Islamic Civilization: From Mecca to the Crusades, 600-1200 C.E.

Topics in Pre-Modern World History
HIS 207-01/02
Tuesday and Thursday 11-12:15

Fall 2022

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Description:
In the middle of the seventh century, Arab tribes coalesced and emerged from the Arabian Peninsula, conquering an enormous expanse of territory that reached from the shores of the Atlantic Ocean to the deserts of India in less than one hundred years. In the following centuries, Islamic civilization took shape, a dynamic process framed by Islamic ideals yet influenced by the many cultures this civilization embraced. The products of this civilization included magnificent monuments, extensive works of literature and science, far-flung trade routes that connected to east Asia, and new agricultural and technological innovations. This course will familiarize students with the history of the rise and spread of Islamic civilization as a complex and interdependent process that occurred throughout the Near East, North Africa, Spain, and Central Asia. We contextualize this process in the world before Islam and the rise of the Prophet Muhammad at the start of the seventh century and continue until the time of the Crusaders at the end of twelfth century. Our approach will be interdisciplinary. We will look at the history, art and architecture, archaeology, environment, literature, and religion of Islamic civilization.

MAC Global Engagement and Intercultural Learning Competency

Courses in this competency provide students with knowledge and critical understanding of similarities and differences across world cultures over time and emphasize the development of global perspectives and skills to engage cross-culturally.

In a Global Engagement and Intercultural Learning course, students will:

1. Describe dynamic elements of different cultures. These elements may include (but are not limited to) aesthetic systems, communication systems, economics, physical environments, ethics, gender norms, geography, history, politics, religious principles, or social beliefs, norms and practices.
2. Explain how similarities, differences, and connections among different groups of people or environmental systems affect one another over time and place.

In this course these two SLOs will be assessed through the final project/paper.
**Student Learning Objectives:**

1. Students will be able to define a suite of political, religious, and social characteristics that characterize the period after 600 C.E. as “Islamic.” Some of these include tribally based political structures, religio-social legal codes, and pluralism and hybridity in culture and economy.

2. Students will be able to identify and explain historical duration, succession, and change in terms of human agency and larger systems or structures in a wide variety of places and periods within Islamic history until 1200 C.E. by using diverse types of primary and secondary sources available for interpretation.

3. Students will utilize historical thinking to contextualize and analyze primary and secondary sources representing different points of view for the formation of Islam. They will be able to describe the historical, geographic, aesthetic, and religious contexts for the rise of Islam and explain various motivations for the conquests and spread of Islam.

4. Students will trace the developments of Islamic civilization through various examples of cultural and social production. By developing an informed historical perspective and by reflecting on the dynamic between Western and non-Western experience, students will be able to challenge and historicize current ideas and stereotypes of Islam.

5. Finally, students will be able to recognize and evaluate salient features of primary source. These features include authorial subjectivity as shaped by social and geographic considerations, differences in generic structures and expectations (that is, formal characteristics of genres), and interpretive value as compared to other comparable sources.

**Requirements:**

There will also be two 50 minute classes per week on Mondays and Wednesdays. Each class will consist of primarily of lectures. On Fridays there will be a 50 minute discussion section consisting of class activities, in-class assignments, discussion of readings, questions on lectures, and other activities. Please read the assigned materials during the week assigned and come to classes prepared with questions and observations. Viewing of lectures and attendance of classes are required, as lectures and discussions will frequently include material not covered in the assigned readings, for which you will also be responsible for on assignments. **You must bring Primary Source readings and your textbook to class for discussion purposes. Failure to do so will result in a low class participation grade for that day.**

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.

**Required text:** (used and new copies available from bookstore)

Lecture handouts will accompany every lecture and will provide an outline and, especially, terms and dates referred to in the lecture. These terms may also appear on your exams. Use these handouts as review sheets for exams.

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


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

**Reading Advice:**
Because most of the original sources (and much of the content) will be totally unfamiliar to you and include foreign names and terms, I recommend taking notes on them as you read. It is also useful to write a brief summary (2-3 sentences) of each document/source so that you can remember the basic gist of it for class discussion. It’s much easier to note down important points as you read than it is to go back and find those points again once you’ve finished reading. Finally, I recommend reading each document more than once. Sometimes it will take two readings for something to make sense to you. Because the amount of reading for our course is fairly small, you’ll have plenty of time for re-reading.

*Note:* the assigned readings from the Egger textbook in the syllabus will have you jumping around a bit in the textbook.

**Assignments:**

**Primary Source Assignments:** There will be, throughout the course, 10 in-class assignments which sometimes you will complete and hand in during class and sometimes you will be asked to take these home and work on them, returning them the following class. These often will involve group work. These **cannot** be made up if you miss the class, as they count towards half your class participation grade.

**Map Assignment:** There will also be a map assignment at the beginning of the course designed to introduce you to the geography of the Islamic world. It consists of a blank map and an attached list of geographic features (countries, cities, bodies of water, mountains, and other features) available in Modules on Canvas which you will label. You will be allowed to consult sources to fill this map in, either an internet source (such as Google Earth or Google Maps), or a paper source (such as an atlas or encyclopedia). Turn the map in as a .jpg, .tif, or .pdf. You can type in the labels on a computer on the image or
print and fill it out and scan or photograph it and upload the file. **Be sure to make it clear and legible!**

**Quizzes:** There will be three Canvas quizzes based on the readings due for that day. You will have the option of dropping the lowest grade of these at the end of the course. To do well on the quizzes you must attend have read and understood the assigned readings. You may **not** make these up.

**Examinations:** There will be three take-home examinations for the course. These will consist of a number of brief identifications, short answer, and essay questions. The first two sections are not cumulative for any exam; however, the essay question should be. The brief identifications will be names, foreign terms (in Arabic, Persian, or Turkish), places, events, and dates. Most lectures will be accompanied by a handout providing an outline and including terms that occur in the literature and you may not be familiar with. These terms will be useful to keep for review for the identification tests. You should also consult the glossary in your textbook (Egger, p. 319-326). It is important to learn about other cultures through their own terminology and vocabulary, which is not always easily translated and loses inherent concepts when it is. Although challenging, learning foreign terms will be useful as the course will emphasize linguistic connections across time and place as a marker of cultural durability. Short answers will require that you are able to explain the characteristics, nature, and qualities of mid-range topics that are fairly specific in nature and often limited to one historical event or single primary source. Answers should be complete and refer to lecture and readings. The essay question on an exam is synthetic and comprehensive calling on you to combine information throughout the duration of the course from lectures, readings, and in class discussions to think about larger themes.

**Final Paper Assignment:** A final research assignment will be given halfway through the semester. You will all help create a banquet at the Alhambra Palace, a 14th century residence in Islamic Spain. Using translated texts as a starting point, you will work in groups to research and prepare a specific aspect of the party, looking at contemporary art and aesthetic design, music, literature (poetry and stories), food, entertainment (theater and games), garden and landscape design, and dress and costume. At the end of the semester we will have the party with all the bells and whistles. The purpose of the assignment is to: 1) read, integrate, and evaluate primary sources (in translation), 2) implement research skills and access resources to discover relevant secondary sources, and 3) to develop an ability to communicate in written and verbal forms and collaborate by working in groups and peer-reviewing each other’s work. You will be in groups of 3-4 for the peer-review. You will write an individual final paper that is between 3-5 pages (800-1500 words, double spaced) and include at least one non-Internet and outside reference.

**Extra Credit.** Throughout the semester there will be several extra credit opportunities in the form of external lectures you can view virtually. After viewing the presentation, write a 3-5 page paper of 1) summary of a lecture, 2), the discussion following, and 3) your own thoughts as it relates to what we have studied in class and in readings.
Grading:
The weight of the final course grade represented by each of the various assignments is:

- In-Class Assignments 5%
- Class Participation 5%
- Map Assignment 10%
- Quizzes 10%
- Exam 1: 15%
- Exam 2: 15%
- Exam 3: 15%
- Peer-Review 10%
- Final Paper 15%

Grading Scale:

- 100-97% = A+
- 96-93 = A
- 92-90 = A-
- 89-87 = B+
- 86-83 = B
- 82-80 = B-
- 79-77 = C+
- 76-73 = C
- 70-72 = C-
- 69-67 = D+
- 66-63 = D
- 60-62 = D-
- 59 or lower = F

Attendance Policy:
Attendance is mandatory and I will take attendance at the beginning of each class. You may miss three classes during the semester, after which your class participation grade will be docked 3 points for each absence. If you miss more than six classes I will drop your final grade by three points per absence and/or reserve the right to drop you from the course.

Late Work/Missed Exam: Assignments are due on the date and at the time listed on the syllabus; if a crisis (such as illness) arises, it is your responsibility to contact me. If you do not contact me, the work (when eventually received) will be penalized, usually at the rate of 1/3 of a letter grade per day.

Tardiness: Please do not come late to class as it disrupts the class for both your fellow classmates and for me. If you are significantly late (more than 10 minutes) or chronically late, you will be marked as absent for that day.

CANVAS SITE
All materials for the course (except for the required book) will be posted on the Canvas site for the course. This is particularly important for announcements and E-Reserves. It is a good idea to check the Canvas site regularly.
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. I can communicate with you only by your UNCG email account (that is the email linked to Canvas, for instance); make sure you check your UNCG email regularly.

Laptops in the Classroom: Laptops may not be used in the classroom.

Phones: Cellular phones must be silenced or turned off during class time. If your phone rings during class, you will be counted as absent for that class period. If I detect that you are using your phone to text (or surf) you will also be counted as absent for that day. Subsequent offenses will be treated with increasing severity.

Academic Integrity Policy:
Enrollment in this course and submission of each written assignment constitute students’ acceptance of UNCG’s Academic Integrity Policy. Make sure you read and understand the policy, which is available at: http://academicintegrity.uncg.edu/complete/
If you have any questions about any aspect of this policy, including what constitutes plagiarism, please consult the professor.
UNCG’s Academic Integrity Policy defines plagiarism as “representing the words of another, as one’s own in any academic exercise” (http://academicintegrity.uncg.edu/complete/). Plagiarism includes both 1) failure to cite sources for ideas and words you use; and 2) submitting all of parts of someone else’s work as your own. Be sure to cite fully all material you use, whether you are paraphrasing or using a direct quote.

Please note that plagiarism (this includes copying internet text for papers), cheating, and other violations of academic integrity are serious offences and will not be tolerated in the class or anywhere else in the University.

COVID-19 INFORMATION (PLEASE READ)
As we return for Fall 2022, all students, faculty, and staff and all visitors to campus are required to uphold UNCG’s culture of care by actively engaging in behaviors that limit the spread of COVID-19. While face-coverings are optional in most areas on campus, individuals are encouraged to wear masks. All individuals and visitors to campus are asked to follow the following actions:
• Engaging in proper hand-washing hygiene.
• Self-monitoring for symptoms of COVID-19.
• Staying home when ill.
• Complying with directions from health care providers or public health officials to quarantine or isolate if ill or exposed to someone who is ill.
• Completing a self-report when experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, testing positive for COVID-19, or being identified as a close contact of someone who has tested positive.
• Staying informed about the University’s policies and announcements via the COVID-19 website.
Students who are ill, quarantining, or isolating should not attend in-person class meetings, but should instead contact their instructor(s) so alternative arrangements for learning and the submission of assignments can be made where possible. As we continue to manage COVID-19 on our campus, we are following the lead of the local health department and we will adjust our plans to balance student success, instructional requirements, and the hallmarks of the collegiate experience with the safety and well-being of our campus community.

**Additional Requirements and Advice**
1. In case later consultation should prove necessary, students should keep copies of all graded assignments until the end of the semester (at least).
2. All course requirements must be completed to receive a grade for the class.
3. Consultation of websites not assigned on the syllabus: many students feel that they can obtain the “answer” (or even a good interpretation) concerning a historical problem by simply looking it up on the web. While the web has many uses, this is almost invariably a fatal strategy. Looking up someone else’s ideas is no substitute for your own analysis.

Some observations from the instructor’s point of view: 1) use of a web-site without citing it is plagiarism, which, if detected, can result in serious academic penalties (see above); 2) instructors can often detect uncited use of a website when either the writing style of the student’s paper changes drastically, or when facts/ideas/dates/people not discussed in class or in any of the assigned readings appear in an assignment. Again, I don’t want to discourage you from gaining more perspectives by using the web. What I’m saying is that ultimately you are being evaluated on your analysis of the assigned readings, not on your ability to plug the ideas of some website into your essay.

**Lecture and Reading Schedule:**

**I. THE RISE AND ESTABLISHMENT OF THE ISLAMIC STATE (7-10th CENTURY)**

**Week 1: Introduction**
Aug 16. Class Organization, Syllabus, Open Discussion of General Themes (Lecture 1)

Aug 18. The World Before Islam: The Byzantine and the Sasanian Empires (Lecture 2)
*Primary Source:* Jahiliya Poetry (course document)
*Secondary Source:* Egger, Preface: xix-xxvii; Ch. 1, 1-15
Recommended: Cameron, *The Mediterranean World in Late Antiquity*, 152-96
Screening of Part I of Islam: Empire of Faith” documentary (PBS)

**Week 2: The Pre-Islamic Near East and The Rise of Islam**
Aug 23. Pre-Islamic Arabia, The Prophet Muhammad, The Qur’an (Lecture 3)
*Primary Source:* Constitution of Madina (in Denny article)
*Secondary Source:* Egger, Ch. 1: 16-32

DUE: Map
DUE IN CLASS: Primary Source Assignment #1
Aug 25. The Age of Conquests and the Rashidun Caliphs (Lecture 4)

*Primary Source:* Accounts of the Conquest of Egypt (course document)

*Secondary Source:* Egger, Ch. 2: 35-45, Ch. 3: 65-70

**DUE IN CLASS:** Primary Source Assignment #2

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**Week 3: The Umayyad Caliphate**

Aug 30. The First and Second Civil Wars (Lecture 4 cont)

Sep 1. The Umayyads (Lecture 5)

*Primary Sources:* Umayyad Coins (in class)

*Secondary Source:* Tax Rescript of 'Umar II (course document)


**DUE IN CLASS:** Primary Source Assignment #3

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**Week 4: The Abbasid Caliphate**

Sep 6. Umayyad Art and Architecture: Religious Buildings and Desert Castles (Lecture 6)

*Primary Sources:* Dome of the Rock, Mosque of Damascus, *qasr* (in class)


Sep 8. The Early Abbasids, The Third and Fourth Civil Wars, and Baghdad (Lecture 7)

*Primary Sources:* Baghdad (in class), Description of Baghdad (course document)

*Secondary Source:* Egger, Ch. 3, 73-75. 91-94

**WATCH:** Screening of first segment of Part II “Islam: Empire of Faith” documentary (PBS) on YouTube or via Library


**DUE IN CLASS:** Primary Source Assignment #4

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**Week 5: The Frontiers**

Sep 13. Al-Andalus and the Islamic-Christian Frontier (Lecture 8)

*Primary Source:* The Conquest of Spain and Battle of Poitiers (course document)

*Secondary Source:* Egger, Ch. 4: 106-110


**WATCH:** Screening of second segment of Part II of “Islam: Empire of Faith” documentary (PBS) on YouTube or via Library


**DUE IN CLASS:** Primary Source Assignment #5

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Sep 15. The Byzantine-Islamic Frontier and the Concept of Holy War (Lecture 9)

*Primary Source:* Shaybani’s *Siyar* (course documents)

*Secondary Source:* Various archaeological surveys and excavations (in class)

Egger, Ch. 9: 251-261
Recommended:

EXAM 1. (covering Lectures 1-9) TAKE-HOME. DUE Monday Sept 19th, 9am
[MIDTERM GRADES POSTED BY FRIDAY SEPT 23]

II. THE FLOWERING OF ISLAMIC CULTURE AND THE SHI'ITE CENTURY

Week 6: Islamic Communities
Sep 20. Sunni and Shi’i Religious Communities (Lecture 11)
Discussion
Primary Source: Abu al-Fida’s Public Cursing (course documents)
Recommended:

Sep 22. Administration, Taxation, Legitimacy, and Law (Lecture 12)
Discussion:
Primary Source: Political Debates (course documents),
Examples of legal cases (in class)
Secondary Source: Egger, Ch. 5: 122-131, Ch. 9: 273-276
Recommended:
https://www.ottomanhistorypodcast.com/2020/12/islamic-law.html

Discussion of Exam 1.

Week 7: Islamic Geography and Urbanism
Sep 27. The Islamic City (Lecture 14)
Primary Source: various Cities (in class)
Secondary Source: Egger, Ch. 9: 262-266

Sep 29. Geographical Accounts and Cartography (Lecture 13)
Primary Source: Geographical accounts (in class)


Recommended: https://www.ottomanhistorypodcast.com/2016/01/islamic-cartography.html

Discussion and Primary Sources

Primary Source: Idrisi World Map (in class)

DUE IN CLASS: Primary Source Assignment #7

Week 8. Economy, Cairo, and the Fatimids
Oct 4. Trade, Agriculture, and Rural Settlement (Lecture 15)


Cairo Geniza letter (course document)

Secondary Source: Egger, Ch. 4: 111-120, Ch. 9: 267

[final paper assignments given]

Oct 6. The Fatimids and al-Qahira (Lecture 16)

Primary Source: Cairo (in class)

Secondary Source: Egger, Ch. 4: 100-105, Ch. 6: 170-175, Ch. 8: 242-249


Recommended: https://www.ottomanhistorypodcast.com/2020/12/fatimids.html

DUE IN CLASS: Commodities Assignment

Week 9: FALL BREAK – NO CLASS (October 11 and 13)

III. THE REPOSITIONING OF THE ISLAMIC EMPIRE (10-12TH CENTURY)

Week 10: North Africa and Spain

Oct 18. Almoravids and Almohads (Lecture 17)

Primary Sources: Madinat al-Zahra’ (in class)

Alhambra (in class)

Epic and Romantic Poetry (course document)

Secondary Source: Egger, Ch. 6: 178-198, Ch. 8: 220-226

Watt and Cachia, History of Islamic Spain, 82-126.

Oct 20. Mediterranean Connections: Coastal Fortified Settlements & Slave Trade (Lect. 18)

Primary Sources: Accounts of Africans, Gold, and Slavery (course documents)

Sijilmasa, Monastir (in class)

Secondary Sources: Egger, Ch. 9: 238-241

El’Ad, A. “The Coastal Cities of Palestine During the Early Middle

**DUE IN CLASS:** Primary Source Assignment #8

**EXAM 2** (covering Lectures 10-18) **TAKE-HOME. DUE Monday Oct 24th, 9am**

**Week 11: Local Autonomies and Crisis of the Caliphate**
Oct 25. The Later Abbasids and Samarra (Lecture 19)

*Discussion:*

**Primary Source:** Samarra (in Class)

**Secondary Sources:** Egger, Ch. 4: 95-96

Oct 27. Nomads and Settlers: the Bedouin Dynasties (Lecture 20)


**DUE: Topics and Group Choices for Final Project**

**Week 12: Research and Writing Skills**
Nov 1. Assignment of Groups and Research Skills Day (Library) in Room 177a

Nov 3. Paper Writing Skills

Work in Groups doing Research

**Bibliography and Introduction Assignments Due**

**Week 13: The East and the Arrival of the Turks**

Nov 8. The Eastern Provinces, The Buyids, Provincial Autonomy Movements (Lecture 21)

**Primary Source:** 1001 Nights- Sixth Voyage of Sindbad (course documents)

**Secondary Source:** Egger, Ch. 4, 97-99, Ch. 6: 157-159

**DUE IN CLASS:** Primary Source Assignment #9

Nov 10. Ghaznavids, the Saljuq Migration, and Anatolian Civilization (Lecture 22)

**Primary Source:** Mu’tamar ‘Ulamāʾ Baghdad (in class)

**Secondary Source:** Egger, Ch. 6: 160-169, 176-77, Ch. 7: 210-17; Ch. 8: 227-236


**Week 14: The Crusades and Islamic Responses**
Nov 15. Crusaders, Zangids, and Ayyubids; Castles and Military Architecture (Lecture 23)
Nov 17. **NO CLASS, INSTRUCTOR AT CONFERENCE.** Work on Final Projects. Screening of third segment of Part II of “Islam: Empire of Faith” documentary (PBS)

SEND draft papers out for peer-review to classmate partners

WATCH Kingdom of Heaven (Ridley Scott, 2005) and complete Question sheet.

**DUE** Kingdom of Heaven questions

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**Week 15: (NO CLASS, THANKSGIVING BREAK, Nov 22 and 24)**

**Week 16. Final Projects and Exam**

Nov 29. **The Alhambra Banquet!** Final Project Presentations. 12-3 (double period).

**DUE** all Final Papers

Dec 1. **READING DAY**.

**Kingdom of Heaven DUE**

EXAM 3 (covering Lectures 1-9) **TAKE-HOME. DUE Dec. 1st, 9am**

[MIDTERM GRADES POSTED BY FRIDAY SEPT 23]

Final Project Topics: 3-4 people per group.

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Extra Credit: (Look in Week 5’s Module)

**Primary Source:** Jacob of Edessa’s Canonical *Responsa*


Egger, Ch. 3: 76-89, Ch. 5: 132-149, Ch. 8: 237-241, Ch. 9: 268-272