Islam in Africa
Fall 2017

AFS4935 section 24H9
AFS6905 section 24H1
REL3371 section 23BD
RLG5365 section 23BE

Meeting & Location:
M 8-9 (3:00-3:50; 4:05-4:55) & W 8 (3:00-3:50): MAT 107

Instructor: Benjamin Soares
Office: 107B Anderson Hall
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Email: benjaminsoares@ufl.edu
Office hours: Wednesday, 11 am-1 pm & by appointment

Course Description: This course provides a comparative and historical survey of Islam and Muslim societies in their diversity in sub-Saharan Africa with particular emphasis on the period from 1800 to the present. Important themes in this course include the changing relationship between Islam and state power, Islamic education, Islamic legal traditions, Sufism, slavery, the challenges of colonial rule, reform, religious encounters, and the postcolonial secular state. The course will also draw attention to current issues relating to Islam in contemporary Africa such as popular culture, cultural heritage, the politics of gender and sexuality, conflict, and contemporary jihadi movements.

Course Objectives:
By the end of this course students should have an:
• Overview of the history of Islam in Africa
• Understanding of the diversity within Islam and Muslim societies in Africa
• Understanding of how Islam and religious practice in Africa can intersect with social, cultural, political, and economic factors
• Understanding of religious encounters between Muslims and non-Muslims in Africa
• Understanding of some of the main currents within contemporary Islam

Course Requirements and Grading Criteria (N.B.: Graduate students see below for additional requirements):
The final grade for undergraduates will be determined by:
• Attendance (10%)
• Participation and in-class presentations (15%)
• 3 Response papers (25% each)
Active Participation and In-class Presentations: Students are expected to attend ALL classes and participate actively in class discussions. Active and informed participation requires that students read the material carefully before coming to class. In-class presentations include brief presentations (7 to 10 minutes) on selected topics/ readings (from the supplementary readings or additional assigned readings) and presentations of response papers (see below).

3 Response Papers (2,000-2,500 words each): These response papers will address key issues and methodological and theoretical questions raised in the readings, lectures, and class discussions. The objective of these papers is to encourage students to read the materials closely and articulate their own informed and analytically nuanced positions. The format for papers is double spaced with font size 12.

Graduate Section Course Requirements and Grading Criteria: Graduate students will fulfill all of the requirements listed above, including the three response papers. In addition to the 3 response papers and presentation(s), they will have 2 additional writing assignments, which we will agree upon together. The assignment is to write a review of book(s) and articles and/or book chapters. Each review should be 2,000 to 2,500 words double-spaced with font size 12. Graduate students will also meet with me at least two times (1/2 hour) during the semester to discuss the agreed upon readings and assignments. These meetings will be during my office hours, and each student should email me with questions and/or the list of texts for me to comment on in advance of the meeting.

The final grade for graduate students will be determined by:
• Attendance (10%)
• Participation and In-class presentations (15%)
• 5 papers (15% each)

Readings:

All other readings will be available either in electronic format (e-books and e-journal articles) through the UF library website or via e-Learning (http://elearning.ufl.edu).

Background reading:
Esposito, John, Islam, the Straight Path (various editions). Oxford University Press. This is an introductory text that might be of use and interest.
Week 1: Introduction to Islam and Muslim societies in Africa

21 August  Introduction & Orientation

23 August

Week 2: A. Understanding the Arabic Ecumene or Arabic as the “Latin of Africa”

28 August
The Lost Libraries of Timbuktu (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BzBCLI9kcdqc), BBC, 2009 (excerpts to view in class).

B. Islamization in History

30 August

Supplementary reading:
Week 3:

4 September (Labor Day)  No Class
6 September (Study Day)  No Class (instructor traveling to attend conference)

Week 4: Law, Race, & Slavery

11 September

13 September

Supplementary reading:

Week 5: Renewal and Jihad

18 & 20 September

**Supplementary reading**:

**1st Response Paper Due: Friday, 22 September at 5 pm**

**Week 6: Muslims under Colonial Rule**

25 & 27 September

**Supplementary reading**:

**Week 7: Saints and Sufis**

2 & 4 October
820–51.

Supplementary reading:

Week 8: Muslims and “African” Religious Traditions
9 & 11 October

Supplementary reading:

Week 9: Education
16 & 18 October
Supplementary readings:

Week 10: Islam and Youth Culture

23 October

25 October Discussion of film with film producer, Prof. Susan O’Brien


2nd Response Paper Due: Friday, 27 October (5 pm)

Week 11: Reform

30 October
1 November

**Supplementary readings:**

**Week 12: Religious Encounters**

6 November
8 November


**Supplementary readings:**
**Week 13: Art, Popular Culture, and Cultural Heritage**

13 November
15 November


**Week 14:**

20 November (American Academy of Religion annual meeting) No Class
22 November (Thanksgiving break) No Class

**Week 15: Gender, Sexuality, & Politics**

27 November
29 November


**Week 16: Conflict**

4 December

**Supplementary readings:**

6 December  Final Class/Wrap Up

**3rd Response Paper Due: Wednesday, 6 December (12 pm)**

**Policies, Rules, Expectations, and Resources:**

1. **Attendance** is mandatory
2. Active discussion of the **readings** by each student during every meeting.
3. **Handing in Assignments**: Response papers should be handed in through e-learning/Canvas via Turnitin.
4. **Late Assignments**: An extension will be granted only in extraordinary circumstances and with prior approval from the instructor.
5. **Completion of All Assignments**: You must complete all written and oral work and fulfill the requirement for class participation in order to pass the course.
6. **Honor Code**: UF students are bound by the Honor Code (http://www.dso.ufl.edu/scce/process/student-conduct-honor-code/), and all students have agreed to follow this Code, meaning they will not give or receive unauthorized assistance in completing assignments.
7. **Course Evaluation**: Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at https://evaluations.ufl.edu.
8. **Students Requiring Accommodations**: Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter, which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.