

Geraldine Heng

E360S: #35475; MES 342: #41790; RS 357: #43650; WS 340: 46915. Fall 2016

### **ENVISIONING MUSLIMS: THE MIDDLE AGES AND TODAY: Course Description**

Our course will survey how Muslims are represented in the dominant cultural media of two important periods: the period known in the West as the European Middle Ages—a time in which Europe first became conscious of Muslims through Islamic invasions, multiple forms of cultural contact and negotiation, and the international wars known as “the Crusades”—and in the contemporary world of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, when Muslims have, once again, become prominent in the Western imagination.

In the medieval period, we will read selections from European chronicles and romances, Arab histories and biographies, and other cultural media, to see how Europeans envisioned Muslims, and how Muslims envisioned themselves. In the contemporary period, we will view clips from digital media representing several genres—including, Hollywood action adventure movies, biographies, television comedy, musicals, and films of mixed genre—to see how, and if, modern representations of Muslims differ from premodern representations. We will also view how Muslims represent themselves in digital media, including clips from Youssef Chahine’s “Saladin,” “Paradise Now,” Nadine Labaki’s “Caramel” and “Where do we go from here?” and the Axis of Evil comedy tour.

Course requirements: a collaboratively researched and authored term paper of at least 35 pages (50%), 1 in-class presentation (20%), attendance (10%) and active participation (20%). Texts listed here are suggestive, not final. All premodern texts read in modern English translation. Chahine’s “Saladin” has English subtitles.

#### TEXTS (tentative)

Selection of digital articles  
Autobiography of Usamah  
 R. Pape (selections)  
Richard Coer de Lyon  
Beha ad-Din, Biography of Saladin  
The King of Tars  
Mandeville’s Travels (selections)  
 John Tolan, Saracens (selections)

#### DIGITAL MEDIA (tentative)

Envisioning Muslims” (M. Sanders)  
 The Kingdom  
 Paradise Now  
 Saladin (Chahine’s)  
 Kingdom of Heaven  
 Caramel  
 Axis of Evil comedy tour  
 Where Do We Go Now?

**Prerequisites:** A) Completion of at least thirty semester hours of coursework, including E 603A, RHE 306, 306Q, or T C 603A, and a passing score on the reading section of the Texas Higher Education Assessment (THEA) test. B) English 316K, 603B, Comparative Literature 315, or Tutorial Course 603B. C) Nine semester hours of coursework in English or rhetoric and writing.

## ENVISIONING MUSLIMS: THE MIDDLE AGES AND TODAY: Course Schedule

### Wk 1: BEGINNINGS

8/24: Introduction, handouts, course policy, grading, requirements, texts, assignments, course structure, presentations, writing, deadlines.

Watch: "Envisioning Muslims," by Murray Sanders.

LABOR DAY ON 9/7; PUBLIC HOLIDAY, NO CLASS

### Wk 2: HISTORY, CONCEPTS, PEOPLE

8/31: 4 Presentations, on (1) The Origins of Islam and History of the Prophet; (2) Divisions and Sects in Islam: the Middle Ages and Today; (3) The Quran; (4) Where and Who are Muslims Today?

### Wk 3: THE CRUSADES: MODERN REPRESENTATIONS

9/7: Watch: "The Kingdom of Heaven."

Small group discussion.

### Wk 4: THE CRUSADES: ISLAMIC AUTOBIOGRAPHY

9/14: Read: selections from Ousama Munkidh, *The Autobiography of Ousama*. A 12<sup>th</sup> century prince of Shaizar.

Small group discussion and presentations.

### Wk 5: CULTURE HERO: SALAH AD-DIN YUSOF IBN AYUB ("SALADIN")

9/21: Read: Beha ad-Din, The Life of Saladin: p.xiii-45, p.110-120, p.244, p.248-321, p.398-409. Saladin and Richard Lionheart: history, biography, hagiography. The Saracen as culture hero.

Watch: Clips from Youssef Chahine's "Saladin;" clips from "Kingdom of Heaven."

Small group discussions and presentations.

### Wk 6: THE CRUSADES: MEDIEVAL EUROPEAN ROMANCE

9/28: Read: lines 2458-3756 of Richard Coer de Lyon (Middle English romance in modern translation). What is a "Saracen"? Religious-racial identities; holy war. Saracen religion; history and cultural fantasy as the ground of encounter, war/atrocities/jokes, depictions of the emir Saladin in Europe.

Small group discussion and presentations.

### Wk 7: HUMOR AND MUSLIMS

10/5: Watch: "The Axis of Evil Comedy Tour."

Small group discussions and presentations.

### Wk 8: MUSLIM WOMEN TODAY, TAKE 1: THE VARIETIES OF WOMEN'S LIVES

10/12: Watch: Nadine Labaki's "Caramel."

Small group discussions and presentations.

Wk 9: MUSLIM WOMEN TODAY, TAKE 2: THE VEIL

10/19: "Read: "The Battle of the Veil in Tunisia." Read:  
[http://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/17/fashion/muslim-women-hijab-style-traditional-garment-fashion.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/17/fashion/muslim-women-hijab-style-traditional-garment-fashion.html?_r=0)

Small group discussions and presentations.

Wk 10: "SUICIDE TERRORISTS," TAKE 1: QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS, POPULAR CULTURE

10/26: Read: "The Logic of Suicide Terrorism," interview with Robert Pape in *The American Conservative*, and a selection of opinion columns by Robert Pape.

Watch: "The Kingdom."

Small group discussion and presentations.

Wk 11: "SUICIDE TERRORISTS," TAKE 2: NATIONALISM, ECONOMICS, POLITICAL IDENTITY

11/2: Watch "Paradise Now."

Small group discussions and presentations.

Wk 12: THE SO-CALLED "ISLAMIC STATE" AND ITS "CALIPHATE"

11/9: Read: Selection of online articles

Small group discussions and presentations.

Wk 13: WHERE DO WE GO NOW?

11/16: Watch Nadine Labaki's: "Where Do We Go Now?"

Small group discussions and presentations.

Wk 14:

11/23: No class on the night before Thanksgiving, to enable students to travel home in time for Thanksgiving.

Wk 14:

11/30: **Term papers due today. There will be no extensions. Group leaders and teams will present their research and summarize their papers to the class.**

## ENVISIONING MUSLIMS: THE MIDDLE AGES AND TODAY

### **COURSE POLICY: READ THIS CAREFULLY**

The requirements for this course are: class attendance and active participation in large- and small-group discussions; the reading of your assigned texts, as demonstrated by your informed participation in large- and small-group classroom discussion; an in-class presentation on appropriate cultural, literary, historical or media material; and a final term paper that will be collaboratively researched and written in teams, due on Wednesday, November 30. Merely “speaking up” in class does not qualify as informed discussion that demonstrates your reading of assigned texts. You must demonstrate that you have read your texts.

Final grades for this course will be earned as follows: **10% for attendance, 20% for participation; 20% for an in-class research presentation, and 50% for a collaborative term paper of a minimum of 35 pages, typed and double-spaced.** Grades will be as earned; there will be no grading curve. **Grades are not negotiable.**

**Attendance will be taken from Week 2; 4 absences lead to an automatic grade of F for the course; 3 absences lead to no higher than a final grade of C for the course.** One point is deducted from your attendance percentage for every absence. Failure to make a presentation when a presentation has been scheduled will automatically result in an F for the presentation grade. Persistent lateness for class is penalized.

Presentations can take a variety of forms: discussion of historical, social, artistic, cultural, literary, scientific, political, or background material related to Muslims, Islam, the Near East, or the depiction of these subjects in the medieval period, today, or the eras between. The first 4 presentations of the semester are on assigned topics, and **will each earn an extra 5% bonus points if it receives a grade of 18% or above of the 20% assigned grade for presentations.**

When in doubt as to whether the subject or form of the presentation you have in mind is appropriate, please consult me in advance before or after class, during office hours, or by e-mail. **The maximum time for presentations is 20 minutes;** presentations exceeding this time limit, & extending into the time allotment of another student, will be penalized. **The first 4 presentations, however, are allowed up to 35 minutes each.** Presentations & term papers must be on different subjects: there should be no overlap in topic between your presentation and your term paper/project. Grades are confidential, & are not announced publicly, but consult me on your grade at any time: before/after class, during break, in office hours, or by email.

**Term papers:** We will conduct a collaborative research experiment in this course, focusing on a variety of projects, some of which will enable students to imagine how they would intervene effectively in today’s world through research, argument, and writing. Students will form “pods,” or small groups, to conduct research and writing. Each pod will consist of no fewer than 2 students and no more than 5, and will make its own decisions on the assignment of individual work and writing within the pod: **the grade earned for the paper is assigned to every individual in the pod.** Group leaders will report to me periodically on the progress of the group. Each group will summarize their research and their paper on the last day of class, when papers are to be submitted. **NO EXTENSIONS for submission of writing assignments.**

Six topics are offered, though you may suggest additional possibilities to me: (1) Write a letter convincing potential “jihadi brides” not to emigrate to the “Islamic State”; (2) Write a letter convincing men not to emigrate to the “Islamic State;” (3) Islamic women and sports; (4) Islam and the Arts; (5) A Muslim country or society, in the past or today; (6) How should the U.S., Europe, and the world combat the “Islamic State” today?

## ENVISIONING MUSLIMS: THE MIDDLE AGES AND TODAY

COURSE MATERIALS (all available as pdfs)

1. Ousama Munkidh, *The Autobiography of Ousama*.
2. Beha ad-Din, *The Life of Saladin*, p.xiii-45, p.110-120, p.244, p.248-321, p.398-409.
3. *Richard Coer de Lyon*.
4. "The Battle of the Veil in Tunisia."
5. [http://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/17/fashion/muslim-women-hijab-style-traditional-garment-fashion.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/17/fashion/muslim-women-hijab-style-traditional-garment-fashion.html?_r=0)
6. Pape.1: "The Logic of Suicide Terrorism," interview with Robert Pape in *The American Conservative*.
7. Pape.2: "Blowing Up an Assumption."
8. Pape.3: "Al Qaeda's Smart Bombs."
9. Pape.4: "To Beat the Taliban, Fight from Afar."
10. Selection of articles on the "Islamic State": digital links to online reading.

*Documented Disability Statement:* The University of Texas at Austin provides upon request appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. For more information, contact Services for Students with Disabilities at 471-6259 (voice) or 232-2937 (video phone), or visit <http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd>.

*Honor Code:* The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.

*Academic Integrity:* Any work submitted by a student in this course for academic credit will be the student's own work. For additional information on Academic Integrity, see <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/acadint.php>.

*Religious Holy Days:* By UT Austin policy, you must notify me of a pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, I will give you an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

*This course carries the Global Cultures flag.* Global Cultures courses are designed to increase your familiarity with cultural groups outside the United States. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from assignments covering the practices, beliefs, and histories of at least one non-U.S. cultural group, past or present.