Course aim and objectives

This course will focus on the history the Southwest Asia / North Africa region (commonly referred to as the “Middle East”) from the period from prior to the rise of Islam to the rise of the Ottoman and Safavid Empires in the 13th-15th centuries of the Christian Era (CE). Students will be introduced to the political, cultural, and social dimensions of the region framed against a historical narrative in three sections. Each section will feature a short writing component, quizzes, and an examination at the end.

This course will emphasize the concept of history-as-inquiry. High school history survey courses tend to teach history as a set of facts to which there are right answers and wrong answers. This course will not only examine what we know about the Southwest Asia / North Africa region during this pivotal period, but also to ask the questions of how we know what we know about it. What kinds of evidence exist to prove “what happened”? Are historians in agreement on this?

The first section will deal with the Rise of Islam and the Umayyad and Abbasid Empires. Islamic civilization will form a key component of our exploration of this region, and we will spend some time discussing key figures, concepts, and events in its development. Who was Muhammad? What is the Qur’an? What is the difference between Sunni and Shi’a, and when those differences appear?

The second section will look at Everyday Life in the Islamic World. Here, we will examine the lived experience of average people during this period. How did Muslims experience their faith on a practical level? What did one do for fun? What did people eat, and where? What did art and architecture look like? What happened in a medieval university? What did people do when they got sick? What was it like to be a non-Muslim living in these so-called “Islamic” states?

The third section will look at the period From the Fall of the Abbasids to the Gunpowder Empires. Here, we will examine a couple of turbulent centuries that saw the fall of the Abbasid empire and the Umayyad state in Spain and the new powers that rose to their places after the Crusades and Mongol invasions. We’ll also examine the impact of the Black Death and the arrival of the Turkic peoples in the region before examining the rise of the two so-called “Gunpowder Empires,” the Ottomans and Safavids.
Global Cultures Flag
This course carries the Global Cultures flag. Global Cultures courses are designed to increase your familiarity with cultural groups outside the United States.

Attendance Policies

Tardiness:
Anyone who arrives between 11:30 and 11:35 will be marked tardy. Every three tardies count as an absence.

Absences:
Students are allowed up to two no-questions-asked absences except for exam/quiz days. The reason for this policy is to allow students with personal, medical, family, or other emergencies to maintain their privacy in dealing with these matters, to allow students to attend to their religious observances and obligations without needing to go to any extra lengths to document them, and to afford students some flexibility in prioritizing work, academic, family, and other commitments; however, this also means that a student who chooses to use his or her absences frivolously will not be allowed any extra penalty-free absences should an emergency, family event, or any other need arise late in the semester. In other words, deploy your absences strategically and wisely.

Please note that class will meet on both Monday, June 26 (the second day of Eid al-Fitr) and on Monday, July 3.

Students who are absent are responsible for material that was covered that day, including notes from class. Class handouts and assignment sheets will be posted on Canvas.

Each absence above two will result in a 5% deduction from your class participation grade. Repeated absences, and/or regular tardiness to class, will have a negative impact on your final grade.

Attendance is required at all exams/quizzes. 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.

Course Work and Grading

Course Requirements:
- Class participation (15% of the final grade)
- First examination (20% of the final grade)
- Second section assessment (format TBD – 20% of the final grade)
- Final examination (25% of the final grade)
- Quizzes (combined – 20% of final grade)

Grades:
This course uses the College of Liberal Arts grading system: (A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, C-, D+, D, F).
**Late Work and Makeup Work:**
Due dates will be posted on the syllabus; if there are changes I will announce these in class and post on Canvas.

All assignments are due on the date posted. If an extension is needed on any assignment you may request one in writing prior to the original deadline. Please propose an alternate deadline in your message. For assignments submitted late without an approved extension the highest possible score will be reduced by one letter grade for each day that passes between the deadline and submission.

**Class Participation (15% of the final grade):**
I firmly believe that students can learn from each other as much as they can from their instructors, and, as such, I expect all students to participate in class discussion. This includes asking questions during lectures, posting questions in the class discussion forum on Canvas, being prepared to discuss the readings, and participating in small group work.

Under **Reading Strategies**, you will find suggestions for taking notes on the readings. I expect you to bring these notes to class and be prepared to discuss them. I may select names at random and ask you to begin a conversation based on your notes on that day’s readings—be prepared!

**First (20%) and Final (25%) Examinations:**
Examinations will be a combination of essays and short answer questions. The final examination will not cover readings from the class periods prior to the mid-term, but essay questions may ask you to identify trends or influences from both halves of the semester.

**Second Section Assessment (20%)**
More information on the assessment for the second section of the course (which will not be an examination) will be given in class.

**Quizzes (combined 20%)**
A series of short will be administered through Canvas and in class to assess your mastery of the material. They will consist of a combination of multiple choice, short answer, and map identification tasks, and will be announced in advance.

**Extra credit**
I do not believe in extra credit as a means to boost your score in areas of the course where your grades are insufficient. Students who are putting in visible effort, coming to office hours, participating in class, and maintaining an inquisitive attitude throughout the semester will find me supportive and willing to give the benefit of the doubt. Students that come to me late in the semester who have been visibly disengaged throughout the course but suddenly find themselves wishing to improve low scores will likely be disappointed in my response.

**Incompletes**
A grade of Incomplete (X) will not be available in this course. If you are struggling to complete readings and become concerned that you may not be able to finish the course successfully, please let me know as soon as possible.
Q Drop Policy
If you want to drop a class after the 12th class day, you’ll need to execute a Q drop before the Q-drop deadline, which typically occurs near the middle of the semester. Under Texas law, you are only allowed six Q drops while you are in college at any public Texas institution. For more information, see: http://www.utexas.edu/ugs/csacc/academic/adddrop/qdrop.

Class Materials

Required texts

Both of these titles have been placed on two-hour reserve in PCL and may also be purchased from the Co-op or the online vendor of your choice.

There will be many supplemental chapters, articles, and websites assigned throughout the course, which will be uploaded to Canvas.

Reading strategies:
Readings form a major component of this course. Lectures will illustrate the major points, or sometimes provide additional material that builds on the readings. If you do not do the readings, you will be lost, and you will miss material that will be covered on the exams.

At the same time, if you are lost, or if the readings do not make sense to you, please post questions in the open discussion forum on Canvas. If fellow students cannot answer your questions (or if I think the answers are wrong or need fleshing out), I’ll address these in the forum and/or in class.

As you go through the readings, don’t simply read for memorization and leave pristine pages behind you. React to what you read. What surprises you? Highlight or star passages that you consider important. Write in the margins (or, for those using electronic copies, use one of the many apps or programs that allow you to comment on a PDF).

No textbook is perfect. Engage with the author: do you agree with their argument? Does the author leave you with unanswered questions? You are allowed to disagree with the authors. Bring these notes to class and be prepared to discuss them.

Contacting your Instructor
Please contact me with any questions, concerns, or issues that arise concerning this course, assignments, grading, etc. I am happy to help in any way that I can. The easiest way to reach me is by email. I will hold office hours on campus—if these times do not suit, we can make an appointment to meet in person or online via webconferencing.
Tentative Schedule
(note: reading assignments are listed on the days I will expect you to have read them by.)

Section 1: The Rise of Islam and the Islamic Empires

Thursday, June 1, 2017: Introduction / Pre-Islamic Arabia


Friday, June 2, 2017: Introducing Muhammad

1. Hughes, Chapter 1, “Setting the Stage” and Chapter 2 “The Making of the Last Prophet” (end before ‘Muhammad at Medina’), 17-51.
2. Video: “Roads of Arabia” (start at 6:29), https://youtu.be/FUZ289zGhsU?t=6m29s (warning: for your own sanity, do not read the viewer comments!)

Monday, June 5, 2017: Life and Times of the Prophet

Map quiz (on Canvas) due before class.


Tuesday, June 6, 2017: The Qur’an


Wednesday, June 7, 2017: The Rashidun Caliphs

1. Hughes, Chapter 4, “Islam Beyond the Arabian Peninsula: A Historical Overview,” 95 – 102 (end before “Abd al-Malik and the Creation of an Islamic Empire”).
Thursday, June 8: Conflict in the Community: The ‘Alids and Kharijites


Friday, June 9: The Umayyads


Monday, June 12: The Abbasid Revolution


Tuesday, June 13: Normative Islam and its Challengers

2. 15 Minute History, Episode 61: The Fatimids, [Link](http://15minutehistory.org/2015/01/07/episode-61-the-fatimids/)

Wednesday, June 14: The Umayyads of Spain


Thursday, June 15: Let’s Review

Friday, June 16: First Exam

Section 2: Everyday Life in the Medieval Islamic World

Monday, June 19: The “Islamic City”

Tuesday, June 20: Material Culture: Art and Architecture

3. Please go through the virtual walking tour of al-Haram al-Sharif, located at: http://archive.aramcoworld.com/issue/200901/al-haram/default.htm, narrated by Oleg Grabbar, (I will introduce this at the end of the previous class).

Wednesday, June 21: Society in the Islamic World

1. Bennison, Chapter 3: “Princes and Beggars: Life and Society in the ‘Abbasid Age” (94-136)

Thursday, June 22: Food and Eating Out

*Class will split into two groups, each of which will read one of the following:*


Friday, June 23: Lived Religion


Monday, June 26: The Golden Age of Science


Tuesday, June 27: Second Assessment Due

Section 3: From the Abbasids to the Gunpowder Empires

Wednesday, June 28: Challenges from Outside: The Turks

Thursday, June 29: Challenges from Outside: the Crusades


Friday, June 30: The Ayyubid Legacy


Monday, July 3: Challenges from Outside: The Black Death


Tuesday, July 4 – Independence Day Holiday (no class)

Wednesday, June 5: Challenges from Outside: The Rise of the Ottomans


Thursday, June 6: Wrap-up and Review

Friday, June 7: Final Examination

Final Examination, 2 – 5 PM
Policies and Resources

**Academic Accommodations and Academic Integrity**

Students with a documented disability may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities, 512-471-6259 (voice) or 1-866-329-3986 (video phone).

http://ddce.utexas.edu/disability/about/

- Please request a meeting as soon as possible to discuss any accommodations
- Please notify me as soon as possible if the material being presented in class is not accessible
- Please notify me if any of the physical space is difficult for you

**Academic Integrity**

Each student in the course is expected to abide by the University of Texas Honor Code:

> “As a student of The University of Texas at Austin, I shall abide by the core values of the University and uphold academic integrity.”

This means that work you produce on assignments, tests and exams is all your own work, unless it is assigned as group work. I will make it clear for each test, exam or assignment whether collaboration is encouraged or not.

Always cite your sources. If you use words or ideas that are not your own (or that you have used in previous class), you must make that clear otherwise you will be guilty of plagiarism and subject to academic disciplinary action, including failure of the course.

You are responsible for understanding UT’s Academic Honesty Policy which can be found at the following web address: [http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/acint_student.php](http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/acint_student.php)

**Important Safety Information**

**BCAL**

If you have concerns about the safety or behavior of fellow students, TAs or Professors, call BCAL (the Behavior Concerns Advice Line): 512-232-5050. Your call can be anonymous. If something doesn’t feel right – it probably isn’t. Trust your instincts and share your concerns.

**Evacuation Information**

The following recommendations regarding emergency evacuation from the Office of Campus Safety and Security, 512-471-5767, [http://www.utexas.edu/safety/](http://www.utexas.edu/safety/)

Occupants of buildings on The University of Texas at Austin campus are required to evacuate buildings when an alarm or alert is activated. Alarm activation or announcement requires exiting and assembling outside, unless told otherwise by an official representative.

- Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of each classroom and building you may occupy. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when entering the building.
• Students requiring assistance in evacuation shall inform their instructor in writing during the first week of class.

• In the event of an evacuation, follow the instruction of faculty or class instructors. Do not re-enter a building unless given instructions by the following: Austin Fire Department, The University of Texas at Austin Police Department, or Fire Prevention Services office.

Link to information regarding emergency evacuation routes and emergency procedures can be found at:  www.utexas.edu/emergency