

**Sacred and Ceremonial Textiles:  
A Study of Various Rites of Passage  
& Cultural Objects in Muslim Societies  
Fall 2011**

**Instructor:** Faegheh Shirazi  
ISL 372

**Course Description:**

From the birth to death textiles, clothing, and other material culture affects our daily lives. The communicative power of textiles and other types of material objects reflects both the everyday and ceremonial lives of people in a society. Although this course focuses on textiles and material objects indigenous to the Islamic world, some examples of non-Muslim communities will be included to draw a comparison. An attempt will be made to shed light on the culture of various Islamic societies. The study of the social and historical background of a community is essential for the interpretation of meanings and symbolism associated with textiles and other elements of material objects. Such a study will be combined in the course with topics like ceremonial gatherings; ceremonial textiles; adornment (jewelry, tattoos, body-painting); body modifications (piercing and body-reshaping); and the role of material objects in public and private celebrations. One of the areas which material objects represent relates to practices of rituals, taboos, and rites of passage in the societies, which can be traced to the pre Islamic era. Muslim communities in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East will be the primary focus of the course, and an attempt will be made to trace the common origins of ritual practices and their representation as a result to of diffusion and contact with other regional practices. Course presentations will be supported by videos, slide show and various material objects.

**Prerequisite:** Upper Division Standing

**Requirements: Regular class attendance**, active class participation, in class presentations, and contribution to class discussions, and two in class exams.

**Attendance Policy:** Attendance is mandatory and counts towards student's final grade. Undocumented absence will affect the attendance grade.

**Texts and Readings:** Reader's Packet (Speedway Copy Center. Ph. 478-3334)

**Grading:**

Attendance	5%
Participation	10%
3 Quizzes (Lowest will be dropped)	20%
First Exam	35%
Second Exam	30%

**(Revised: July 2011)**

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**1- Culture, Dress, and Cloth**

**August 25**

Grant McCracken. Clothing as Cloth... Expressive Properties of Material Culture

**August 30**

Beverly Gorden. The Fiber of our Lives: A Conceptual Framework for Looking at Textiles' meanings

**September 1st**

Robin O'Brian. Who Weaves and Why? Weaving, Loom Complexity and Trade

**September 6**

Kathryn S. March. Weaving writing and Gender

**2- Islam, Jinns, Rites of Pilgrimage, Gendered Discourses of Death, &**

**Male Circumcision**

**September 8**

The Holy Qur'an- About Jinns

William C. Young. The Ka'ba, Gender, and the Rites of Pilgrimage

**September 13**

Lila Abu-Lughod. Islam and the Gendered Discourses of Death

**September 15**

World Health Organization- Male Circumcision, Global Trends and Prevalence, Safety, and Acceptability

**3- Iran, Afghanistan, & Turkey**

**September 20**

Parviz Tanavoli- Lion Rugs from Fars (Iran)

Gary Wheeler- Visual Expressions of Violence and Symbolic Speech: Gendered Ars of War

**September 22**

Gillian Vogelsang Eastwood. The Turkish-Iranian Horse Hair Face Veil

Faegheh Shirazi – Sterility, Childbirth, Taboos and popular Religious Practices

**September 27**

Faegheh Shirazi- The *Sofreh*: Comfort and Community among Women in Iran

#### **4- India, Indonesia, & Malaysia**

**September 29**

Rahul Ramgundam- Khadi and its Agency: Organizing Structures of Philanthropic commerce (India)

Ruth Barnes- Indian Textiles for Island Taste (India)

**October 4**

Niky Guninder Jaur Singh- Sacred Fabric and Sacred Stitches: The Underwear of the Khalsa (India)

**October 6**

Susan S. Bean. Gandhi and Khadi, The Fabric of Indian Independence (India)

Bernard S. Cohn- Cloth, Clothes, and Colonialism: India in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century

**October 11 (Thursday) \*\*First Exam\*\***

**October 13**

Nils Bubndt- Interview with an Ancestor: Spirit and Informants and the Politics of Possession in North Maluku (Indonesia)

Fiona Kerlogue- Interpreting Textiles as a Medium of Communication: Cloth and Community in Malay Sumatra (Malaysia)

#### **5- Africa & North Africa**

**October 18**

Susan F. Rasmussen- Reflections on Witchcraft, Danger, and Modernity Among the Taureg

**October 20**

Brinkley Messick-Subordinate Discourse: Women, Weaving and Gender Relation in North Africa

**October 25**

Susan M. Kenyon- Movable Feast of signs: Gender in Zar in Central Sudan

**October 27**

Elisha P. Renne. Water, Spirits, and Plain White Cloth: The Ambiguity of Things in

**November 1st**

Bunu Social Life (Central Nigerian- Yoruba People)

**November 3**

Aretha Oluwakemi Asakitikpi- Function of hand Woven Textiles among Yoruba Women in Southwestern Nigeria

**November 8**

Patricia Darish- Dressing for the next life: Raffia Textile Production and use among the Kuba of Zaire

**November 10**

Adeyinka Theresa Ajayi- Weaving in Ekiti Land, Nigeria: The Gendered Perspective

**6- America**

**November 15**

Max Carocci- Textiles of Healing: Native American AIDS Quilts

**Thursday November 17**

**\*\* Second Exam\*\* & Last Day for this class**