

Town and Country in the Medieval Islamic World
HIS 511c Seminar in Historical Research and Writing

Seminar in Historical Research and Writing

Fall 2015

HIS 511c, Tuesdays, 3:30 – 6:20, MHRA Building 2210

Instructor: A. Asa Eger

aaeger@uncg.edu

Office: MHRA Building, Room 2113

Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 2:00-3:00 PM, by appointment

Office Phone: 336-334-5208

Description:

At a time when western Europe was thought to have been cut off from the rest of the Mediterranean world in a post-Roman insular “Dark Ages”, the Medieval Islamic world, from the 8th to 12th centuries reached a thriving pinnacle of civilization. The Islamic lands included a complex system of cities and subsidiary towns, innovative new agricultural and industrial technologies, and far-flung trading networks from the Mediterranean Sea (and western Europe) to East Asia. It is precisely the unifying force and openness of Islamic culture superimposed over these vastly different geographies from Spain to Central Asia that allowed for an expansive yet inter-connected framework of economic and social exchanges. The first goal of the class is to explore the depths and extent of the nature of urbanism and rural settlements, land use and the spread of agricultural crops and techniques, manufacturing industries and trade, and the economy of the Medieval Islamic world. We will contextualize this world in the Late Antique/early Medieval Mediterranean and its connections with the Europe and Asia. The second goal in this class is to learn how to use, locate, and analyze a rich body of primary sources including contemporary translated documents and material culture gathered from archaeological reports. Over the course of several stages, you will produce a final research paper on a topic of your choosing which draws upon a synthesis of your historical and archaeological research with secondary sources. No prior knowledge of Islamic history is required for the course.

Student Learning Objectives:

- Undergraduate students will acquire analyze historical duration, succession, and change in terms of human agency and larger systems or structures in a wide variety of places and periods within medieval Islamic history with specific regards to its urban, rural and agricultural, industrial, and economic manifestations.

- Students will use historical thinking to contextualize and analyze primary and secondary sources representing different points of view. Specifically they will learn how to use archaeological evidence from reports as primary sources alongside textual accounts in building an interdisciplinary methodology which intersects history and historical archaeology.
- Students will conduct original research by investigating and interpreting primary source materials (including texts and material culture from archaeological reports) and secondary source material. In addition, they will learn the stages of researching (including library work, note-taking, and source criticism) and critique the written work of their peers in constructive ways.
- Finally, students will use evidence-based reasoning to interpret the past coherently while developing and presenting an original persuasive argument orally and in writing to produce a 15-20 page research paper.
- Graduate students will acquire or perfect research skills appropriate to the production of a 20-30 page research paper.

There will be one 3 hour class per week. Please read the assigned materials during the week assigned and come to classes prepared with questions and observations.

No prerequisite is required to take this course.

Readings:

Readings for each week are given on the attached syllabus. Readings listed under the lecture mean you will have read those *in advance* for that lecture day. Weekly assignments consist of readings from selected works. Please come prepared and able to comment on the readings in class. In addition to the assigned readings, additional readings have been placed on reserve and will be useful for those wishing to explore subjects (particularly for papers) in detail.

There is required textbook for the course, available at the bookstore.

Risso, P. *Merchants and Faith: Muslim Commerce and Culture in the Indian Ocean*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995

The following will be important for your papers:

Goitein, S. D. (1973) *Letters of Medieval Jewish Traders, Translated from the Arabic*. Princeton University Press, Princeton.

Goitein, S.D. *A Mediterranean Society: the Jewish communities of the Arab world as portrayed in the documents of the Cairo Geniza*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967-93.

The Princeton Geniza Project (over 2,000 searchable documents online) <http://gravitas.princeton.edu/tg/tt/>

Lopez, Robert S. and Irving W. Raymond, trans. *Medieval Trade in the Mediterranean World, Illustrative Documents*.

Study aids, though not a requirement for the course, might be useful in preparing for the paper and providing useful basic reference information for Islamic history and civilization. They include:

The Encyclopaedia of Islam (First Edition (EI1), 1913-1942, New (Second) Edition (EI2), 1954 (1960)-2004, Third Edition, continuing). Jackson Library stacks Tower 8 DS37.E523, vols. 1-12.

The Cambridge History of Islam. Jackson Library stacks Tower 8 DS35.6.C3, vols. 1-2

Bosworth, C. E., *The Islamic Dynasties*. Jackson Library stacks Tower 8 D199.3.I8 No. 5

Writing Center: In addition to seeking the instructor's advice about writing assignments, you can seek assistance in the Writing Center in 3211 of the MHRA Building (334-334-3125), <http://www.uncg.edu/eng/writingcenter/>.

Course Requirements:

Grading

Participation 15%

Assignments 1-5: 25%

Assignment 6: Rough Draft: 10%

Assignment 7: Final Presentation: 10%

Assignment 7: Final Paper 40%

Assignments

Assignment 1: Individual Readings/Presentations (Aug 25, Sept 1, Sept 8, Sept 15, Sept 18)

Assignment 2: Project Description Due (Sept 18)

Assignment 3: Preliminary Bibliographies Due (in class presentations) (Sept 29)

Assignment 4: Report of one archaeological source Due (Oct 6)

Assignment 5: Historiographical Essay/Literature Review Due (Oct 20)

Assignment 6: Rough Draft Due (please bring 3 copies to class) (Nov 3)

Assignment 7: Final Presentation (Nov 17)

Assignment 8: Final Paper Due (Nov 30)

Class Rules:

Attendance is mandatory, as the class only meets once per week and lectures will frequently include material not covered in the assigned readings, for which you will also be responsible. On several days, you will be presenting a reading or group of readings as part of the seminar discussion. If you miss more

than one class period for any reason, your final grade will be reduced by 2 points for each additional absence.

Academic Integrity: Any violation of the honor code (plagiarism or cheating) will be dealt with according to UNCG's academic integrity policy. As this course is about researching a topic and writing a paper based on primary and secondary sources, I do not wish to see plagiarism from the web. I strongly urge you not to use any websites (besides library databases) except as a means to find printed sources. If you have good reason to use a website rather than a printed source, you must clear it with me. For specific explanations about UNCG's academic integrity policy, see <http://academicintegrity.uncg.edu/>.

Please do not come late to class as it disrupts the class for both your fellow classmates and for me. Cellular phones *must* be silenced or turned off in the classroom. If you disrupt class by talking on the phone or text messaging, you will be asked to leave. Laptops may *not* be used in the classroom.

The best way to contact me is by email. Please note that I will only check and respond to emails Monday through Friday during the work day; i.e. don't expect me to respond to an email at 2 am on a Saturday.

Lecture and Reading Schedule:

Week 1 (August 18)

Introduction, Pirenne, History and Archaeology, the Cairo Geniza, Geographers

Week 2 (August 25)

The Towns: Cities and Urban Life

Group Readings:

Risso, P. *Merchants and Faith: Muslim Commerce and Culture in the Indian Ocean*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995: 1-20.

Kennedy, H. "From *Polis* to *Madina*: Urban Change in Late Antique and Early Islamic Syria," *Past and Present* 106 (1985): 3-27.

Abu-Lughod, J. "The Islamic City – Historic Myth, Islamic Essence, and Contemporary Relevance," *IJMES* 19.2 (1987): 155-76.

Whitcomb, D. "An Urban Structure for the Early Islamic City" *Cities in The Pre-Modern Islamic World* (2007), 15-26

Individual Readings (Assignment 1):

Tsafir, Yoram. "Trade, workshops and shops in Bet Shean/Scythopolis, 4th-8th centuries," in *Byzantine Trade, 4th-12th Centuries: The Archaeology of Local, Regional and International Exchange*, ed M. Mango., pp 61-82.

Heidemann, S. "The History of the industrial and commercial area of 'Abbāsīd al-Raqqa, called al-Raqqa al-Muhtariqa." *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 69.1 (2006): 32-52.

Whitehouse, D. "Siraf: A Medieval Port on the Persian Gulf," *World Archaeology* 2 (1970) 141-58.

Week 3 (September 1)

The Country: Agriculture and Rural Life

General Readings:

Butzer, K., et al. "Irrigation Agrosystems in Eastern Spain: Roman or Islamic Origins?" *Annals of the American Association of Geographers*. Vol. 75.4 (1985): 479-509.

Watson, A. M. "The Arab Agricultural Revolution," *Journal of Economic History* 34 (1979): 8-35.

Individual Readings (Assignment 1):

Bazzana, A. & J. de Meulemeester. "Irrigation systems of Islamic origin in the Valle de Ricote (Murcia, Spain). *Ruralia II* (Spa 1997) (Pamarky Archeologicke – Supplementum 11): 152-60, Praha, 1998.

de Meulemeester, J. & A. Matthys. "The conservation of grain and the fortified granaries from the Maghreb to central Europe." *Ruralia II* (Spa 1997) (Pamatky Archeologicke Supplementum 11): 161-71. Praha, 1998.

Keenan, J.G. "Fayyum Agriculture at the End of the Ayyubid Era: Nabulsi's Survey" In *Agriculture in Egypt: from pharoanic to modern times*, edited by A.K. Bowman and E.L. Rogan. Pp. 287-300

Nevo, Y. D. *Pagans and Herders: A Re-examination of the Negev Runoff Systems in the Byzantine and Early Arab Periods*. Sde Boqer: Israel Publications Service, 1991.

Haiman, M. "Agriculture and Nomad-State Relations in the Negev Desert in the Byzantine and Early Islamic Periods." *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 297 (1995): 29–53.

Week 4 (September 18)

The Routes: Trade over Land and Sea

General Readings:

Risso, P. *Merchants and Faith: Muslim Commerce and Culture in the Indian Ocean*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995: 20-54, 99-106.

Abu Lughod, J. *Before European Hegemony*, selected chapters.

Individual Readings (Assignment 1):

Stillman, N. A. "The Eleventh Century Merchant House of Ibn 'Awkal (A Geniza Study)" *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 16 (1973): 15-88.

Goitein, S. D. 1961 The Main Industries of the Mediterranean Area as Reflected in the Records of the Cairo Geniza. *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 4: 168-197.

Jacoby, David. "Venetian commercial expansion in the eastern Mediterranean, 8th-11th centuries," in *Byzantine Trade, 4th-12th centuries*. Edited by M. Mango. Pp. 371-392.

Peacock, Andrew C. S. 2007 Black Sea Trade and the Islamic World down to the Mongol Period. In *The Black Sea. Past, Present and Future*, edited by Gülden Erkut and Stephen Mitchell. British Institute of Archaeology at Ankara, London.

Chittick, H. N. (1970) East African Trade with the Orient. In *Islam and the Trade of Asia: A Colloquium*, edited by D. S. Richards, pp. 97-104. Papers on Islamic History. vol. 2. Bruno Cassirir/University of Pennsylvania Press, Oxford.

Di Meglio, R. R. (1970) Arab Trade with Indonesia and the Malay Peninsula from the 8th to the 16th Century. In *Islam and the Trade of Asia: A Colloquium*, edited by D. S. Richards, pp. 105-136. Papers on Islamic History. vol. 2. Bruno Cassirir/University of Pennsylvania Press, Oxford.

Goitein, S. D. (1954) From the Mediterranean to India: Documents on the Trade to India, South Arabia, and East Africa from the 11th and 12th centuries. *Speculum* 29: 191-97.

Goitein, S. D. (1963) Letters and Documents on the India Trade in Medieval Times. *Islamic Culture* 37 (3): 188-205.

Hudson, G. F. (1970) The Medieval Trade of China. In *Islam and the Trade of Asia: A Colloquium*, edited by D. S. Richards, pp. 159-67. Papers on Islamic History. vol. 2. Bruno Cassirir/University of Pennsylvania Press, Oxford.

Week 5 (September 15)

The Industries: Ceramics, Glass, Sugar, Timber, Gold, Textiles, Spices, Incense

Project Description with 5 Research Questions (a paragraph) is due

Presentations on an industry from the readings (Assignment 2)

Individual Readings (Assignment 1):

Amar, Z. 2002 The History of the Paper Industry in al-Sham in the Middle Ages. In *Towns and Material Culture in the Medieval Middle East*, edited by Y. Lev, pp. 119-34. Medieval Mediterranean. vol. 39. Brill, Leiden.

Encyclopedia of Islam, New Edition (EI2), "kaghad", vol. 4, 624.

Fischel, W. J. (1958) The Spice Trade in Mamluk Egypt: A Contribution to the Economic History of Medieval Islam. *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 1: 157-174. [HC411.A1J8]

Lev, E. 2002 Trade of Medical Substances in the Medieval and Ottoman Levant. In *Towns and Material Culture in the Medieval Middle East*, edited by Y. Lev, pp. 159-84. Medieval Mediterranean. vol. 39. Brill, Leiden.

McCabe, Anne, "Imported *materia medica*, 4th-12th centuries, and Byzantine pharmacology," in *Byzantine Trade, 4th-12th centuries*, pp. 273-296.

Frantz-Murphy, G. (1981) A new interpretation of the Economic History of Medieval Egypt. The Role of the Textile Industry 254-567/868-1171. *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 24: 274-98.

Mayerson, Philip. "The Role of Flax in Roman and Fatimid Egypt." *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 56 (3): 201-07.

Philips, W.D. "Sugar Production and trade in the Mediterranean at the Time of the Crusades." In *The Meeting of Two Worlds, Cultural Exchange between East and West during the Period of the Crusades*, ed. By V.P. Gross, pp. 393-406. Studies in Medieval Culture. Vol. 21.

Tsugitaka, Sato. "Sugar in the Economic Life of Mamluk Egypt." *Mamluk Studies Review* 8.2 (2004) 87-108.

Saitowitz, S. J. and D. L. Reid, "Early Indian Ocean Glass Bead Trade between Egypt and Malaysia: A Pilot Study." *Indo-Pacific Prehistory, The Melaka Papers* 5: 119-23.

Konishita, Hiromi, "Foreign Glass excavated in China, from the 4th to 12th centuries," in *Byzantine Trade, 4th-12th centuries*. Pp. 253-262.

Week 6 (September 22)

Library Research Seminar

Week 7 (September 29)

In class presentations and discussions of proposals

Preliminary Bibliographies due (Assignment 3)

Week 8 (October 6)

Reading an Archaeological Report

Report of one archaeological source due (Assignment 4)

General Readings:

Rautmann, M. "Archaeology and Byzantine Studies." *Byzantinische Forschungen* 15

(1990): 137–65.

Andren, "The Dialogue of Historical Archaeology" *Between Artifacts and Texts*, p. 145-177

Individual Readings:

TBA (Based on your topic)

Week 9 (October 13)

No Class – FALL BREAK

Week 10 (October 20)

Individual Meetings

Historiographical Essay/Literature review due (Assignment 5)

Week 11 (October 27)

Individual Meetings

Week 12 (November 3)

Individual Meetings

Rough Drafts Due. Send an electronic copy of your draft to both me and the classmates who are critiquing your work by **noon**. (Assignment 6)

Week 13 (November 10)

In-class, small-group critiques of rough drafts.

Peer-critiques are due.

Week 14 (November 17)

Last day of class, in-class group meeting and presentations.

Final Presentations given (Assignment 7)

Week 15 (November 24)

No Class - Thanksgiving

Final Papers due Monday, November 30th at noon. (Assignment 8)

Sample Topics for Research Papers:

Town

Siraf/Persian Gulf

Aden

Fustat/Cairo

Sijilmassa

Country

Irrigation

Land Tax

Industry

Agriculture in Egypt, Linen and Flax

Sugar

Spice and Drug

Coins and Money

Glass

Ceramics

Trade

Levant Trade and the West

Indian Ocean Trade

Chinese/Silk Route Trade

African Trade – Gold

Slave Trade

Shipping and Commerce in the Mediterranean

Merchants

Jewish Merchants