

Department of History, Dalhousie University
Winter, 2016

HIST 2503/RLST 2503

*Classical and Medieval History of Islamic
Civilization*



Illustration on Fountain Design from al-Jazari's *Book of Knowledge of Ingenious Devices* (13th c., Anatolia)

Instructor: Prof. C. Mitchell
Time: MWF, 10:30-11:30
Location: LSC 332

Office Hours: Fridays, 1:30 -3:30 p.m.
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I) COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVE

This course will introduce students to the Perso-Levantine world at the time of Muhammad's prophecy in the 7th century, and how the Arabian Peninsula was impacted by the creation and emergence of an Islamic society in Medina and Mecca. With the displacing of Byzantine control in the Holy Land and the collapse of the Sasanian Empire in Persia, the Arab-centric society of Mecca and Medina had become an empire of unprecedented size and ethnic complexity. The class will examine the respective Umayyad and `Abbasid dynasties, as well as the slave states of the Saljuqs and Mamluks. The final portion of the course will focus on the gunpowder empires of the Ottomans, Safavids, and Mughals. The central theme of this course will be an examination of the Islamic community, or *umma*, from its earliest days and how it interacted over the next thousand years with different surrounding traditions and cultures in the Mediterranean, the Iranian Plateau, the Caucasus, the Steppe, India, and Southeast Asia. Another important theme will be the study of how various Islamic societies understood and resolved the age-old dynamic between tribal nomadism and hierarchical urbanism. This course will strive to strike a balance between understanding Islamic civilization in both a societal and historical context.

While students will not necessarily be expected to have a background in Islamic history, they will be expected to keep up with readings and pursue supplementary material should they choose to.

II) COURSE FORMAT

This class has lectures twice a week (Mondays and Wednesdays), and tutorials once a week (Fridays). There is also a blog where class materials, announcements, and tutorial readings will be posted. The professor will not post his lectures or power-point presentations online; they will not be provided individually to students on any basis.

As has been the practice since the establishment of universities, students are expected to read and take lecture notes. Processing information and recording/organizing it in your own words is *inherently* cognitive; taking notes is an important part of the learning and comprehension process. Simply put: students who don't take consistent notes almost always underperform in this course. On Fridays, there will be class discussions, and students will be expected to participate fully.

III) COURSE REQUIREMENTS

i) Article Review (10%)

Students will select one academic article from an available list. They will summarize and critique this article in 4-5 pages (1000-1250 words).

Due: Jan. 25, 2016 (late penalty in effect!)

ii) Research Essay (25%)

Students will be expected to research and write a essay 2,500-3,000 words on a topic(s) to be distributed later in the semester.

Length: 10-12 pages (ca 2,500-3000 words)

Due: April 6, 2016 (late penalty in effect!)

iii) Mid-term Exam (20%)

Combination multiple choice, identifications, and short essay(s)
Scheduled: Feb.10, 2016

iv) Final Exam (30%)

Identification and essay questions.
Scheduled: T.B.A.

v) Tutorial Participation (15%)

Students are expected to read assigned primary source texts and discuss these in an engaged manner every Friday.

Note on submissions and deadlines:

- All assignments are due on their respective due dates; no extensions will be granted.
- Failure to submit an essay on its proper due date result in a 3% per day penalty (5% per weekend) for a maximum of 1 week. If students are having difficulty with an assignment, they are encouraged to approach the instructor as soon as possible.

****Note***:* Students must fulfill every portion of this course (book review, research paper, mid-term, final) to receive a grade. Non-completion of any major assignment for this course will result in a failure (F).

IV. ATTENDANCE

Students must attend class, and absenteeism will jeopardize a student's performance. Poor attendance affects the final grade in the following ways:

1. 3-5 unexcused absences = final grade will be reduced by an order of one (i.e. a grade of B becomes a B-; a C+ becomes a C; a C- becomes a D)
2. 6-7 unexcused absences = final grade will be reduced by an order of two (i.e. a grade of A- becomes a B; a B becomes a C+; a C becomes a D)
3. 8+ unexcused absences = final grade will be reduced by an order of three (i.e. a grade of B- becomes a C-; a C+ becomes a D; a grade lower than C- will revert to a F.

An attendance ledger will be circulated at the beginning of class. If a student fails to sign in, the student is counted absent. If a student wants an absence counted as excused, he/she must submit a valid written excuse within one week of the absence. Medical excuses will be accepted; all other excuses are subject to scrutiny.

Note that attendance is more than a student's physical presence. Students who check Facebook, surf the net, send text messages, or otherwise ignore or interrupt the lecture will be counted as absent and this behavior will be noted. Students should not attend if they are going to be more than ten minutes late.

V. ACCOMODATION AND ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Accommodation Statement:

Students may request accommodation as a result of barriers related to disability, religious obligation, or any characteristic under the Nova Scotia Human Rights Act. Students who require academic accommodation for either classroom participation or the writing of tests and exams should make their request to the Advising and Access Services Center (AASC) prior to or at the outset of the regular academic year. Please visit www.dal.ca/access for more information and to obtain the Request for Accommodation – Form A.

A note taker may be required as part of a student's accommodation. There is an honorarium of \$75/course/term (with some exceptions). If you are interested, please contact AASC at 494-2836 for more information.

Please note that your classroom may contain specialized accessible furniture and equipment. It is important that these items remain in the classroom, untouched, so that students who require their usage will be able to participate in the class.

Academic Integrity Statement:

All students in this class are to read and understand the policies on academic integrity and plagiarism referenced in the Policies and Student Resources sections of the academicintegrity.dal.ca website. Ignorance of such policies is no excuse for violations.

Any paper submitted by a student at Dalhousie University may be checked for originality to confirm that the student has not plagiarized from other sources. Plagiarism is considered a serious academic offence which may lead to loss of credit, suspension or expulsion from the University, or even to the revocation of a degree. It is essential that there be correct attribution of authorities from which facts and opinions have been derived. At Dalhousie there are University Regulations which deal with plagiarism and, prior to submitting any paper in a course, students should read the Policy on Intellectual Honesty contained in the Calendar or on the Online Dalhousie website. The Senate has affirmed the right of any instructor to require that student papers be submitted in both written and computer-readable format, and to submit any paper to be checked electronically for originality. As a student in this class, you are to keep an electronic copy of any paper you submit, and the course instructor may require you to submit that electronic copy on demand.

VI. ELECTRONIC DEVICES

Numerous studies and articles have appeared in recent years regarding the negative impact of screen technology (laptops, smart phones, tablets, etc.) on students during lectures. For this reason, the instructor asks that students do not bring such electronic devices to class. Part of tutorial will be dedicated to explaining effective note-taking for students.

VII. AGREEMENT AND CONSENT

By enrolling in this class you agree to accept the policies described in this document. You have the right to withdraw if you do not accept these policies.

VIII. TEXTS

Available at Dalhousie University Bookstore (Basement, SUB)

Jonathan Berkey, *The Formation of Islam: Religion and Society in the Near East 600-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

IX. COURSE SCHEDULE

Date	Topic	Time Period	Readings
Jan. 4	Introduction		
Jan. 6	Geography Session		
Jan. 8	Tutorial: Studying Islamic History		
Jan. 11	The Ancient Near East	300-600	Berkey, 1-38
Jan. 13	Pre-Islamic Arabia	500-600	Berkey, 39-50
Jan. 15	Tutorial: <i>The Hanged Poems</i>		Posted on blog
Jan. 18	The Prophet Muhammad and Islam	580-632	Berkey, 58-69
Jan. 20	Movie: <i>Islam: The Empire of Faith (I)</i>		
Jan. 22	Tutorial: <i>Ibn Hisham's Biography of the Prophet</i>		Posted on blog
Jan. 25	The Rightly-Guided Caliphs and Fitna (Civil War) <i>Article Review Due</i>	632-661	Berkey, 70-82
Jan. 27	The Umayyad Caliphate and the Invasions of the East	661-750	Berkey, 83-90
Jan. 29	Tutorial: Al-Tabari and the Debate at Saqifa Bani Sa`ida		Posted on blog
Feb. 1	The Abbasid Revolution (750)	740-750	Berkey, 102-09
Feb. 3	Islamic Civilization in the West; Rise of Andalusia	700-1000	
Feb. 5	Munroe Day: Class Cancelled		
Feb. 8	Golden Era of Abbasid Empire	800-900	Berkey, 113-18
Feb. 10	<i>Midterm</i>		
Feb. 12	Tutorial: <i>A Thousand and One Nights</i>		Posted on blog
Feb. 15	Break		
Feb. 17	Break		
Feb. 19	Break		
Feb. 22	Shi`ism and the Fatimid Empire	700-1000	Berkey, 130-40
Feb. 24	Movie: <i>Islam: The Empire of Faith (II)</i>		
Feb. 26	Tutorial: Research Session		

Feb. 29	The Translation Movement	750-850	Berkey, 113-15
Mar. 2	Muslim Philosophy and Mutazilism	750-1100	Berkey, 124-29
Mar. 4	Tutorial: Ibn al-Nadim's <i>Fihrist</i>		Posted on blog
Mar. 7	Islamic Law	750-1000	Berkey, 141-51
Mar. 9	Islamic Mysticism	900-1250	Berkey, 152-58; 231-247
Mar. 11	Tutorial <i>Masnawi</i> by Jalal al-Din Rumi		Posted on blog
Mar. 14	Decline of the Abbasids & Rise of Seljuks	900-1100	Berkey, 179-88
Mar. 16	Sunni Revivalism and Education	1050-1200	Berkey, 189-98
Mar. 18	Tutorial: <i>Deliverance from Error</i> by al-Ghazali		Posted on blog
Mar. 21	The Crusades	1100-1300	Berkey, 198-202
Mar. 23	The Mongols	1200-1300	Berkey, 203-15; 248-257
Mar. 25	Class cancelled		
Mar. 28	Rise of the Ottomans	1280-1600	Berkey, 261-66
Mar. 30	Movie: <i>Islam: Empire of Faith (III)</i>	1280-1600	Berkey, 261-66
Apr. 1	Tutorial: De Busbecq's account of Suleiman the Magnificent		Posted on blog
Apr. 4	Rise of the Safavids	1500-1600	Berkey, 266-69
Apr. 6	Review for Final Exam; <i>Final Paper Due</i>	1500-1600	