

Town and Country in the Medieval Islamic World
HIS 411c Seminar in Historical Research and Writing

Seminar in Historical Research and Writing

Spring 2020

HIS 411c, Wednesdays, 4:00 – 6:50, MHRA 2204

Instructor: A. Asa Eger

aaeger@uncg.edu

Office: MHRA Building, Room 2113

Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays 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.

Summaries*: Please write a one or two paragraph synopsis of **each reading. The synopsis should include: the citation of the source, a brief overview of what the author is arguing, and your own thoughts building on what you know and have read.

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

Lambourn, E. *Abraham's Luggage: A Social Life of Things in the Medieval Indian Ocean World*. Cambridge University Press, 2018.

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*.

*Goldberg, Jessica. *Trade and Institutions in the Medieval Mediterranean: The Geniza Merchants and their Business World*. Cambridge University Press, 2012.

Ali, Omar. *Islam in the Indian Ocean World: A Brief History with Documents*. New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2016.

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: Reading Summaries 1-4/Individual Presentations (Aug 23, Aug 30, Sept 6, Sept 13)

Assignment 2: Project Description Due (Sept 13)

Assignment 3: Preliminary Bibliographies Due (in class presentations) (Sept 27)

Assignment 4: Report of one archaeological source Due (Oct 11)

Assignment 5: Historiographical Essay/Literature Review Due (Oct 18)

Assignment 6: Rough Draft Due (please bring 3 copies to class) (Nov 1)

Assignment 7: Formal Final Presentation (Dec. 6)

Assignment 8: Final Paper Due (Dec. 6)

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 (January 15)

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

*Recommended, Watch: *Islam: Empire of Faith*, parts 1 and 2 on YouTube.

Week 2 (January 22)

The Towns: Cities and Urban Life

Debate over the Islamic City

A. 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.

B. Individual Readings (Assignment 1):

PICK ONE OF THESE FOUR. PRESENT ITS VIEW IN THE ISLAMIC CITY DEBATE

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

Wheatley, P. "Chapter 17: The Urban Fabric," *The Places Where Men Pray Together*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001: 227-256.

Avni, G. "'From Polis to Madina' Revisited – Urban Change in Byzantine and Early Islamic Palestine." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 21.3 (2011): 301-329.

C. Individual Readings (Assignment 1)

PICK ONE OF THESE THREE.

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.

Walmsley, A. "Economic Developments and the Nature of Settlement in the Towns and Countryside of Syria-Palestine, ca. 565-800." *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 61 (2007): 319-352.

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

[Summary 1 due]

Week 3 (January 29)

The Country: Agriculture and Rural Life

Debate over the Agricultural Revolution, Role of Nomads vs the State

A. General Readings:

Kennedy, H. "The Feeding of the Five Hundred Thousand: Cities and Agriculture in Early Islamic Mesopotamia." *Iraq* 73 (2011): 177-199

PICK EITHER THESE THREE. CRITIQUE THE DEBATE OVER THE ISLAMIC AGRICULTURAL REVOLUTION

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.

Decker, M. "Plants and Progress."

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

OR THESE THREE. CRITIQUE THE DEBATE OVER THE ROLE OF NOMADS VS THE STATE

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.

Avni, G. "Early Mosques in the Negev Highlands: New Archaeological Evidence on Islamic Penetration of Southern Palestine," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 294 (1994): 83-100.

B. Individual Readings (Assignment 1)

PICK ONE FROM EITHER SECTIONS B1 or B2.

B1. Irrigation, Canals, Gardens

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

Redford, S. *Landscape and the State in Medieval Anatolia: Seljuk Pavilions and Gardens of Southern Turkey*. Oxford: Archaeopress, British Archaeological Reports 893.

Anderson, G. *The Islamic Villa in Early Medieval Iberia: Architecture and Court Culture in Umayyad Córdoba*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013. Chapter 4: Gardens, pp. 105-136.

B2. Pastoralists, Nomads, Marsh Dwellers, Mountain Dwellers

Gari, L. "A History of the Hima Conservation System," *Environment and History* 12.2 (2006): 213-228.

Shoup, J. "Middle Eastern Sheep Pastoralism and the Hima System," In: *The World of Pastoralism*, Guilford Press, 1990.

[summary 2 due]

Week 4 (February 5)

The Routes: Trade over Land and Sea (with guest Dr. Omar Ali)

A. 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*, Chapters 5, 6, 7.

B. Individual Readings:

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. 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 (1961): 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. 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, 2007.

Chittick, H. N. 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, 1970.

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.

George, A. "Direct Sea Trade Between Early Islamic Iraq and Tang China: from the Exchange of Goods to the Transmission of Ideas." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* August 2015: 1-46.

Mango, M. M. "Byzantine Trade: local, regional, interregional and international."

Mortel, R. T. "The Mercantile Community of Mecca during the Late Mamluk Period." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Third Series, 4.1 (1994): 15-35.

Muller-Weiner, M. "China and the Islamic World: the evidence of 12th and 13th century North Syria." In: *Hadeeth ad-Dar* 37 (2011): 9-21

Priestman, S. "The Silk Road or the Sea? Sasanian and Islamic Exports to Japan." *Journal of Islamic Archaeology* 3.1 (2016) 1-35.

Wilson, A. "Developments in Mediterranean Shipping and Maritime Trade from the Hellenistic Period to AD 1000." In: *Maritime Archaeology and Ancient Trade in the Mediterranean*. Edited by Damian Robinson and Andrew Wilson. Pp. 33-60.

[summary 3 due]

Week 5 (February 12)

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

A. General Readings

Lambourn, *Abraham's Luggage*, Ch. 1, Introduction

B. Individual Readings:

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. 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, 2002.

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.

Goitein, S. D. "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* 4.2 (1961): 168-197.

Holmqvist, V.E. "Ceramic Production Traditions in the Late Byzantine-Early Islamic Transition: A Comparative Analytical Study of Ceramics from *Palaestina Tertia*." EMAC 2007 Budapest – Vessels: Inside and Outside. 91-95.

Jacoby, D. "Silk Economics and Cross-Cultural Artistic Interaction: Byzantium, the Muslim World, and the Christian West." *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 58 (2004), 197-240.

Lambourn, E. "Borrowed Words in an Ocean of Objects: Geniza Sources and New Cultural Histories of the Indian Ocean." In: *Irreverent History: Essays for M.G.S. Narayanan*. Edited by K. Veluthat and D. Davis, Jr. Primus Books, 2015. 1-21(8)

[Project Description with 5 Research Questions (a paragraph) is due (Assignment 2)]

[summary 4 due and presentations on an industry from the readings]

Week 6 (February 19)

Lambourn, *Abraham's Luggage*, Chapters 2 and 3

In class presentations and discussions of proposals.

*You will also be expected to ask questions and provide suggestions for others' presentations.

Week 7 (February 26)

Lambourn, *Abraham's Luggage*, Chapters 4 and 5

Frenkel, M. and A. Lester "Evidence of Material Culture from the Geniza – An Attempt to Correlate Textual and Archaeological Findings," in *Material Evidence and Narrative Sources: Interdisciplinary*

Studies of the History of the Muslim Middle East, D. Talmon-Heller and K. Cytryn-Silverman, eds. (Brill, 2014), pp. 147-187

Library Research Seminar with Maggie Murphy (Meet in citilab in the Library at 7:00).

Week 8 (March 4)

Lambourn, *Abraham's Luggage*, Chapters 6 and 7

NO CLASS-SPRING BREAK

*FOR NEXT WEEK, LOCATE AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL REPORT SUITABLE TO YOUR PAPER TOPIC.

[Preliminary Bibliographies due (Assignment 3), emailed to me]

Week 9 (March 11)

Lambourn, *Abraham's Luggage*, Chapters 8 and 9

Reading an Archaeological Report

A. 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

B. Individual Readings:

TBA (Based on your topic)

[Report of one archaeological source due (Assignment 4)]

Week 10 (March 18)

Paper Writing Workshop: Writing the Introduction (In MHRA Computer Lab, first floor)

* Schedule these during office hours or by arrangement with me for another time. They can also be on Tuesday's office hours and by appointment.

[Historiographical Essay/Literature review due (Assignment 5)]

Week 11 (March 25)

Organizing the Paper and Content

Individual Meetings, schedule in 10 minute blocks in my office.

Week 12 (April 1)

Editing and Revising the Paper (In MHRA Computer Lab, first floor)

*be able to access the LATEST version of your Rough Draft in the Computer Lab.

[Rough Drafts Due.] Send an electronic copy of your draft to both me and the classmates who are critiquing your work **at the end of class.** (Assignment 6)

Week 13 (April 8)

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

[Peer-critiques are due.]

Week 14 (April 15)

[Submit Assessment of Peer Critiques]

Week 15 (April 22)

Week 16 (April 29)

In-class group meeting and formal presentations.

[Final Presentations given (Assignment 7)]

[Final Papers due! (Assignment 8)]

Sample Topics for Research Papers:

Town

Siraf/Persian Gulf

Aden

Fustat/Cairo

Sijilmasa

Country

Irrigation

Land Tax

Industry

Agriculture in Egypt, Linen and Flax

Sugar

Spices and Drugs

Coins and Money

Glass

Ceramics

Mining/Metal Production

Pastoralism

Medicine

Slaves

Silk

Trade

Levant Trade and the West

Indian Ocean Trade

Chinese/Silk Route Trade

African Trade – Gold

Slave Trade

Shipping and Commerce in the Mediterranean

Viking and Northern European Trade

Merchants, Economy, Transportation

Jewish Merchants

Charity in the Islamic World

Nomads

Waystations

Medieval Partnership

Road Systems and Transportation