

Dr. Spellberg  
Office:  
Office Hours:

Fall 2016, W 3-6 pm,

HISTORY OF ISLAM IN THE UNITED STATES, HIS 350R-22, ISL 372, RS 346

### **Course Description**

This course is intended to do three things: provide a brief introduction to Islam for those unfamiliar with the religion and its early history; define the role of Islam and early American views of Muslims in the founding history of this country; and introduce students to major issues concerning contemporary American Muslims. The course surveys the presence of Islam in the United States from the colonial era to the twenty-first century through the use of historical documents and contemporary media, with a special focus on politics, youth, and race.

The course is divided into three sections. The first explores the origins of Islam through primary textual examples. The second section focuses on early American views of Islam in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, with an emphasis on the earliest Muslims in the United States. The final section of the course analyzes the diversity of the contemporary American Muslim population, together with the politics surrounding notions of citizenship and the challenges faced by young American Muslims in the twenty-first century.

### **Objectives and Academic Flags**

This course may be used to fulfill three hours of the U.S. history component of the university core curriculum. The course carries 3 University-approved “Flags”: Cultural Diversity (CD), Independent Inquiry (II), and Writing (WR). The aim of courses with a CD flag is to “increase your familiarity with the variety and richness of American cultural experience as it applies to marginalized communities, their history, beliefs, and practices.” The course interrogates the question of whether one can be both American and Muslim in the 21<sup>st</sup>-century U.S. The course is designated also as a Writing Flag, which features assignments designed to improve written communication. The Independent Inquiry Flag focuses on communication skills, critical thinking skills, personal responsibility, and social responsibility.

### **Required Readings**

Hisham Aidi, *Rebel Music: Race, Empire, and the New Muslim Youth Culture* (Vintage, 2014)

Moustafa Bayoumi, *How Does It Feel To Be a Problem? Being Young and Arab in America* (2008)

Jonathan Brown, *Muhammad: A Very Short Introduction* (2011)

John Esposito, *What Everyone Needs to Know about Islam*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (2011)

Kambiz GhaneaBassiri, *A History of Islam in America* (Cambridge, 2010)

Denise A. Spellberg, *Thomas Jefferson’s Qur’an: Islam and the Founders* (2014)

Documents: Other primary and secondary readings posted on Canvas Website.

**All books on sale at the University Co-op (cheaper online sellers), and all books on reserve at PCL.**

**Grading/Requirements: Late Assignments Will Incur Grade Penalties**

**Journal Entries: 10%**, assigned over the semester and *due in class*. *No late work accepted*. Attendance Required/Class participation -unexcused absence results in a point deduction from the final grade

**September 14 Quiz 10%**, due in class

**September 28 First Essay 20%** due in class

**October 5, Timeline of Islam in Early America, 5%**, due in class

**2 November Second Essay, 20 %**, due in class

**9 November, Biography first draft 5%**, due in class; returned 16 November

**16 November and 30 November, Oral presentations of biographies, 10%**

**30 November, final draft of biography 10% and final essay due in class, 10%**

\*For this class, you **must** buy a notebook of lined paper 8 x 11 inches. (No computers or electronic devices of any kind will be permitted in this class, unless you are asked specifically to use them.) The journal will serve for required assignments to be checked by the instructor as indicated on the syllabus. \*Students should also bring readings as assigned for discussion on the day specified in the syllabus.

**Final Grade Distribution (A 94-100), A-(90-93), B+ (87-89), B (83-86), B- (80-82), C+ (77-79), C (73-76), C- (70-72), D+ (67-69), D (63-66), D- (60-62), F Below 60.**

\*Religious observances are always understood as excused absences, and missed work will be acceptable to make up within a reasonable period after the due date, 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>

To see examples of footnotes go to History Lab and log in. Click: Learning Resources > Quick Guides for Students > CMS [*Chicago Manual of Style*] Footnotes (and Bibliography) This is the History Lab Web site <https://sites.utexas.edu/historylab/>

**This course contains content that may provoke heated disagreement. Students should respect the feelings and perspectives of their classmates during class discussion. One of the aims of this class is to foster open, civil, and scholarly exchange, despite differences.**

**I. ISLAM: ORIGINS**

Week 1 August 24: Class Objectives/Assignments

Handout: "Comparison of dialogue and debate." Expectations of the professor and students.

Week 2 August 31: Sources of the Faith Readings

Brown, *Muhammad*. (all)

Handout: Qur'anic Verses; Canvas: Amartya Sen, "Civilizational Imprisonments," and Williams, *Word of Islam*, 1-35 (internal 13-39) and \*Journal Assignment #1 due in class: In two paragraphs, describe the main argument of "Civilizational Imprisonments" and explain how it might apply to this course. From the Williams reading, in one paragraph describe the importance of prophets in Islam. Select one quotation from Brown's book and be prepared to explain why you think it worthy of class discussion.

### Week 3 September 7: Early History: Conquest and the People of the Book

#### Readings

Canvas: Williams, *Word of Islam*, marked for this date, pp. 36 to end; "Pact of Umar," and "How the Jizya Is To Be Collected" \*Journal Assignment # 2 due in class: Explain in two paragraphs the importance of the "Pact" and the "Jizya" as historical documents. What do they reveal about Muslim interactions with non-Muslims?

#### **FILM**

### Week 4 September 14: Islamic Expansion and Cultural Interaction

#### **Quiz**

#### Readings

Canvas: Usamah ibn Munqidh, excerpt "An Appreciation of the Frankish Character" \*Journal Assignment # 3 due in class: From the perspective of the Muslim author, what is the "Frankish Character?" Describe this in two paragraphs.

## **II. ISLAM IN FOUNDING AMERICAN HISTORY**

### Week 5 September 21: American Views of Islam: The Qur'an in America

Readings: Spellberg, 1-157.

Read the Introduction to the first Qur'an translated into English in London in 1649:

<https://archive.org/stream/alcoranofmahomet00dury#page/n5/mode/2up>

Canvas: Images of the "Pope and Turk" and "Mahomet"

**FIELD TRIP TO HRC** at 3:30pm to see earliest Qur'ans in English

**First Essay Assigned**

### Week 6 September 28: Early American Debates about Muslims

#### Readings

Canvas: Documents for essay: U.S. Constitution Article 6, clause 3; Elliot's *Debates*, North Carolina state constitutional ratification convention "Wednesday July 30, 1788," pp. 191-215, Library Research Guide.

**First Essay Due**

### Week 7 October 5: Was the U.S. Founded as a Christian Nation? The Example of Thomas Jefferson

Readings: GhaneaBassiri, 1-134; Spellberg, 158-269.

**Assignment:** Based on Spellberg's book, create a typed timeline of 20 important events/documents/actions concerning Islam and Muslims in the U.S. For each event, specify the page number on which you found the reference. *Pass this in during class.*

Week 8 October 12 (Ashura and Yom Kippur): Race and Slavery

GhaneaBassiri, 1-94, Spellberg, 186-196.

Canvas: "Autobiography" of Omar ibn Said Autobiography of 1831.

### **Film**

**PLEASE Bring Computers to Class:** "How many Fatimas are there in the American South?" In-class research assignment.

\*Journal Assignment # 4: due in class: Write a brief life story, based on Omar ibn Said's autobiography. Explain why you think his story should be included in an American history class. Why do you think there are no biographies of African Muslim women? Three paragraphs.

## **III. ISLAM IN CONTEMPORARY AMERICA**

Week 9 October 19: Views of Islam in Contemporary America

GhaneaBassiri, 95-227.

Bayoumi, all. Be prepared to write a response to questions about individuals in this book. Bring your copy of this text to class.

### **FILM**

**Assignment of Second Essay on Bayoumi: Group Work in class**

Week 10 October 26: Race, Ethnic Diversity, and the First Muslims

How Does It Feel To Be a Problem?

GhaneaBassiri, 228-292

**Group work on Bayoumi continues; individual meetings with Dr. Spellberg about distributed biography assignment**

Week 11 November 2: What is Islamophobia? Incidents in Texas

Readings; Aidi, 1-158; GhaneaBassiri, 292-381.

<https://diversityandcivillife.org/research/islamophobia-in-texas/>; (access and read this report); and this article: <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2016/08/texas-muslims-threatened-increasing-islamophobia-160819195741303.html>

Journal Assignment #5: In your journal define Islamophobia in one paragraph, based on these readings. Then, consider how this has manifested itself in Texas. For local examples, look up the "Clock Kid," Ahmed Mohamed, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/amhtml/lifestyle/style/a-year-ago-ahmed-mohamed-became-clock-boy-now-he-cant-escape-that-moment/2016/08/02/2b8650be-484b-11e6-bdb9-701687974517\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/amhtml/lifestyle/style/a-year-ago-ahmed-mohamed-became-clock-boy-now-he-cant-escape-that-moment/2016/08/02/2b8650be-484b-11e6-bdb9-701687974517_story.html) and the incident at Kerbey Lane on Guadalupe in 2016. In one additional paragraph, are these incidents like or unlike those described by young people in Bayoumi's book?

**Second Essay Due; Final Essay Assignment Distributed**

Week 12 November 9: Muslim Media Portrayals and the Arts

Visiting Lecturer, Dr. Rebecca Hankins, Texas A&M: Lecture venue and time during class time to be announced!

Readings: Aidi, 159-334. Pay attention to pp. 159-194, “We Ain’t White.”  
 On Canvas, Hankins and Thornton, “The Influence of Muslims and Islam in Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Comics,” pp. 323-348

**Journal Assignment #6: According to Aidi, is race more important than religion in defining Muslim identity? One paragraph. Based on the Hankins/Thornton article, which aspect of Muslim/Islamic influence in popular literature surprised you the most? Be prepared to discuss with Dr. Hankins after her lecture.**

**\*First draft of biography essay due to Dr. Spellberg**

Week 13 November 16: Student Presentations of Biographies  
**Drafts of biography essay returned with comments**

Week 14 November 23 NO CLASS THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY

Readings

Esposito, *What Everyone Needs to Know about Islam*, all.

Week 15: November 30: Last Class Day: Student Presentations of Biographies  
**Final Biography and Final Essay Due in Class**