

Susan Gunasti

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Office Hours: Tuesdays, 1:45-2:45 and by appointment at Loree, Room 114, Douglass Campus

In this class, we will use the categories of gender and sexuality to examine Islamic history from an alternative vantage point to the study of Islam. Gender provides us with an opportunity to examine the tension that exists between an Islamic textual tradition and the everyday lives of Muslims. The contrast between the social lives of Muslims and the Islamic tradition and the way in which Muslim societies have negotiated these tensions will be a recurring theme in the course. The course is divided into three parts. The first part of the course will provide an overview of Islamic history – with an emphasis on women – as well as an introduction to important Islamic sources. The second part of the course is a thematic treatment of issues regarding law, sexuality, and politics. In the third part of the course, we will look at feminist reinterpretations of the classical Islamic tradition. No prior study of Islam is necessary.

Requirements:

- 1) Regular attendance, careful reading of all assigned material, and active participation in class discussion. **Attendance will constitute 10% of your overall grade.** No more than 3 unexcused absences will be tolerated; in that case, your grade will be reduced by a full letter grade. For example, a student who has earned a grade of an A-, but has missed 4 classes, will receive a B+ for an overall grade. Attendance is solely established by your signing the attendance sheet that will circulate at the beginning of every class and your remaining for the entire duration of the class. **Participation will constitute 10% of your overall grade.**
- 2) You will have two in-class quizzes to test your knowledge of the material. **Each quiz will constitute 10% of your overall grade.** The date of the quizzes will be announced at least a week in advance. Each quiz will cover both the readings and class discussions. A missed quiz can only be made up in the case of a family or medical emergency.
- 3) You will have two take-home exams, a mid-term and a final. Each exam will consist of two questions and you will be expected to write about three double-spaced pages (about 1000 words) in response to each. Questions for the first exam will be handed out in class on Tuesday, March 9 and will be due by email on **Friday, March 12 by 5pm by email.** The final exam will be distributed on the last day of class, Thursday, April 29 and will be due on **Friday, May 7 by 5pm by email. Each exam will constitute 30% of your overall grade.** For every day (1 day = 24 hours) that you hand in your exam late, your grade will be reduced by 10 points. For example, if you earned an 87 on your exam, but turned it in a day late, your final grade for the exam will be reduced to a 77.
- 4) **Grading System:** A=100-90, B+= 89-87, B=86-80, C+=79-77, C=76-70, D=69-65, F=64-

Books for Purchase:

Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992)

Kecia Ali, *Sexual Ethics & Islam: Feminist Reflections on Qur'an, Hadith, and Jurisprudence* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2006)

Judith Tucker, *In the House of the Law: Gender and Islamic Law in Ottoman Syria and Palestine* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000)

Syllabus:

PART I:

Overview of Islam & Islamic/Middle Eastern History

Jan. 19: First Class – Introduction to the Course

Jan. 21: Jonathan Berkey, *The Formation of Islam*, 39-53 & 61-75

Jan. 26: From early to medieval Islam
Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam*, 1-63

Jan. 28: Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam*, 64-101
Jonathan Berkey, *The Formation of Islam*, 261-269
In class, I will distribute a handout of Qur'anic passages that address women. We will divide the passages in class for student presentations at our next meeting.

Sources: Qur'an and *Hadith*

Feb. 2: Q 4 (entire); Q 12 (entire); Q 33 (entire)
Student presentations on Qur'anic passages dealing with women
Fatima Mernissi, *The Veil and the Male Elite*, 25-48
Barbara Freyer Stowasser, "The Mother of the Believers in the *Ḥadīth*," *The Muslim World* (January-April, 1992): 1-36

Feb. 4: Ruth Roded, "Sayings of the Prophet: selective quotations," in *Women in Islam and the Middle East, a Reader*, 48-57
Fatima Mernissi, *The Veil and the Male Elite*, 49-81 & 115-140

Women, Gender, & Medieval Society

Feb. 9: Muhammad Fadel, "Two women, one man: Knowledge, Power, and Gender in Medieval Sunni Legal Thought," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 29 (1997): 185-204
Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam*, 102-123

Feb. 11: Yossef Rapoport, "Women and Gender in Mamluk Society – an Overview", *Mamlūk Studies Review*, (November 2007): 1-45
Carl F. Petry, "Conjugal Rights versus Class Prerogatives: A Divorce Case in Mamluk Cairo," in *Women in the Medieval Islamic World*, 227-240
Jonathan Berkey, "Circumcision Circumscribed: Female Excision and Cultural Accommodation in the Medieval Near East," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* vol. 28 (1996): 19-38

PART II:

Law & Gender

Feb. 16: Tucker, *In the House of the Law*, 1-77

Feb. 18: Tucker, *In the House of the Law*, 77-112

Leslie Pierce, ““She is Trouble ... and I will Divorce Her’: Orality, Honor, and Representation in the Ottoman Court of ‘Aintab,” in *Women in the Medieval Islamic World*, 269-300

Feb. 23: Tucker, *In the House of the Law*, 113-186

Feb. 25: Nasrin Ramihieh, “Divorce Seen Through Women’s Cinematic Lens,” *Iranian Studies*, 42 (2009): 97-112

In-class film: *Divorce Iranian Style* (1998)

Gender & Power

Mar. 2: Leslie Pierce, *The Imperial Harem: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire*, 12-56 & 113-149

Mar. 4: Leslie Pierce, *The Imperial Harem: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire*, 186-285

The Veil

Mar. 9: Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam*, 144-168

Qasim Amin, *The Liberation of Women and the New Woman: Two Documents in the History of Egyptian Feminism*. Samiha Sidhom Peterson (trans.), 37-61

Take-home midterm will be distributed towards the end of class

Mar. 11: In-class film: *On Boys, Girls, and the Veil* (1995)

Mar. 12: Midterm due by 5pm by email

Mar. 16: Spring Recess – No Class

Mar. 18: Spring Recess – No Class

Sexuality

Mar. 23: Khaled El-Rouayheb, *Before Homosexuality in the Arab-Islamic World, 1500-1800*, 1-51

Sofian Merabet, "Disavowed Homosexualities in Beirut," *MERIP* (Spring 2004)
(available on-line: http://www.merip.org/mer/mer230/230_merabet.html)
Scott Long, "The Trials of Culture: Sex and Security in Egypt," *MERIP* (Spring 2004)
(available on-line: http://www.merip.org/mer/mer230/230_long.html)

Mar. 25: In-class film: *Be Like Others* (2008)

PART III:

Women in the Modern Era

Mar. 30: Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam*, 169-207

Margot Badran, "Competing Agenda: Feminists, Islam and the State in 19th and 20th Century Egypt," in *Women, Islam & the State*, Deniz Kandiyoti (ed.), 201-236

Apr. 1: Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam*, 208-248

Islamism & Gender

Apr. 6: Roxanne L. Euben and Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *Princeton Readings in Islamist Thought*, 249-274, 302-310

Apr. 8: miriam cooke, *Women Claim Islam*, 83-106

Roxanne L. Euben and Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *Princeton Readings in Islamist Thought*, 275-301

Feminist Re-Interpretations and Empowerment

Apr. 13: Ali, *Sexual Ethics & Islam*, xii-xxviii & 1-74

Apr. 15: Ali, *Sexual Ethics & Islam*, 75-157

Apr. 20: Amina Wadud, *Qur'an and Women: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective*, ix-xix & 1-43

Apr. 22 Amina Wadud, *Qur'an and Women: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective*, 44-105

Apr. 27: Lara Deeb, *An Enchanted Modern: Gender and Public Piety in Shi'i Lebanon*, 99-128 & 204-219

Apr. 29: Saba Mahmood, "Feminist theory, embodiment, and the docile agent: Some reflections on the Egyptian Islamic Revival," *Cultural Anthropology*, vol. 6 (2001): 202-36
Take-home final will be distributed towards the end of class

May 7: Final due by 5pm by email