Introduction to the Middle East: Religious, Cultural, Historical Foundations, 570-1453  
HIS 306K (39105), MES 301K (41675), RS 314 (43695)  
Fall 2012

Dr. Denise A. Spellberg  
Office:  
5:00-6:30

Teaching Assistant: Reem Elghanimi  
Office:  
Hours:  
Email:

Course Description and Goals  
This course surveys the history of the Middle East from the rise of Islam to the end of the fifteenth century. Students will be introduced to basic aspects of the political, social, and cultural dimensions of Islamic civilization from Spain to Iran as they changed over time.

In the midst of mapping this broad view, we will focus our attention on how specific historical figures and events contributed to definitions of Islamic identity, community, and authority. Central themes include the emergence of Sunni and Shi‘i identities, the relationship of Muslims and non-Muslims, and the unique material and intellectual contributions of Islamic civilization to world history and other societies.

An overarching goal of this course is to focus attention on the history of the Middle East in this formative phase as a fascinating, complicated, and enriching study in its own right. In order to do this, students will be expected to master key terms and concepts of the period. The intent of all essay exams is to hone analytical skills and written expression.

Course Rules: In Class  
No computers or electronic devices (including tablets) may be used to take notes, record the class, or visit online sites. (Please inform the instructor immediately if issues of disability provide an exception, and see Services for Students with Disabilities Guidelines below).

During class, no recording devices: I pads, I phones or cell phones may be used. You may not reproduce for publication class notes verbatim or in any other format.

Out of Class: I am available during office hours and by appointment. The Teaching Assistant will also hold office hours.

I will attempt to make this an informative and enjoyable class, but your participation is essential to complete your own intellectual development. I do not require your attendance in class (freewill in adults is a beautiful thing), but
unexcused absences will not result in the recapitulation of a lecture by the instructor or teaching assistant. Exam appearance is required.

*Religious observances are always understood as excused absences, but the instructor must be informed 14 days prior, as per UT policy.
*Services for Students with Disabilities 471-6259 http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/ should be contacted along with the instructor directly if special arrangements are necessary.
*The UT Honor Code is enforced: http://registrar.utexas.edu/catalogs/gi09-10/ch01/index.html

Class handouts and assignment sheets due to any absence will always be supplied; they will also be posted on the class Blackboard site.

*Attendance will be taken at all exams.

There will be no make-up exams without prior consent of the instructor. (Only medical emergencies or true catastrophic events will warrant consideration on a case-by-case basis.) Emails simply alerting me to your absence without prior discussion or documentation are not acceptable.

In order to succeed in this class, you will need to learn all the reading material assigned on the syllabus, delivered in lectures, and discussed in class. All exams are stipulated on the syllabus.

Course Requirements:
4 exams @ 25% each = 100%. There is no final exam during Final Exam Period.

Class Assignment Schedule:
First Exam: Thursday, 20 September
Second Exam: Thursday, 18 October
Third Exam: Thursday, 15 November
Last Exam (in class): Thursday, 6 December

Required Books and Readings:
2. Ira Lapidus, A History of Islamic Societies (2002 edition only)
3. D. A. Spellberg, Politics, Gender, and the Islamic Past: The Legacy of ‘A’isha bint Abi Bakr
4. John Alden Williams, ed. and trans., The Word of Islam
5. Xerox packet of primary documents and articles

Books available for purchase at the University Co-op, but cheaper online. Xerox course packet available for purchase at Speedway (Dobie Mall). Everything is on reserve at the Perry Castaneda Library Reserves.

Part One:

Religion and Politics

I. 30 August
Course Objectives
Readings: Lapidus, xviii-17.
II. 4, 6 September
The Pre-Islamic Middle East and the Advent of Islam
Readings: Lapidus, 18-27.
Williams, 1-35 (Qur’an).

III. 11, 13 September
Muhammad: Prophet and Statesman
Readings:
Brown, all.
Lapidus, 27-30
Spellberg, 1-99.
Williams, 36-53 (Life of the Prophet).

IV. 18, *20 September [First Exam, 20 September]
The Rightly Guided Caliphs: Succession and Conquest
Readings: Lapidus, 31-47.
Spellberg, 101-195.
Williams, 53-65 (Hadith).
Course packet, “`A’isha bint Abi Bakr.”

V. 25, 27 September
The First Islamic Empire: The Umayyad Dynasty at Damascus
Readings: Lapidus, 47-51.

Part Two:
Social Change and the Rise of Islamic Culture
VI. 2, 4, October
Cosmopolitan Islam and Conversion: The Abbasid Empire at Baghdad
Williams, 66-108 (Shari`a).

VII. 9, 11 October
The Separation of Mosque and State
Readings: Lapidus, 67-111; 133-149.
Course Packet, In The Meadows of Gold, ”Fall of the Barmakids,” “Amin and Ma’mun as Children,” “The Succession,” “Zubaida’s Opinion,” “Rashid’s Pilgrimage” and “Amin’s Head.”

VIII. 16, **18 October [Second Exam, 18 October]
Philosophy and Mysticism
Readings: Lapidus, 156-193.
Williams, 109-169 (Sufism, Theology).
Packet, “New Capital of Samarra.”

IX. 23 [NO CLASS the 23rd] 25 October [class resumes]
Abbasid Decline: Buyid Shi`i and Saljuk Sunni Dynasties at Baghdad
Readings: Lapidus, 112-132; 149-155.
Course packet, From The Book of Government by Nizam al-Mulk, “On the
Subject of Those Who Wear the Veil.”

X. 30 October, 1 November
Abbasid Fragmentation: Shi`ism in Egypt and the Impact of the Crusades
Readings: Lapidus, 94-98 (repeat); 283-294.
Course Packet, From P. Hitti, trans., An Arab-Syrian Gentleman and Warrior
in the Period of the Crusades, Usamah ibn Munqidh, “An Appreciation of the
Frankish Character,” Sicily (973).”

XI. 6, 8 November
The Mongol Destruction of Baghdad
Readings: Lapidus, 226-234.
Course packet, “The Coming of the Mongols,” “The Last Caliph of Baghdad,”
“The Fall of Baghdad (1258),” “The Battle of `Ayn Jalut,” “Timur and His
Historian;” “Capture of Aleppo by Timur.”

Part Three:
New Empires and Contacts with the West

XII. 13, ***15 November [Third Exam, 15 November]
Islamic Spain

XIII. 20 November [NO CLASS 22 November - Thanksgiving holiday]
The Conversion of Iran to Shi`ism
Readings: Lapidus, 234-247.
Williams, 170-end (Shi`ism).

XIV. 27, 29 November
The Sunni Ottoman Empire
Readings: Lapidus, 197-225; 248-282; 294-298.

XV. 4, 6 December - Last Class [****In class Fourth Exam, 6 December]
Islam in Early American Thought
Course packet, Kevin J. Hayes, “How Thomas Jefferson Read the Qur’an;”
Sebastian Prange, “Thomas Jefferson’s Qur’an.”