

# Islam in America: A Global History

## SYLLABUS

HMAN 1973N | Spring 2019

**Class: Mondays 10:00 AM – 12:30 PM, Pembroke Hall 003**

Professor Faiz Ahmed

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Office Hours: Mondays 2–4 PM, Peter Green 006

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## I. COURSE OVERVIEW

### Content

This course explores the history of Muslims in the United States—and American discourses about Islam—from colonial times to the present. As a broadly conceived transregional history, the seminar begins just before 1492 and follows five principal historical contexts and processes linking diverse geographic regions of the world. In roughly chronological order: (1) Iberian-Ottoman imperial rivalry in the Mediterranean and Indian Ocean and the latter’s relationship to the European colonization of the Americas; (2) the transatlantic slave trade and roots of African-American Islam; (3) the founders’ ideas about Muslims and religious freedom, and US diplomatic engagement with the Ottoman Empire, India, and the Philippines during the long nineteenth century; (4) the large-scale immigration of Muslims from the Middle East, South Asia, and the Balkans following the 1965 Civil Rights Act and repeal of race-based quotas; and finally, (5) the racialization of Muslim Americans—along with other minorities sometimes misidentified as Muslim including Arab, Sikh, South Asian, Iranian, Jewish, Black, and Latino/a Americans—before and after the US wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and 9/11.

We will not, however, stop there. A major component of the course is reading closely for underlying socioeconomic and cultural processes in and outside the US—including mercantile networks, migration patterns, and evolving conceptions of race, religion, and citizenship—themes often ignored by conventional political histories that dwell on watershed events or conflict. In addition to works on US diplomatic history with Muslim-majority states, we will also utilize travel diaries, memoirs, biographies, and other social literatures to explore the lives of both “ordinary” and famous Muslims in US history, including slaves and merchants, officials and celebrities, and artists and intellectuals. Our goal: to explore the diverse social, political, and economic processes connecting Africa, the Middle East, South Asia, and North America from the fifteenth to twenty-first centuries; and to appreciate how the history of Muslims in America is far more complex, varied, and deep-rooted than is generally assumed.

### Learning Goals

The course has three goals. First, it will provide you with a robust understanding of the history of Islam and Muslims in the United States, on topics ranging from influential persons and

institutions to critical social and economic processes including trade, labor, and migration; race, nationalism, and citizenship; as well as kinship, spirituality, gender, and family life. Second, this course practices what it means *to think, write, and speak historically* by analyzing various approaches and methodologies used to construct narratives about change over time. Third, it will provide you with resources and analytical tools that will enable you to further educate yourself and others about the history of Islam in the US and American discourses about Muslims (and similarly stigmatized minorities), through independent research of your own, including at local archives, libraries, or museums; and by presenting one's research to a non-academic audience.

## II. REGISTRATION AND WAITLIST

This seminar will be capped at 15 students maximum. **All students wishing to enroll must email the Professor a brief statement of interest (1 or 2 paragraphs) explaining why they wish to take this course.** See below for more information on the course requirements, including the final project. Please email your statement of interest to [Faiz\\_Ahmed@brown.edu](mailto:Faiz_Ahmed@brown.edu).

Enrollment will be on a rolling basis. While there are no prerequisites, priority might be given to seniors or students completing honors theses/capstone projects; those with prior courses or work experience in Islamic Studies, Middle East Studies, Africana Studies, South Asian Studies, Ethnic Studies, American Studies, or the history of American religions; and/or other relevant academic considerations. **Furthermore, priority registration will be given to those present on the first day of class, which is Monday, January 28, 2019, at 10:00 AM.**

## III. GRADING

Attendance and participation	25%
Weekly journal	10%
Film review (3-4 pages, double-spaced)	10%
Final project, including preliminary assignments and PowerPoint presentation	30%
Final report (8-12 pages, double-spaced)	25%

## IV. WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS AND DEADLINES

*All assignments below, except for the Final Report due May 17, should be printed out, stapled, and turn in to the professor at the start of the respective class.*

- **Due at the Beginning of Most Classes (Mondays, 10 AM): Weekly journal entry**  
Directions: choose your most meaningful (or, most bothersome) quotation from one of the week's readings. Write a brief comment of 1-2 paragraphs on why you have chosen it and what it means to you and your interests in Islam or religious history in America. Alternatively, you may write on a moving experience in preparing your final project. The first entry is due Monday, Feb. 4 and the last is due Monday, May 6. Journal entries are **not required** on days when other written assignments are due (see below).

- **Due Monday, February 25: Proposal describing your final project plan**  
Directions: Discuss your final project's research question, intended sources, and 3 possible community partner institutions to present your research to (see Engaged Scholarship Components section below). Also, name **one classmate** you have arranged to partner with in reviewing each other's final presentation draft. 1-2 pages, double-spaced.
- **Due Monday, March 11: Update on your final project progress**  
Directions: Discuss your **confirmed** topic, sources, community partner institution, class partner, and date and time of presentation. Make sure to include the **name and contact information** for the individual or office organizing your visit. 1-2 pages, double-spaced.
- **Due by Monday, April 8: Film review**  
Directions: The review should be on a movie or TV series episode with content about Islam/Muslims in America, historical or contemporary. The purpose of this assignment is not to summarize content, but to practice critical analysis with the opportunity for feedback on your writing. 3-4 pages, double-spaced.
- **Due Monday, April 22: Draft printout of PowerPoint slides for final presentation**  
Directions: Print out the PowerPoint slides for the first draft of your final project presentation. Prepare to present a draft 10-minute PowerPoint slide presentation on your final project, with the opportunity for feedback from the class (you should have already received feedback from your class partner by this date). There is no required length or format for the PowerPoint slides.
- **Due Friday, May 17: Final Report plus printout of PowerPoint presentation slides**  
Directions: The final report should reflect on your experience researching your topic, presenting to a community partner institution, working with your class partner, and journey in this course overall. 8-12 pages, double-spaced for Final Report. No required length of PowerPoint slides. **Please upload your report and slides to Canvas.**

## V. ENGAGED SCHOLARSHIP COMPONENTS

This course implements two special engaged scholarship components. First, at the mid-point of the semester, as a class we make a field trip to one of the most important research centers for local and regional history in our own neighborhood: the Rhode Island Historical Society in Providence. The purpose of this field trip is to survey library and archival collections on Asian, African, and Middle Eastern history (including ancestry and genealogical records) in New England from the eighteenth to twentieth centuries. A guided tour with a librarian or archival specialist will be arranged followed by a group discussion over lunch.

Second, at the conclusion of the semester and in lieu of a traditional final paper, each student will present her/his pre-approved research project in the form of a 20-minute professional presentation to a non-university partner institution in the greater Providence community. Options for community partners include the following organizations in the Providence area interested in learning more about Muslim communities in New England from a historical perspective:

- Churches, Synagogues, Mosques, Temples, or other religious congregations.

- Public libraries, YMCAs, or other community centers open to the public.
- Refugee support agencies in the greater Providence area.
- High school civics or social science classes.
- Other community centers or institutions pre-approved by the instructor.

To help you prepare a successful presentation, note the following strict deadlines (noted above):

- ❖ **Due Monday, February 25: Proposal describing your final project plan.**
- ❖ **Due Monday, March 11: Update on your final project progress.**
- ❖ **Due Monday, April 22: Draft printout of PowerPoint slides for final presentation.**
- ❖ **Due Friday, May 17: Final Report and printout of PowerPoint presentation slides.**

## VI. TEXTBOOKS

*Books marked with \* are available for free as Brown Library e-Books.*

\*Diouf, Sylviane A. *Servants of Allah: African Muslims Enslaved in the Americas*. New York: NYU Press, 2013.

GhaneaBassiri, Kambiz. *A History of Islam in America*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Gomez, Michael A. *Black Crescent: The Experience and Legacy of African Muslims in the Americas*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

Gruzinski, Serge. *What Time is it There? America and Islam at the Dawn of Modern Times*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2010.

\*Lockman, Zachary. *Contending Visions of the Middle East: The History and Politics of Orientalism*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Matar, Nabil. *Turks, Moors, and Englishmen in the Age of Discovery*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999.

Spellberg, Denise. *Thomas Jefferson's Quran: Islam and the Founders*. New York: Knopf, 2013.

## VII. MISCELLANIA

### Research Fund

With the generous support of the Cogut Institute for the Humanities, Swearer Center Engaged Scholarship Program, and the Watson Institute's South Asia in the World Course Development grant, I am happy to announce a small research fund will be available for every enrolled student to assist in meeting research and transportation expenses for their final project and presentation. Details TBA in class.

### **Course Time Allotment**

*The total of in-class hours and out-of-class work for all full credit courses at Brown is approx. 180 hours over the length of a semester. In this class, students seeking to maximize their learning can expect to spend 35 hours in class (2.5 hours per week for 14 weeks), 84 hours reading for class (6 hours per week), 6 hours on weekly journal entries (25 minutes per week), 10 hours researching and writing the Final Project Proposal, 5 hours on the Final Project Update, 6 hours on the Film Review, 24 hours on preparing and delivering the Final Presentation, and 10 hours on the Final Report. Actual times vary for each student; grades are not determined by the amount of time a student spends on the course.*

### **Accessibility**

Brown University is committed to full inclusion of all students. Please inform me if you have a disability or other condition that might require accommodations or modification of any of these course procedures. For more information contact Student and Employee Accessibility Services (SEAS) at 401.863.9588, SEAS@brown.edu, 20 Benevolent Street.

### **Classroom Policies**

Finally, please note the Classroom Policies at the end of this syllabus.

## **Course Schedule**

### **NOTE:**

- Links to all articles, book excerpts, e-books, and the latest Syllabus are always posted on the Canvas course website, <http://brown.edu/it/canvas/>.
- Students are responsible for staying up to date with the Syllabus, which may be occasionally adjusted from time to time.
- Field Trip Date TBA.

- = **Required reading**
- = **Recommended or related works for further research**
- ❖ = **assignment due**

### **Jan. 28: Introduction to the Course**

- Closely read Syllabus.
- Pam Mueller and Daniel Oppenheimer, “The Pen is Mightier than the Keyboard: Advantages of Longhand Over Laptop Note Taking,” *Psychological Science* 25 (2014): 1159-1168.
- Steven Eisenstat, “A Game Changer: Assessing the Impact of Princeton/UCLA Laptop Study,” *Suffolk University Law School Legal Studies Series* 15 (2015): 1-35.

**Feb. 4: First Encounters? Turks, Moors, and Britons in the Age of Discovery**

- Shakespeare's *Othello*, selected excerpts.
  - Abbas Hamdani, "Columbus and the Recovery of Jerusalem," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 99 (1979): 39-48 (skim)  
and "Ottoman Response to the Discovery of America," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 101 (1981): 323-30 (skim).
  - Matar, *Turks, Moors, and Englishmen*, Introduction, Chs. 1, 3, 5, Conclusion.
  - Jerry Brotton, *The Sultan and the Queen: The Untold Story of Queen Elizabeth and Islam* (Penguin Books, 2017).
- ❖ **Due: Weekly journal entry.**

**Feb. 11: Islam after 1492—Muslims and their Interlocutors between Old and New Worlds**

- Gruzinski, *What Time is it There?*
  - Sophia Arjana, *Muslims in the Western Imagination* (Oxford University Press, 2015).
  - Maria del Mar Logroño and Paulo Pinto, *Crescent over Another Horizon: Islam in Latin America, the Caribbean, and Latino USA* (University of Texas Press, 2015)
- ❖ **Due: Weekly journal entry.**

Feb. 18: UNIVERSITY HOLIDAY – NO CLASS

**Feb. 25: The Transatlantic Slave Trade and Roots of African-American Islam**

- Diouf, *Servants of Allah*, Intro and Chs. 1-4 and 6.
  - Gomez, *Black Crescent*, Prologue, Chs. 4-5, Interlude.
  - *The Autobiography of Omar ibn Sayyid* (1831), pp. 1-9.
  - Terry Alford, *Prince Among Slaves* (Oxford University Press, 2007)
  - Allan Austin, *African Muslims in Antebellum America: Transatlantic Stories and Spiritual Struggles* (Routledge, 1997).
- ❖ **Due: Proposal describing your final project plan.**

**Mar. 4: "Neither Pagan nor Mahamedan nor Jew ought to be excluded": The Founding Fathers on Race, Religion, and Islam**

- Spellberg, *Thomas Jefferson's Quran*, Introduction and Chs. 1-7.
  - Benjamin Franklin, "On Rev. George Whitefield," (1739).
  - The Virginia Act for Establishing Religious Freedom (1786).
- ❖ **Due: Weekly journal entry.**

**Mar. 11: Orientalism and European Empires: Cultural Legacies in the Early United States**

- Lockman, *Contending Visions of the Middle East*, Chs. 2-3.

- Kim Fortuny, *American Writers in Istanbul: Melville, Twain, Hemingway et al* (University of Washington Press, 2009), Introduction, Chs. 1-2.
  - Whitman, “A Persian Lesson,” in *Leaves of Grass* (1855).
  - Brian T. Edwards, *Morocco Bound: Disorienting America’s Maghreb, from Casablanca to the Marrakech Express* (Duke University Press, 2005).
- ❖ **Due: Update on your final project progress.**

**Mar. 18: Imagining a “Muslim world”: Islam and US Foreign Policy from North Africa to Southeast Asia, 19th-20th centuries**

- Cemil Aydin, *The Idea of the Muslim World: A Global Intellectual History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017), Introduction, Chs. 1-2.
  - Karine V. Walther, *Sacred Interests: The United States and the Islamic World, 1821-1921* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), Introduction, Chs. 5-6, 8, Conclusion.
  - Lockman, *Contending Visions of the Middle East*, Ch. 4.
  - Osamah Khalil, *America’s Dream Palace: Middle East Expertise and the Rise of the National Security State* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016).
  - Seteney Shemi and Cynthia Miller-Idriss, *Middle East Studies for the New Millennium: Infrastructures of Knowledge* (NYU Press, 2016).
- ❖ **Due: Weekly journal entry.**

Mar. 25: SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS

**Apr. 1: “Turks and Hindoos” in Victorian America: Early Ottoman and Indian Migration to the US and the Question of Ethno-Religious Categories**

- GhaneaBassiri, *A History of Islam in America*, pp. 9-14, Chs. 3-4.
  - Umar Abd-Allah, *A Muslim in Victorian America: The Life of Alexander Russell Webb* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), Ch. 1, 3, Conclusion.
  - Sangay Mishra, *Desis Divided: The Political Lives of South Asian Americans* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016), pp. 19-26.
  - Kemal Karpat, “Ottoman Emigration to America, 1860-1914,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 17 (1985): 175-209.
  - Vivek Bald, Miabi Chatterji, Sujani Reddy, and Manu Vimalassery. *The Sun Never Sets: South Asian Migrants in an Age of US Power* (New York: NYU Press, 2013).
- ❖ **Due: Weekly journal entry.**

**Apr. 8: The Evolution of African-American Islam in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century**

- Gomez, *Black Crescent*, Chs. 6-8, Epilogue.
- *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1965), Chs. 1, 13-14, 17-19.

- Melani McAlister, “The Middle East in African American Cultural Politics, 1955-1972,” in *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and US Interests in the Middle East since 1945* (University of California Press, 2005), Ch. 2.
  - Sherman Jackson, “Black Orientalism,” in *Islam and the Blackamerican* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).
- ❖ **Due: Last day to submit Film Review.**

**Apr. 15: Critical Convergences: The Civil Rights Act of 1965, Afro-Asian Immigration, and early American Muslim Institutions**

- GhaneaBassiri, *A History of Islam in America*, Chs. 5-7.
  - Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, *Becoming American: The Forging of Arab and Muslim Identity in Pluralist America* (Baylor University Press, 2011).
- ❖ **Due: Weekly journal entry.**

**Apr. 22: Final Project Presentation Rehearsals**

- Prepare and present a draft 10-minute Powerpoint slide presentation on your final project, with the opportunity for feedback from with class.
- ❖ **Due: Draft printout of PowerPoint slides for final presentation**

**Apr. 29: Final Project Presentation Rehearsals, continued.**

**May 6: Being Muslim in post-9/11 America: Change and Continuity, Histories and Futures**

- GhaneaBassiri, *A History of Islam in America*, Ch. 8, Epilogue.
  - Lockman, *Contending Visions of the Middle East*, Afterword.
  - Spellberg, *Thomas Jefferson’s Quran*, Afterword.
  - “A New Beginning,” President Barack H. Obama’s Cairo Speech (2009)
  - Khaled Beydoun, *American Islamophobia: Understanding the Roots and Rise of Fear* (University of California Press, 2018).
  - Mucahit Bilici, *Finding Mecca in America* (University of Chicago Press, 2012).
  - Suad Abdul Khabeer, *Muslim Cool: Race, Religion, and Hip Hop in the United States* (NYU Press, 2016).
  - Leila Fadel, “Being Muslim in America,” *National Geographic* (May 2018): 42-77.
- ❖ **Due: Weekly journal entry.**

❖ **Due May 17: Final Report and printout of PowerPoint slides (Upload to Canvas)**



## Classroom Policies

**In addition to all other course requirements described in this syllabus, three simple contractual rules govern our class meetings. They are:**

1. No recording (audio or video) or photography is allowed without express written permission of the professor.
2. This course has instituted a **No-Laptop, No-Gadget Policy**. Unless you have an exemption from the professor, keep all computers, phones, gadgets and screens closed during class and take notes by hand.
3. Finally, please respect your classmates, instructor, and the course material by arriving on time, and in general by treating each other with the respect you would like others to show you.

Thank you and I look forward to a memorable semester together.

*Professor Ahmed*