TWO READING RESPONSES (30%):

- Due on October 2 by 7:00am on Canvas

Reading Response 1 is due today by 7:00am: readings chosen from class sessions from Sep. 11 and Oct. 2

- Due on November 13th by 7:00am on Canvas

Reading response 2 is due today by 7:00am: readings chosen from class sessions from Oct. 9 and Nov. 13.

In your reading responses, you should not summarize the reading. Instead, I am asking you to do three things:

- Select *three readings (or documentary)* from at least two sessions. You can choose only one short story or essay of less than 10 pages.
- Select from each reading *two direct citations* (of c. 50 consecutive words) that go to the heart of the arguments or insights of the author *and* are important to you (whether you find them enlightening or are critical of them). In the case of a film, you can analyze two direct citations or two scenes.
- Explain in your own words what the direct citation says or means in the context of the reading (c. 250 words);
- Briefly comment/reflect on why you chose this particular citation (c. 250 words).

- You must also give a full bibliographical reference (and a page number), which does not have to be part of the word-count.

I would expect that this means that, for each of the three readings, you would have a response of c. 500 words; since the RR consists of your response to three readings, this would yield a word count of c. 1500 words, *but this is just a general guideline and RRs can be somewhat shorter or longer without any penalty.*

While you are always encouraged to ask questions, please do so in class and do not make questions the main focus of your reading response. You will get credit for each of the assigned reading responses (15% of the grade for each, see below).

TWO TAKE-HOME EXAMS (30%)

Each exam will account for **15%** of the student's grade, for a total of **30%** of the semester grade. Exams will test your ability to identify terms, discuss historical developments, and interpret sources. The exams will ask students to identify terms and to write essays which synthesize data and perspectives from a variety of materials (readings, films, lectures, discussions).

Mid-term exam: (15%): Open-book, **take-home exam essay (2100 words)** You will answer 3 essay questions about selected readings of the syllabus from the beginning of the semester up to 23 October. Detailed assignment will be discussed in class. Assignment to be posted one week before the due date. Expectations and grading scales will be discussed in class before exam (15 % of the course grade). **Please submit your paper on Canvas by on October 23 by 11:59pm.**

Final Exam (15%): Open-book, **take-home exam essay (2100 words)** You will answer 3 essay questions about selected readings of the syllabus **from October 30 up to this point.** Detailed assignment will be discussed in class. Assignment to be posted one week before the due date. Expectations and grading scales will be discussed in class before exam (**15 % of the course grade**). **Please submit your paper on Canvas by on Tuesday, December 19th by 11:59pm.**

More details to follow on each assignment!

GENERAL INFORMATION & CLASSROOM CONDUCT

Technology in the Classroom:

Studies show that students who take notes by hand learn material more effectively than those who take notes on a laptop. Studies also show that using a laptop in class not only has negative learning outcomes for the individual laptop user, but for other members of the class as well. For these reasons, my policy is that there will be no laptops allowed in

this class. If you need specific accommodations regarding technology in the classroom, please get in touch ASAP.

Writing Resources: The History Lab is a resource center where experts PhD students will assist you with your history papers. No matter your stage in the writing process — choosing a topic, conducting research, composing a thesis, outlining your argument, revising your drafts — the History Lab can help you sharpen your skills and become a more successful writer. Go to: <https://history.wisc.edu/undergraduate-program/the-history-lab/>

Academic Integrity: I expect you to know and abide by the university's policies on academic integrity. This course includes instruction on the basic principles of academic integrity. However, as in every course, you are responsible for potential violations throughout your enrollment. I follow the university's policies for suspected violations. For more information, see: <https://conduct.students.wisc.edu/academic-integrity/>

http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/QPA_plagiarism.html

Disability: Disability guidelines for course accommodations may be found at the UW McBurney Disability Resource Center site: <http://www.mcburney.wisc.edu/>

Extension Policy: I will normally accommodate lateness due to illness, serious family events, or other exceptional circumstances. I will not accept a late paper unless you have asked prior permission. **For late work or make-up work, you have to produce a documentation of your excuse (e.g., doctor's note) prior to missing the assignment. An extension for a final assignment requires requesting an incomplete grade.**

Special Learning needs: If you have special learning needs, please let me know as soon as you possibly can, so that I can make the necessary arrangements.

Some Nuts and Bolts

- Do not be late to class. Turn off or silence cell phones.
- Please learn each other's names.
- Respect the speaker, even when you do not agree with or respect the point the speaker is making.
- Listen carefully; do not interrupt—even when you are excited to respond.

- Try not to generalize about groups (even groups with which you identify) and do not ask another person to speak as a representative of a group.
- Keep an open mind—enter the classroom dialogue with the expectation of learning something new.

Look forward to learning about—and being challenged by—ideas, questions, and points of view that are different than your own.

- Do not “monopolize” the conversation; give others a chance to contribute to the discussion.
- Support an atmosphere of learning and growth. Approach discussion as a means to “think out loud.” Allow others (as well as yourself) to revise and clarify ideas and positions in response to new information and insights.
- Bring out ideas, perspectives, or solutions that you think are not yet represented or haven’t yet been adequately discussed.
- Support your arguments with evidence. Be honest when you are not sure if you have enough evidence to make a strong argument or when your thoughts about a topic are still speculative or exploratory.
- Try not to make assumptions; ask questions to learn more about other perspectives, especially those that are different from your own.
 - Talk with me about patterns in the discussion that are troubling or that may be
- I will use Canvas to send email updates to the class. Please ensure that your settings allow you to receive emails from me as they come in so that you don’t miss vital information.

Communication with Professor

Please feel free to email me with your questions, concerns, and/or to schedule a time to meet in person. When sending emails please remember to follow the guidelines outlined below:

- *Check the syllabus.* Before sending your email or message, be sure that your question has not already been addressed in the syllabus or announcements.

- *Be patient.* If you have a concern and send me a message, you can expect a response **within 2 business days maximum**. Please allow **2 business days** for assessment submission feedback.
- *Specify subject.* Subject line should include the topic of the message and class title.
- *Greet & Close.* E-mails should begin with a formal greeting and end with you signing your name in all messages/emails. So, if you send an email to me, please use proper format, including a salutation, complete sentences, a closing, and your name. Here's an example:

Dear Professor Esseisah,

I have the plague and I will not be able to attend class tomorrow. I will make sure to keep up with the reading and assignments.

*Thank you,
Serious Student*

- *Check writing.* Proofread (i.e. grammar and spelling) your message before sending.

Syllabus revision: While it is unlikely, this syllabus is subject to revision at any time by the instructor. I will announce changes during class meetings as well as over email.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1

11 September: Introduction and syllabus distribution & Studying Islam

Ziauddin Sardar, *What Do Muslims Believe? The Roots and Realities of Modern Islam* (New York: Walker & Company, 2007), 41-79 (on canvas).

Robinson, David, *Muslim Societies in African History*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, pp. 3-23.

At home viewing the following documentary for discussion in class:

- Muhammad, Legacy of a Prophet (1:56:53 minutes).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JQncamLcDO4>Links to an external site.



- The Caliphate

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P3O9d7PsI48>Links to an external site.



(48:

Week 2

18 September: Studying Africa (the basics), the Production of Knowledge, and Importance of Islamic Sources

Wainaina, Binyavanga. "How Not to Write about Africa in 2012. A Beginner's Guide." The

Guardian, 3 June 2012 (2012).

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/jun/03/how-not-to-write-about-africa>

At home viewing Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's speech on retiring stolen artifacts to Africa for discussion in class

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TIcKT2rC1k>Links to an external site.



(19:15 minutes)

John Hunwick, "Arabic Sources for African History," in Philips, *Writing African History*, (216-253).

Ngom, Taylor, and Kurfi, "Precolonial Africa had written traditions,"
<https://africasacountry.com/2019/10/refuting-the-claim-that-precolonial-africa-lacks-written-traditions>Links to an external site.

Week 3

25 September: Islam and Society in North Africa

Loimeier, Chapter 2 "The Bilad al-Maghrib: Rebels, Saints and Heretics" of *Muslim Societies in Africa* (35 – 53)

• Peter von Sivers, Chapter 1 "Egypt and North Africa" in Levtzion and Pouwels, *The History of Islam in Africa* (21-36)

• Ramzi Rouighi, "The Andalusí origins of the Berbers," *Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies* 2, n.1 (2010): 93-108.

At home viewing of Islam in Africa - History of Africa with Zeinab Badawi [Episode 9]

(44.49 minutes):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tcF-e6RhLzU>Links to an external site.



"In this episode Zeinab Badawi travels to several countries and looks at the early spread of Islam in Africa and how many Africans practice to this day a mystic, Sufi form of the religion. She shows how not only Islam but Arab culture came to influence a large part of the continent, particularly in the north. And she charts the rise of the powerful Islamic dynasties of North Africa, that built magnificent monuments, mosques and empires, including a part of southern Europe and who helped determine the path of this part of the continent.

Week 4

2 October: Islam in Africa South of the Sahara: Part 1

Loimeier, Chapter 3 and 4 “The Sahara as Connective Space” and “Dynamics of Islamization in the Bilad al-Sudan” of Muslim Societies in

Africa (54-107) (on canvas)

Primary Source: Al-Bakri, parts of *Kitab al-masalik wa-l-mamalik* in Levtzion and Hopkins, *Corpus of Early Arabic Sources for West African History* (62-87) (on canvas)

Reading Response 1 is due today by 7:00am: readings chosen from class sessions from Sep. 11 and Oct. 2

Week 5

9 October: Islam in Africa South of the Sahara: Part 2

Loimeier, Chapters 8-10 “Ethiopia and Islam”, “Muslims on the Horn of Africa”, “The East African Coast”, of *Muslim Societies in Africa* (172-247).

Ibn Battuta “The East African Coast” in Collins, *Documents from the African Past*, (8-14).

Said Hamdun and Noel King, *Ibn Battuta in Black Africa* (Princeton: Markus Wiener, 1998), 15-25, 29-61.

Loimeier, Chapter 5, *Muslim Societies in Africa* (pp.108-129)

Willis John Ralph, "Jihād fi Sabīl Allāh—its Doctrinal Basis in Islam and some Aspects of its Evolution in Nineteenth-Century West Africa," *The Journal of African History* 8, no. 3 (1967): 395-415. (reading on Canvas)

Week 6

16 October: Scholars, Sufi Saints, Merchants, and Reformists

Nehemia Levtzion, “Merchants vs Scholars and Clerics: Differential and Complementary Roles,” *Asian and African Studies* 20 (1986), 27-43

Hunwick, “Secular Power and Religious Authority in Muslim Society: The Case of Songhay,” *Journal of African History* 37/2 (1996): 175-194.

Nobili, “Muslim Brotherhoods in West African History,” Oxford Research Encyclopedia, 2021.

Amir Syed, “Between *jihād* and history: Re-conceptualizing the Islamic revolutions of West Africa” in *The Palgrave Handbook of Islam in Africa*, edited by Fallou Ngom, Mustapha Kurfi, and Toyin Falola (Cham: Palgrave Press 2020), 93-116.

Week 7

23 October: Slavery and Abolition in *Muslim Africa*

R. T. Ware, "Slavery in Islamic Africa, 1400–1800," in *The Cambridge World History of Slavery*, edited by David Eltis and Stanley L. Engerman (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2011), v. 3, 47-80.

R. T. Ware, "Slavery in Islamic Africa, 1776–1905," in *The Cambridge World History of Slavery*, edited by David Eltis, Stanley L. Engerman, and Seymour Drescher, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2017), v. 4, 344-372.

Mid-Term Exam is due today by 11:59pm on Canvas.

Week 8

30 October: Racial Discourse in *Muslim Africa*

Bruce Hall, Part One "Race Along the Desert Edge, c.1600-1900," in A History of Race in Muslim West Africa, 1600-1960 (27-104).

Jonathon Glassman, "Toward a comparative history of racial thought in Africa: historicism, barbarism, autochthony," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 63,1 (2021): 72-98.

Primary Sources Study - Ahmad Baba and his Fatwa on Slavery Ahmad Baba, *Mi'rāj Al-Su'ūd: Ahmad Baba's Replies on Slavery*, translated by John Hunwick and Fatima Harrak (Rabat: University Mohammed V Souissi, 2000), 13-40.

Week 9

6 November: Islam in South Africa

Robert C.H. Shell, "Islam in Southern Africa, 1652-1998," in *The History of Islam in Africa*, 327-348

Week 10

13 November: European Colonialism

Jean-Louis Triaud, "Islam in Africa under French colonial rule," in *The History of Islam in Africa*, 169-187.

Jonathan Reynolds, "Good and Bad Muslims: Islam and Indirect Rule in Northern Nigeria," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 34/3 (2001): 601-618.

At home viewing of Africa, A Voyage of Discovery, parts 6

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4B3KOVjbQBg>Links to an external site.



Reading response 2 is due today by 7:00am: readings chosen from class sessions from Oct. 9 and Nov. 13.

Week 11

20 November: Muslim Responses to Colonial Rule

David Robinson, *Paths of Accommodation: Muslim Societies and French Colonial Officials in Senegal and Mauritania, 1880- 1920*. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2000 [Selected readings on Canvas].

Muhammad S. Umar, *Islam and Colonialism: Intellectual Responses of Muslims of Northern Nigeria to British Colonial Rule* (Leiden: Brill, 2006) [Selected readings on Canvas].

Osborn, Emily Lynn, Richard L. Roberts, Benjamin Lawrance, eds. *Intermediaries, Interpreters, and Clerks: African Employees in the Making of Colonial Africa* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006) [Selected readings on Canvas]

Thanksgiving Recess: November 23-26, 2023.

Week 12

27 November: Education

Launay, Robert, "Introduction," in *Islamic Education in Africa: Writing Boards and Blackboards*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016, pp. 1-26.

Frede, Britta, "Female Muslim Scholars in Africa," in Fallou Ngom et al., eds, *The Palgrave Handbook of Islam in Africa*, Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020, pp. 221-232.

Alidou, Ousseina, "Mwalim Bi Swafiiya Muhashamy-Said: A Pioneer of the Integrated (Madrassa) Curriculum in Kenya and Beyond," in Robert Launay, ed., *Islamic Education in Africa*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016, pp. 195-211.

Umar, Muhammad S., "Mass Islamic Education and Emergence of Female 'Ulama in Northern Nigeria: Background, Trends, and Consequences," in Scott Reese, ed., *The Transmission of Learning in Islamic Africa*, Leiden: Brill, 2004, pp. 99-120.

Week 13

4 December: Terrorism and political instability

Sanusi Lamido Sanusi, "Politics and Sharia in Northern Nigeria," in Soares and Otayek, Islam and Muslim Politics in Africa (177-188).

- *Rudiger Seesemann, "Kenyan Muslim, the Aftermath of 9/11, and the 'War on Terror', in Soares and Otayek, Islam and Muslim Politics in*

Africa (157-176).

- *Abdin Chaunde, "Radicalism and Reform in East Africa," in Levtzion and Pouwels, A History of Islam in Africa (349-369).*

Week 14

11 December: Popular Culture

Mandal, Sumit, "The Built Archives of Popular Islam in Singapore and Cape Town," *post: notes on art in a global context* (Museum of Modern Art) July 2022 (<https://post.moma.org/the-built-archives-of-popular-islam-in-singapore-and-cape-town/>)

Ogunnaike, Ayodeji, "The Transcontinental Genealogy of the Afro-Brazilian Mosque," *MAVCOR Journal* 6, 2 (2022) (<https://mavcor.yale.edu/mavcor-journal/transcontinental-genealogy-afro-brazilian-mosque>).

Masquelier, Adeline, "'The Mouthpiece of an Entire Generation': Hip-Hop, Truth, and Islam in Niger," in A. Masquelier & B. Soares, eds, *Muslim Youth and the 9/11 Generation*, Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, pp. 213-238.

Bravmann, René, "Islamic Art and Material Culture in Africa," in N. Levtzion & Randall L. Pouwels, eds, *The History of Islam in Africa*, Athens: Ohio University Press, 2000, pp. 489-517.

Final exam (15%) is due Tuesday, December 19th, 2023 by 11:59pm on Canvas: