History of the Middle East

Fall 2015

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Office Hours: M-F 10:00-10:50
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And by Appointment
(Note: Office hours may be cancelled due to campus meetings)

Texts: Tamim Ansary, Destiny Disrupted: A History of the World Through Islamic Eyes
N. I. Matar, Islam for Beginners
Karen Armstrong, Muhammad: A Prophet for Our Time
Reza Aslan, No god but God: The Origins, Evolution, and Future of Islam

Introduction: Today the Middle East is probably the most politically volatile part of the world. A day does not go by without the region dominating the headlines. But how much do we really know about the Middle East and of Islam, the dominant religion of the region? Much of the media attention since September 11th has concentrated on ISIS, suicide bombings, the wars in Gaza, Afghanistan and Iraq, and other acts of violence that color the entire region. Islam is often portrayed as violent and anti-Western. Is this a true image? How has the so called “Arab Spring” change the region? This semester we will examine the history of the region from the rise of Islam in the 7th Century to the present. We will look at how Islamic civilization developed and spread. We will look at the background and origins of the issues, such as the appeal of ISIS, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the Sunni-Shi’ia divide that we are still trying to solve today. By the end of the semester, you will have a much broader understanding of the region, its people and its history.

Learning Objectives: By the end of the semester you should be able to:
1. Identify significant events, peoples, ideas, and historical trends that have shaped the Middle East, historically, socially, culturally, and politically.
2. Explain the main principles of the Islamic religion and its impact on all institutions, both secular and religious.
3. Discuss the significance of the Caliphates, the Ottoman Empire, and the Safavid Empire.
4. Explain the contributions of Islamic Civilization to art, science, and mathematics.
5. Describe the roots of the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians and how this conflict affects the region and the rest of the world.
6. Describe the response of Islam to modernity and how it impacts on contemporary society.

Class Format: This course is basically designed around a lecture, reading, and discussion format with assigned readings in the text and regular written evaluations.

Grades: Your final grade will be based on the cumulative total of points earned on exams, quizzes, and your Articles Notebook. There will be 484 points available. Your final grade will be based on the standard 10% scale. There is no extra credit.

Exams and Quizzes: There will be three exams, including the final. Each exam will be worth 100 points. Each exam will consist of two parts: short answer-identification, and an essay. The first two exams will be taken in the Assessment Center and are scheduled for the weeks of: September 21st, October 26th. The final exam will be in class on Dec. 11th. There will also be up to four quizzes, each worth 25 points. The quizzes will be a combination of short answer-identification, fill in and blank, and matching.

Article Notebook: Starting next you will be required to keep an “Articles Notebook.” A separate handout describes this assignment in more detail. This notebook will be worth a maximum of 100 points.

Make-up Policy: My best advice is not to miss an exam or quiz. If you must miss one, you must notify me in advance in order to make it up. You must have a valid excuse to be granted a make-up. Excuses like family
vacation, concerts, ball games, etc, are not acceptable excuses. Ultimately, I alone will determine if you will be allowed to make up a missed exam or quiz.

**Class Attendance:** The key to a good grade is regular attendance. Much of the information presented in class may not be covered in the textbooks. That being said, you are an adult and it is ultimately your decision if you will attend class or not. I will be passing around an attendance sheet for administrative purposes only. If you arrive late, you will not receive extra time for a quiz or a test. There is no need for you to contact me if you miss class, unless there was a quiz or test on the day you missed. Students have the ability to initiate a withdrawal from this class. By completing the form in the Records Office or through the form located within WebAdvisor, the student is authorizing IVCC to remove him/her from the course. Entering the student ID number serves as the student’s electronic signature. IVCC has the right to rescind a withdrawal in cases of academic dishonesty or at the instructor’s discretion. You need to be aware of the impact of a withdrawal on full-time status for insurance purposes and for financial aid. It is highly recommended that you meet with me or with a counselor before withdrawing from a class to discuss if a withdrawal is the best course of action. The last day to drop this class is November 4th!

**Warning!** This is not an easy class! For many of you this will be your first real exposure to the history and culture of the Middle East. If you are having trouble preparing for this course, come see me as soon as possible and we will work together in improving your study skills.

**Basic Assumptions:** This is a college class and I assume that all of you will read the text, know how to read the text for knowledge, know how to take notes in class, and how to study. If you do not know how to do these things, it is your responsibility to contact me to learn about options offered through the Academic Achievement Center in LRC-B. You are also expected to behave as adults during class. Discussions will be civil. Cell phones are to be turned off, or, if you are an EMT or first responder, set on vibrate. Activities, such as but not limited to, texting, surfing the web, talking, that disrupt the class should be avoided and constant disruptions will lead to removal from the class. I am also assuming that you are familiar with the college’s policies on Academic Honesty. If you cheat during the semester, I reserve the right to prosecute you to the hilt!

**Syllabus**

**Part I: Antecedents**
1. Class Introduction and the Geography of the Middle East (Ansary, Introduction; start reading Armstrong)
2. The Middle East before Muhammad (Ansary, Ch 1; Aslan, Ch 1)

**Part II: The Dawn of Islam**
3. Life of Muhammad and the Origins of Islam (Ansary, Ch 2; Aslan, Ch 2)
4. Islam (Aslan Chap 3 & 4)
5. Islamic expansion and the origins of Shiism (Ansary, Ch 3-5, Aslan, Ch 5 & 7)

**Part III: Islam at Noon**
6. The Abbasid Caliphate (Ansary, Ch 6)

**Part IV: Cross-Sections**
7. Government and Law (Ansary, Ch 6; Aslan, Ch 6)
8. Culture and the arts (Aslan, Ch 8)

**Part V: Challenges and Rebirth**
9. Outsiders (Ansary Ch 8 & 9)
10. Gunpowder Empires (Ansary Ch 10)

**Part VI: The Middle East and the Modern World**
10. Europe and the Middle East (Ansary, Ch 11 & 12))
11. Response and Reaction (Ansary, Ch 13 & 14; Aslan, Ch 9)
12. Israel and the Mid East (Handout)
13. War and the Quest for peace (Ansary, Ch 15 & 16)
14. The Reassertion of Islamic Power (Ansary, Ch 17, Aslan, Ch 10)

*Note: I reserve the right to fall behind and to modify this syllabus and test dates during the semester!*