Wednesday 3:00-6:00

Islamic Historiography            Fall 2012
HIS 388 (39730)/MES 385 (41790)/RS 388 (43832)

Instructor:       Dr. Denise A. Spellberg
Office:           
Office hours:     
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Course Description and Objectives:

The course provides an introduction to basic aspects of Islamic historiography before 1700 C.E., with an emphasis on intellectual, political, and religious history. We will study contemporary definitions of the field of medieval Islamic historiography as we look at original texts from the period.

A range of genres will be studied in translation, including prophetic biography, biographical dictionaries, chronicle, court manuals, and the first medieval philosophy of history. Issues include: authenticity, narrative, authorial intent, available evidence, the invisibility of potential past subjects, silences and conflicts in historical production, as well as the importance of gender as a category of analysis. Historical biography will also be contrasted with contemporary Western fictional incarnations.

The course also considers new methodological approaches to critical historiographical issues of sectarian origins, the afterlife in material culture as well as the phenomenon of sacred kingship and sainthood in the post-Mongol Islamic world.

The last research section of the seminar allows students to use their familiarity with a range of basic sources to focus on their own scholarly interests by identifying a problem based in the medieval period, but not necessarily limited to it.

All assigned materials are in English, but students who wish to work in original languages are encouraged to do so, with the proviso that this is not a class in translation techniques.

Course Requirements:
Two analytical essays based on assigned course readings (6-8 pages): 25% each
One research paper (10-15 pages): 40%
Research proposal, 1-2 pages with preliminary bibliography, not graded but requisite.
One outline/review of a week’s course reading (advance sign-up), weekly participation, and a final research presentation: 10%

Paper Due Dates
First Analytical Essay, 10 October in class.
Research Proposal and meeting to discuss individually, 7 November in class.
Second Essay, 14 November in class.
Research Paper Due, 5 December in class.

Required Texts
I. August 29: Introduction: All History is Historiography

II. September 5: The Qur’an, the Prophet’s Biography, and Western Fiction
   Berkey, *The Formation of Islam*, 57-69
   Humphreys, *Islamic History*, ix-65
   Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, xii-66
   Beholder*, pp. 3-9 (pages numbered in packet)
   Selections from Ibn Ishaq (d. 767 is actually the recension of Ibn Hisham d. 833), trans.
   A. Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, first set of selections in packet, beginning “The
   Woman Who Offered Herself in Marriage to ‘Abdullah b. ‘Abdu’l-Muttalib,” pp. 12-48
   Sura LIII “The Star,” from the Qur’an, trans. Pickthall, pp. 189-192

III. September 12: The Precedents of the Prophet, Then and Now
   Berkey, 216-230
   Brown, *Hadith: Muhammad’s Legacy in the Medieval and Modern World*
IV. September 19: Religious Authority, Then and Now
Berkey, 231-269
Bulliet, Islam: The View from the Edge

V. September 26: The First Civil War (656 C.E.) according to al-Tabari (d. 923)
Berkey, 70-75
Al-Tabari, History of al-Tabari: The Community Divided, vol. XVI
Document in xerox packet: Marilyn Waldman, “‘The Otherwise Unnoteworthy Year 711:’ A Reply to Hayden White,” from On Narrative , pp. 49-54

VI. October 3: The Shi‘i versus the Sunni Version of Who Should Succeed the Prophet (632-661 C.E.) [First Essay Assigned]
Berkey, 76-158.
Madelung, The Succession to Muhammad

VII. October 10: Aisha bint Abi Bakr (d. 678): History, Gender, and Western Fiction [First Essay Due]*
Spellberg, Politics, Gender, and the Islamic Past
Documents in xerox packet:
Ibn Ishaq, Life of Muhammad, selection from this source starts with “The Lie That Was Uttered on the Raid of the B. al-Mustaliq,” pp. 274-277
Scott, “Introduction,” “Women’s History,” and “Gender: A Useful Category of Analysis,” in Gender and the Politics of History, pp. 279-309
Jones, selections from The Jewel of Medina, pp. 311-344
Pasha, selections from Mother of the Believers, pp. 347-382

VIII. October 17: Varieties of Historiography: The Islamic Conquests, Political Treatises, and Biography, Ninth to Fifteenth Centuries
Berkey, 159-215

IX. October 24: NO CLASS

X. October 31: The Afterlife and Material Culture

XI. November 7: [Research Proposal Due: individual meetings only this week ]

XII. November 14: Sovereignty and Sainthood [Second Essay Due]
A. Azfar Moin, *The Millenial Sovereign: Sacred Kingship and Sainthood in Islam*

**Guest Lecture by Dr. A. Azfar Moin at 3pm, place TBA.**
*After the lecture, Dr. Moin will lead class discussion about his book.*

XIII. November 21: Research and Tutorial Period [NO CLASS. Students may schedule meeting with the instructor during class time by appointment.]

XIV. November 28: Research and Tutorial Period [NO CLASS]

XV. December 5: Oral Presentations of Research [Research Papers Due]