Women and Islam

SYLLABUS

HIST4335/WMST4335 and sundry other crosslistings

University of Wyoming, Spring Semester 2009. Tuesdays, 7 to 9:50 pm. Compressed video course: UW on campus section meets in CR 105; distance enrolled students attend at their local compressed video site.

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Can a cultural and religious system that seems to regard gender difference as immutable produce gender equality? This course will examine women’s lives in Islamic societies from the seventh century to the present, in the Middle East and throughout the world. Topics will include women’s position in Islamic law; Muslim women’s differing lives in various societies; Muslim women’s movements in relation to radical Islam, secularism, nationalism and socialism; Muslim women’s religious practices; recent controversies over veiling, and others. The format will include lecture and discussion. Course materials include several books, articles, and films.

Assessment of student work:

This is a DISCUSSION BASED course. Your presence is required. One absence will be excused. A second absence will cause your final grade to be lowered by two letters (i.e., from A to C). More than two absences will result in your failure of this course.

Discussion/participation is more than just showing up. Come to class having done the reading, having thought about it, and having written a few notes that will help you to participate in discussion. Speak up. Benchwarming (that is, just sitting in class without talking) earns a D for discussion/participation. Discussion/participation is 30% of your grade.

Written work is described at the end of this syllabus. Each of the first five assignments is worth 10% of your grade. The final paper is worth 20% of your grade. Late work is NOT ACCEPTED and earns a grade of 0 (zero). You will have ONE opportunity to take a five day extension on a deadline. You cannot use this on the first assignment, but after that, you need to notify me by
email before the paper is due (this can be on the day that it is due) that you will take your extension. I do not need to know the reason.

Grading scale: A=91-100; B+81-90; C=71-80; D=61-70; F=0-60

Requirements for **graduate students**: Final paper 3000 words, involving research and an engagement with feminist theory.

This course meets the Arts and Sciences “Non-Western” requirement.

I adhere to standards described in Teachers and Students Working Together. I expect you to abide by Academic Honesty standards (for a description of Academic Honesty, dishonesty, plagiarism, etc., see the Academic Honesty link on the UW A-Z directory). For regulations and guidelines explaining Academic dishonesty and how the University handles cases such as plagiarism, see this link: [http://uwadmnweb.uwyo.edu/a&s/Appeals_Dishonesty/guidelines_Dishonesty.htm](http://uwadmnweb.uwyo.edu/a&s/Appeals_Dishonesty/guidelines_Dishonesty.htm)

Please inform me about disabilities, so that I can make necessary accommodations.

**Required texts:**


*The Qur’an*. If you do not own a copy, you can borrow one from the library (where you will find them under a keyword search for the earlier standard English spelling, Koran) or you can use an on-line version. Links to on-line versions are found under the "websites" link.


Required chapters, found on UW Library Electronic Reserve. My strong suggestion is that you download all of them onto a CD or other memory device. However, this list is still being edited, so don’t rush ahead and try to obtain all of these yet (and anyway, I haven’t put them on e-reserve yet). Some will be removed and others added.

Abou El Fadl, Khaled. Speaking in God’s Name: Islamic Law, Authority, and Women. Oxford: One World Press, 2001, 170-208 (Chapter 6); and 222-262 (part of Chapter 7).


Week 1

January 12

Film selections from “Women and Islam”

For class today, read all of Mernissi, Dreams of Trespass. Discussion questions found on the tab for this week will serve as a guide to reading.

For next Tuesday, read Ahmed, 1-63. Read discussion questions/instructions on ecompanion to prepare for Tuesday discussion.

Read Quran 24, “Light”: 1-20, on adultery, and lying; 23-26 on blaspheming chaste women; 27-34, on behavior in others’ homes, on how men and women should conduct themselves with modesty, on marriage; 56-61, on proper behavior and seeing people undressed

Week 2

Tuesday, January 19 In class discussion of Ahmed 1-63 and Quran passages

For next week: Read Ahmed 64-101

Film selections from Paradise Lies at the Feet of the Mother

Read Quran 2, “The Cow”: 221-242, on whom one can marry, on menstruation, and on divorce
Surah 55, 46 to end, Ar-Rahman. On the very masculine version of paradise

Surah 76, 1-22, Time. A not so masculine version of paradise; see also 13: 22-24

Come to class prepared for discussion—access the discussion questions to give you a guideline to readings for this week.

Written work: begin web searching for websites, videos, blogs where Muslim women present themselves and their thoughts on Islam. Find one topic that seems to be important to Muslim women who are presenting their own thoughts and

**Week 3**

Tuesday, January 26

Film selections from “Women and Islam”

Read Ahmed 102-143

Read Qur’an 4, “The Women”: 1-25, on slaves, orphans, marriage, inheritance, adultery, same-sex relationships, forbidden marriages; 32-36, on who has responsibility of providing (and the beating verse)

First thought piece due

**Week 4**

Tuesday, Feb 2

Film selection, “Paradise lies at the feet of the mother”

Read Ahmed 144-188

On e-reserve, read Qasim Amin, The Liberation of Women and the New Woman

Read Surah 33, 1-8, The Allied Troops. Where the Prophet is permitted to marry the divorced wife of his adopted son; 28-34: wives of the Prophet, you are not like other women; 35-40 Believing men and women; 49-52 on whom one can marry; 53-58 on showing respect by not barging in; 59, tell women to draw their wraps around them

**Week 5**

Friday, Feb 9

Film selection from Inside Islam
Read Ahmed 189-207

Read al-Ali 1-108

Read Qur’an, Surah 60, verse 7 to end, The Woman Tried. Concerns treatment of women from conquered groups, or women who are associated with unbelievers.

Surah 65, all. Divorce.

Surah 66, all. Prohibition. On Muhammad’s dispute with his wives.

Due Sunday, midnight, essay.

**Week 6**

Tues Feb 16

Read Ahmed, 208-248

Read al-Ali 109-146

Film selection from Inside Islam

**Week 7**

Feb 23

Film selection from Born Again Muslims

Read al-Ali 149-213

Read Deniz Kandiyoti, “Bargaining with Patriarchy,” *Gender and Society*, 1988, vol. 2, no. 3: 274-290. You can find this article by going to the Library Articles and Databases index, selecting J-STOR, and then choosing the journal title (Gender and Society) and finding the article by date.

**Week 8**

March 2

Film selection: “Veiled Revolution”

Read al-Ali 214-270

On e-reserve, read Women Embracing Islam
Choose either selections from Shattering the Stereotypes or from Living Islam Outloud Midnight, thought piece on Muslim women’s self-presentations on web due

**Week 9**

March 9

Film selections: “Persepolis”

Read Osanloo, The Politics of Women’s Rights in Iran, 1-108

Read Shehadeh, on e reserve

Read selections from Women and Sexuality in Muslim Societies, on e reserve

**Week 10**

March 23

Film: Divorce Iranian Style

Read Osanloo, the Politics of Women’s Rights in Iran 108-end

Read Abou el Fadl, on e reserve; optional, read Anwar on e-reserve

fourth essay due Sunday night at midnight.

**Week 11**

March 30

Read Wadud, Inside the Gender Jihad, 1-86

Film selection: “Honorable Murder”

Choose from these e reserve readings

Deeb, Doumato, Van Doorn-Harder
Week 12

April 6, Wadud, Inside Gender Jihad 87-186

Film: Under one Sky

Read e-reserve by Moghadam, in Gender, Politics and Islam

Week 13

April 13 Wadud 187 to end

Read e-reserves Bibars, and Altorki in Gender and Citizenship

Week 14

April 20 Lazreg, a letter

Week 15

April 27

Wrap up discussion on everything!

Written work for this course:

All papers are to be turned in through the dropbox on ecompanion. Nothing is turned in on paper. The name that you give to your file should begin with your last name. Files should be in .doc format (Word 97-2003, not docx, which is Word 2007). If your computer does not have MSWord, then save your document in .rtf format.

Citation format is CHICAGO STYLE with footnotes. Every essay should use footnotes, not endnotes or in-text citations, to cite sources. Every essay should also have a bibliography, again in Chicago style (organized by author last name). Citation should take place when you include information that you found in a source, and that you did not know before you read that source. Citation is necessary NOT ONLY when you are quoting, but ALSO when you are simply referring to what a source tells you. Fuller instructions for citation will be found on the ecompanion.
1. 750 word thought piece reflecting on Qur’an and Ahmed readings. Discuss any themes that interest you, but you need to include an explanation of the term misogyny, with examples, and you need to address Ahmed’s discussion, on pp. 65-66, about two tendencies that readers of the Qur’an might find, an “ethical egalitarian” voice, and a voice that stresses social order.

2. 1250 word essay that draws on Ahmed, Amin, and Qur’an. The essay must be structured with a clear thesis statement, several arguments that support the thesis, and a conclusion. It should be your first attempt to address the question: “What explains women’s subordination/inequality: Islam or culture? and what brings about change (liberatory or restricting)?”

3. 750 word thought piece that reflects on what you have found on Muslima websites.

4. 1250 word essay based primarily on Abou el Fadl, using any other sources you choose, to discuss a second time: “What explains women’s subordination/inequality: Islam or culture? and what brings about change (liberatory or restricting)?”

5. 750 word thought piece, comparing readings from Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday of this week.

6. Final paper. Your choice:

1. Write a book review that ties issues in book to general course content. Length, 1250-2500 words (5-10 pages). The review needs to explain the book’s content in sufficient detail that the review reader understands the central argument, or else the main story (this should be no more than one half of the review). The second part of the review should be a discussion of the argument or the themes of the book in the context of other things that you read this semester: connections, comparisons, contradictions. Ultimately, you are trying to explain what the reader is saying about women in a particular Islamic society, whether the author sees women as equal to men or as subordinate to men, why, and whether and how the author calls for change.

Use one of these books:

Nawal el Saadawi, *The Fall of the Imam* (a novel)

Fatima Mernissi, *Dreams of Trespass: tales of a harem girlhood* (a memoir)

Khaled Hosseini, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (a novel)

Assia Djebar, *Fantasia, an Algerian Cavalcade* (a novel)

Assia Djebar, *Sister to Scheherazade* (a novel)


Choice 2: A final essay on the question: “What explains women’s subordination/inequality: Islam or culture? and what brings about change (liberatory or restricting)?” 1200-2500 words, structured as an essay, with a clear thesis statement, supporting arguments, and a conclusion. The essay should draw on at least five different sources from your course readings.