Muslim Women and the West
HIS / INAF 397
Monday 3:30-6:00 ICC270

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Course Description

This seminar is designed to study aspects of the encounter between Muslim women and the West. Assigned readings will include primary and secondary sources. The seminar is divided into three parts:

1. *How the West has perceived, characterized and constructed “the Muslim woman.”* We will study the historical encounter of Europeans and Americans (travelers, missionaries, journalists and others) with Muslim societies and cultures, and the resulting images of Muslim women as sexual objects, downtrodden by men and badly in need of Western “liberation.”

2. *How the women of these Muslim countries/cultures have responded to the challenges posited by these images.* We will consider movements of modernization and education, as well as the evolution of several feminist trends: from liberal or “westernized,” to feminism as defined by the nation state, and finally to the development of Islamic feminism. Particular attention will be given to Egypt, Indonesia, Turkey and Iran.

3. *Experiences of Muslim women in the West and their integration/assimilation into the United States and various cultures of Europe, including France, Britain and Germany.* In this section we will look at shari’a and fiqh for women in the West, as well as Muslim women’s involvement in changing family structures, new forms of media and art, dress and fashion, film and theater, literature and music. Special attention will be given to the relationship of cultural heritage to new societal structures, as well as to the growth and development of African American Islam.

The goal is to help students develop their ability to conduct research, analyze and assess evidence, and articulate sound conclusions both orally and in writing. Students will acquire knowledge and skills that help them develop as informed, engaged, and thoughtful citizens.

The seminar emphasizes discussion and engagement with both primary sources and the interpretations of various scholars to prepare them to engage in rigorous historical inquiry and debate. Students will be equipped to analyze and integrate historical evidence relating to politics and states, ethnicity and sectarianism,
environment and society, culture and religion. They will acquire a strong foundation in historical knowledge and an ability to balance global and local perspectives and the ability to develop an original historical argument and to communicate complex historical arguments both in writing and orally.

Students will learn how to evaluate scholarly arguments by analyzing responses to previous contributions, investigating use of primary evidence, weighing logical construction and development, and assessing rhetorical style. They will hone their skills in conducting research, familiarizing themselves with library holdings, digital databases, and tools for identifying and acquiring access to published material. They will be able to assess the extent of available published materials on any specific historical topic in their field. Students are expected to write a research paper that makes an original contribution to scholarship. They will learn how to lead discussions; they will have the opportunity to make presentations and they will work closely with faculty.

The course will be conducted in seminar format, with both lecture and class discussion. Students are expected to read the material assigned for the day, identify the author’s argument (premises, thesis, evidence and conclusions) and develop their own interpretations.

Attendance at all class sessions is mandatory; unexcused absences will affect a student’s grade.

Honor System

Upon application to the College or the School of Foreign Service, all students pledged to abide by Georgetown University’s Honor System. Each student is to be familiar with the University’s Honor System, especially topics covered under "Standards of Conduct" which is found in the Undergraduate Bulletin or on line at <www.georgetown.edu/undergrad/bulletin/regulations.html> which covers cheating, committing plagiarism, using false citations, and so on.

The Grade will be based on the following:

1. Class discussion 30%
2. Class presentation 30%
3. Research paper (15 pp undergraduate, 25 pp graduate) 40%
   a. The focus of the research paper must be relevant to the course and determined in consultation with the instructor. Thesis, short outline, and working bibliography are due by February 9.
   b. The grade for the paper will be based on the following: organization and style; a substantial thesis; strong argumentation; appropriate use of evidence; accuracy of factual material; originality of work.

Required Textbooks available at the bookstore and on reserve:


**Seminar Schedule**

**INTRODUCTION: Foundations of the Faith and Institutionalization of Islam**

**January 19 Introduction to the Seminar and Overview of the Syllabus**


Haddad, *Muslim Women in America*, ch 1

Viewing Film: “Hollywood Harems”

**January 26 Muslim Women in the Qur’an and Islamic Tradition**

For Muslims, the Qur’an is the foundation of faith and spiritual life, as well as social and public life. This session will be devoted to analyzing the Qur’anic verses that deal with women and gender.

**Reading:** Selected verses from the *Qur’an*, several translations the Qur’an are available through the internet. You can explore the different nuances and interpretations of the text. Available through Blackboard under “Qur’an”

The list of verses is posted on Blackboard under “Assignment”


Fadel, “Two Women, One Man: Knowledge, Power and Gender in Medieval Sunni Legal Thought,” in *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 29, # 2, 185-204.
I. Muslim Women through the Western Gaze

February 2 Western Construction of “The Muslim Woman”: Orientalism & Mission

Reading: Edward Said, “Knowing the Oriental,” And “The Latest Phase,” pp.31-49, 284-328 Bb
Juliet A. Williams, “Unholy Matrimony, Feminism, Orientalism and the Possibility of the Double Critique,” Signs Bb
Allison, The Crescent Observed: A Peek into the Seraglio: Americans, Sex, and the Muslim World, Bb
Lyons, Through Western Eyes Bb
Haddad, MWA, ch 2

February 2 Western Construction of “The Muslim Woman”: Film and Print

We will discuss the role of western missionaries, colonial rulers, and feminists in promoting change in Muslim societies, the response they have generated, as well as the impact of international conventions and norms of women’s rights and human rights

Reading: Steet, Veils and Daggers. A Century of National Geographic’s Representation of the Arab World, pp. 32-77, 96-98 Bb
Gottschalk and Greenberg, Islamophobia, (selection) Bb
Ahmed, Women and Gender in Islam, ch 8 Bb
Thompson, Colonial Citizens, Cinema, Bb
View: Reel Bad Arabs (in class)

II. Modern Muslim Construction of the “Muslim Woman”

February 9 Construction of “The Muslim Woman”: Turkey & Iran

For over half a century, the Turkish state modernized women by legislation. The Turkish model was held as an example for other Muslim nations to emulate. Increasingly, the AK ruling party and its female cadres are Islamizing society.

Reading:Najmabadi, “Crafting an Educated Housewife in Iran” Bb
Sullivan, “Eluding the feminist, Overthrowing the Modern? Transformations in twentieth Century Iran” Bb

February 16: Construction of “The Muslim Woman”: The Arab World

Reading: Badran and Cooke, Opening the Gates: An Anthology of Arab Feminist Writings, (Etel Adnan, Fadwa Touqan, Alifa Rifaat, Bahithat al-Badiya, Ghada Samman, Nabawiya Musa. Saiza Nabawari, Huda Shaarawi, Inji Aflatun, Duriya Shafiq, Evelyne Accad, Nawal Saadawi) Book available in bookstore. Also on reserve at Circulation Desk
Qasim Amin, *The Liberation of Women and the New Woman*, pp. 37-61

Haddad, “Islam and Gender: Dilemmas in the Changing Arab World,” in Haddad & Esposito, *Islam, Gender, and Social Change*

Badran, “Arab Feminism”

**February 23 Competing Models of “The Muslim Woman: Turkey and Indonesia**


Ayse Kadioglu, “Women’s Subordination in Turkey: Is Islam Really the


Van-Doorn-Harder, *Women Shaping Islam: Reading the Qur'an in Indonesia*, Selection

**March 1 Islamist Models of “The Muslim Woman”**

*Reading:* Arat, Yesim, *Rethinking Islam and Liberal Democracy; Islamist Women in Turkish Politics*, chs 1,3,4 (Internet connection)


Azza Karam, *Women, Islamists and the State*, chs 7&8

“Movie Program Goes too Far”

Kriedler, ‘Glam Abaya,” in *Fashion Talks*

Mayer, “Restrictions on the Rights of Women,’ in *Islam and Human Rights*,

**March 8 Spring Break No class**

**III. MUSLIM WOMEN IN THE WEST**

**March 15 Refugees and the Search for Identity in the West**

*Reading:* Karmi, Ghada, *In Search of Fatima: A Palestinian Story*

**March 22 Muslim Women in North America**

*Reading:* To be assigned

**March 29 Choosing Islam: Western Women’s Conversion to Islam**

*Reading:* Van Nieuwkerk, *Women Embracing Islam: Gender and Conversion in the West*, ch 2,3,5-7 Bookstore, also: On Reserve, circulation desk
April 5 Muslim Women in Western Diasporas (France, Germany and the United Kingdom)
“Muslim and Virginity in France” Bb
“Western Islam and Cinema” Bb
“The Struggle for Secularism in Europe and North America” Bb

April 12 Writing Women’s Experience in American History
Mohja Kahf, The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf, Bookstore, also Available on Reserve at Circulation Desk

April 20 Muslim Women’s Activism in North America
Reading: “Islam and the Cultural Imperative” Bb
“Claiming Public Space in US” Bb
Haddad, “The Emergence of Muslim American Feminism”
Haddad, MWA, chs7 & 8

April 27 Creating A Muslim American Culture
Reading: Ebrahimji and Suratwala, I Speak for Myself: American Women on being Muslim pp 71-83, 114-137, 206-225 (Available at the bookstore and the reserve desk at the library)