

Islam In the Americas
Religion 4393/Section 1535
African American Studies 4931/Section 09G9
Undergraduate Section
Fall Semester 2018
Tuesdays 10th period
(5:10pm -6:00 PM)
Thursdays 10 & 11th Periods
(5:10pm – 7:05 pm)

Anderson Hall -Room 134

Format: Discussion & Group Projects
Instructor: Gwendolyn (Zoharah) Simmons, Ph.D.
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Office Hours: Wednesdays: 1:00 – 4:00 pm
And by appointment

Course Description:

Islam is said to be the fastest growing religion in the world including here in the United States and in Canada. Muslim sources say that the number of Muslim adherents in the U.S. number from six to eight million¹, making it the third largest religion in the US. However, a Pew Foundation estimate in 2017 said that there were 3.45 million Muslims in the U.S., about 1.1% of the total U.S. population. By 2040, PEW demographers project that the Muslim population will be around 8.1 million and will be the second largest religion in the U.S. outstripping the American Jewish population. The latest figures for the Muslim population in Canada are from 2011, when they numbered, 1,053,945 or about 3.2% of the population, making Islam the second largest religion after Christianity. Muslims make up 7% of the population in Greater Toronto and 6% in Montreal, the two largest cities in the country.

Islam is also growing in the Southern Hemisphere – Latin and South America as well as in the Caribbean. There is now a good deal of information on Islam in the Caribbean and in South America that we will draw upon in our work this semester. One source, states that the number of Muslims in Latin America number over four million.² Islam entered the Americas largely through enslaved persons brought to the New World by the Spanish.

In this Course we will begin with a brief overview of Islam – the history of the religion, the fundamentals of the faith as well as the primary texts, the *Qur'an*, the *Hadith* and Islam's legal system – the *Shari'ah*. We will also touch on the religion's phenomenal spread from Arabia, throughout the Middle East and parts of Asia into Europe itself from the 7th through the 13th

¹ The figure has been recently contested by the PEW Research Center, which in the spring of 2007 completed one of the largest studies of American Muslims ever done. Pew says that the number of Muslims in the US is closer to two million, plus. U.S. based Muslim demographers hotly dispute the Pew Research Center's findings. At this point we do not really know how many Muslims there are in the U.S.

² This statistic comes from, Muhammad Yusef Hallar's book, Muslims in Latin America, found at www.islamawareness.net/Latin America/adosimpo.html

centuries. Then we will turn our attention to the study of *Islam in the Americas*, from its beginnings as the religion of significant numbers of enslaved and free Moors and Africans who came or were brought to the Americas (North and South) in the 15th century, until the spread of the religion in the Americas today. This phenomenal rise of Islam here in the U.S. and Canada in the 20 & 21st centuries and in the Southern Hemisphere will be our primary focus in this class. This course is interdisciplinary in that we will use history, religious studies, cultural, and women studies in our effort to map Islam in the Americas over the last six centuries.

Requirements: This is a reading intensive and research course. Some of your work will be done in small research groups focused on a topic you will select by the 3rd week of class and continue working on throughout the term.

- 1) Attendance and **active** participation in your group and class discussion will count for **10% of your grade**. Roll will be taken at each class after the first two. You are permitted three unexcused absence, after which your grade will be negatively impacted by additional unexcused absences. Such absences after the first will lower your cumulative grade by 2 grade points per absence. (Please mark your unexcused absences in your calendar to keep track of them.) To be chronically late for class will also negatively impact your grade and can count as absences too. Leaving the class before it ends without cause and without notifying me in advance (preferably by e-mail) can be counted as an absence also. Therefore, please let me know in advance if you will be late (and the reason) or if you need to leave class early for a legitimate reason, (preferably by e-mail.)
- 2) **Four Reaction Papers** to assigned readings (5 pg. minimum) will be written during the course of the term. (Reports on these readings will be made in class by an assigned person in each class and along with the instructor's comments on the readings will serve as the basis for our weekly discussions). A sign up sheet for these reaction papers and presentations will be circulated at the 3rd meeting of this class.) The four reaction papers and your leading at least one class discussion will count for **25% of your grade**.
- 3) **Small Group Projects**. Each student will participate in a small (2 or more persons) research projects on *Islam in a particular country in the Americas: 1)the U.S.; Canada; 2)Trinidad & Tobago; 3)Mexico; 4)Brazil; 5) Guyana; etc.* (This group will map and monitor these countries; the Muslim organizations within these countries, any publications, websites, etc. Each group will make periodic reports in class on your findings. The groups are to forward interesting info to me for posting on the class' list serve.) If you have an idea for another group topic and there is interest, it can be added to the list.

Each group will prepare an **in depth final written report** at the end of the term on their topic with **each member of the group being responsible for writing some specific subset of the overall project, (ten pages minimum) which will be written as a separate stand alone paper and graded**. The group will make an oral presentation on your research at the Mid-Point of the Term and at the End of the Term with a written synopsis of your research to be distributed to the class at the time of the groups' oral presentations. Everyone will be asked to sign up for one of the groups by the 3rd meeting of the class and to hold the first meeting of the group at that time.

At this meeting, members of each group will exchange telephone numbers and e-mail addresses or other ways you want to stay in touch with each other as each group will need to meet periodically and to communicate regularly. I am to be included in your group on-line communications about your groups' work and will rotate among your groups during your in class meetings. Also the groups will be given time to meet throughout the term during class time. This project (the research, individual written segments { 10pgs minimum}, oral presentation with handout) will count for - **40% -(a substantial portion of your grade) in this class**

- 4) **A written 7 page minimum book report** is to be written by each student on a book to be selected by each of you or you can select from a book list I will supply early in the semester. All book titles are to be submitted to me for approval. Additionally, an oral presentation {with a minimum two-page synopsis of the book review to be distributed to the class at the time of your oral presentation} is to be made. Guidelines for the book report plus the list of books to select from will be posted on Canvas and sent e-mailed to each of you via our class list. The written book report plus your oral presentation with synopsis for the class will count for **15% of your class grade.**
- 5). **Class Trip or Event.** Students are to attend an Islamic event during the fall term. It can be the Juma' (Friday prayer service) or one of the teacher approved events/lectures on campus that will be organized by the *Islam on Campus* organization, *The Center for Global Islam* or possibly events organized by other organization. We will discuss, the Juma' prayer Class Trip and other possible events that we can do as a class or as portions of the class together. More about possible events and their dates will be distributed when this information becomes available. This trip or attendance at an event will count for **10%of your class grade.**

In Summary, Grades will be based on the following:

- 1) Attendance and active participation in your group and class discussion. **10%**
- 2) Four reaction papers (5 pg. minimum) during the term, which each student will be assigned to read from or lead the class discussion on. These four papers will be turned in for grading. **25%**
- 3) Small group project on a selected topic with each member having a specific component on which to write a 10 pg (minimum) paper and make an oral presentation in class. **40%**
- 4) Book Report (7- pp minimum) on book plus oral presentation with two-page synopsis for distribution to the class. **15%**
- 5) Class trip to an Islamic event **10%.**

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS FOR THIS CLASS

Required texts are available at the UF Bookstore. Alternatively, you may want to purchase your books on line as they are often much cheaper even than the used books at the book store. Please order them on time according to our Course Outline which will be distributed at the 2nd meeting of the class.

- Tamara Sonn, *Islam, History and Politics*, 3rd edition, Malden, Mass: Blackwell Publishing 2015. (If you have not had an Islam course before and are not a Muslim, you

need to read this book in its entirety during the first week in class as we will go over the fundamentals of the religion in our first 2-3 classes.).

- Julianne Hammer & Omid Safi, editors, *The Cambridge Companion to American Islam*, Cambridge U.P, 2013.
- Maria del Mar, Logrono Narbona, Paulo G. Pinto, and John Tofik Karam, editors, *Crescent Over Another Horizon: Islam in Latin America, The Caribbean, and Latino, USA.*, Austin, University of Texas Press, 2016.

Additionally we will read chapters that will be placed on our Canvas Course Site from the following books:

DO NOT PURCHASE

- Ula Yvette Taylor, *The Promise of PATRIARCHY: Women and the Nation of Islam*, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2017.
- Manning Marable and Hishaam D. Aidi, editors, *Black Routes to Islam*, Palgrave McMillian, 2009.
- Michael A. Gomez, *Black Crescent: The Experience & Legacy of African Muslims in the Americas*, Cambridge: Cambridge U.P. 2005
- Zahid H. Bukhari, Sulayman S. Nyang, Mumtaz Ahmad, and John L. Esposito, eds., *Muslims' Place in the American Public Square*, Walnut Ca.: AltaMira Press, 2004.
- *Muslim Americans Middle Class and Mostly Mainstream*, free pdf download of report from survey conducted by the Pew Research Center. Download entire report from: <http://people-press.org/report/?reportid=329>

Students with disabilities:

Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation.

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