

History 381a
Fall 2000
TTh 12:30-2:00 pm
Psych 206

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HISTORY OF MUSLIM SOCIETIES

Theme for Fall 2000: Islam in Time and Place

This course provides an introduction to the history of Islamic societies from the seventh century to the present day. Both geographically and chronologically, the history of Islam occupies a central position in global history. Islam, both as a body of beliefs and as a means of organizing society, evolved over time in response to forces from within and without. This course will examine that evolution, looking in particular at the relationship between Islam and the times and places in which it was practiced. This relationship, too, evolved and changed as Muslim society grew, its political systems developed, and its relations with the surrounding world altered. For that reason it can be used as a lens through which to view the development of the society as a whole.

The course will be a combination of lecture and discussion. The main course reading is a textbook which we will try to analyze as well as learn. There is also a book of readings that give insight into the ways Muslims have seen their own societies. These will help us develop a sense of similarities and differences among Muslims spread over time and space. The final reading concerns the observations a Muslim traveler who visited almost the whole Islamic world and will give us an opportunity to look more closely at these societies through panel presentations, which will have both oral and written components. The main skills of the historian are reading and writing, good reading and good writing, and that is what the course requirements primarily consist of. For this kind of class, keeping up with the assignments is mandatory; readings must be done before the class for which they are listed. There will be some discussion and a final oral and written presentation on a country visited by Ibn Battuta. Midterm and final exams will be essay. Class participation (including attendance, contribution to discussions, and oral presentation) will count 20% of the grade, the midterm 25%, the written presentation 25%, and the final exam 30%.

TEXTS FOR THE COURSE

The following are available for purchase at the bookstore or on reserve in the library:

Lapidus: A History of Islamic Societies
McNeill and Waldman: The Islamic World
Dunn: The Adventures of Ibn Battuta

SCHEDULE OF READINGS**INTRODUCTION**

- Aug. 22: Introduction
- Aug. 24: Foundations of Islam
- Aug. 29: The PreIslamic Middle East and Arabia
Lapidus, 1-20
McNeill and Waldman, 3-13
Question: What are the primary values expressed in the M&W readings?

THE RISE OF ISLAM

- Aug. 31: Muhammad: The Man and the Message
Lapidus, 21-36
McNeill and Waldman, 13-27
Question: How do the values in this M&W selection differ from those above?
- Sept. 5: Revelation and Society
MAP EXERCISE DUE
McNeill and Waldman, 27-67
Question: What does the Prophet's message tell you about the society to which it was addressed? What were their issues?
- Sept. 7: The Arab Conquests
Lapidus, 37-53
- Sept. 12: Arabs and Conquered Peoples
McNeill and Waldman, 67-81
Question: Why were some people dissatisfied with Muslim society? What evidence leads you to that conclusion?
- Sept. 14: The Beginnings of Fragmentation
Lapidus, 54-67

CULTURE AND SOCIETY IN THE ABBASID MIDDLE EAST

- Sept. 19: The Abbasid Empire
Lapidus, 67-80
McNeill and Waldman, 111-134
Question: What does this selection suggest about ideal relationships among Muslims who are different? What is the evidence for your conclusion?

- Sept. 21: Culture in the Abbasid World
Lapidus, 81-97
- Sept. 26: Ordinary Muslim Society
McNeill and Waldman, 86-110
Question: From this evidence, what social groups existed in Muslim society? What were the tensions between them? How does the author use humor in his analysis?
- Sept. 28: The Disintegration of the Abbasid Empire
Lapidus, 126-136
McNeill and Waldman, 142-150
Question: What does this selection reveal about relationships between Muslims? What light does it shed on the disintegration of the empire?
- Oct. 3: MIDTERM

THE DEVELOPMENT OF RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS

- Oct. 5: The Growth of Islamic Law
Lapidus, 98-105, 164-167
McNeill and Waldman, 134-142
Discussion: Does the selection by al-Shafi'i sound like a lawbook? How does he determine the law?
- Oct. 10: Theology or Philosophy?
Lapidus, 105-109
McNeill and Waldman, 151-171
Question: What things in al-Farabi's essay would al-Ash'ari dislike? What things in al-Ash'ari's essay would al-Farabi dislike?
- Oct. 12: Shi'ism
Lapidus, 115-119, 162-164
- Oct. 17: Sufism: Islamic Mysticism
Lapidus, 109-115, 168-171
- Oct. 19: Sufi Expressions
Lapidus, 192-218, 253-264
McNeill and Waldman, 240-247
Question: What for Rumi are the primary values? How do they differ from al-Ash'ari's and al-Farabi's?

VARIETIES OF MUSLIM SOCIETY

- Oct. 24: Religion and Society
Lapidus, 120-125, 172-191
- Oct. 26: Ideals and Ethics
Lapidus, 218-237
McNeill and Waldman, 206-239
Question: According to Ghazali, what are the different approaches to religion?
How do they differ from those of the early Muslims?
- Oct. 31: Regional Cultures
Lapidus, 152-161
McNeill and Waldman, 171-180
Question: Rumi writes poems to God, and Mutanabbi writes poems to kings and poets; what similarities and differences do you find between them?
- Nov. 2: The Spread of Islam
Lapidus, 241-252, 264-275

THE TRAVELS OF IBN BATTUTA

- Nov. 7: The Travels of Ibn Battuta, 1325-1354
The Travels of Ibn Battuta by Ibn Battuta is on reserve and selections are on the web at <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/batuta.html>
McNeill and Waldman, 273-308
Dunn, 1-12
- Nov. 9: North Africa and Spain
Dunn, 13-40
Lapidus, 365-394
The Medieval Arab World
Dunn, 41-80
Lapidus, 344-358
- Nov. 14: Persia (Iran)
Dunn, 81-105
Lapidus, 365-394
East Africa
Dunn, 106-136
Lapidus, 524-535

- Nov. 16: Medieval Islam
- Nov. 21: Anatolia
Dunn, 137-158
Lapidus, 303-309
Central Asia
Dunn, 159-182
Lapidus, 414-436

THANKSGIVING BREAK

- Nov. 28: India
Dunn, 183-212
Lapidus, 437-452
The Indian Ocean
Dunn, 213-240
- Nov. 30: China
Dunn, 241-265
West Africa
Dunn, 290-309
Lapidus, 489-500
- Dec. 5: Conclusion
Dunn, 266-289, 310-320
- Dec. 14: FINAL EXAMINATION 11:00 AM

