

HIST 099: WOMEN AND GENDER IN THE MIDDLE EAST



"For Your Slenderness in the Summer." *Ḥawwā'* 512 (Cairo: 1966).

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Office hours: Tuesdays in ICC 610 at 12-1 PM, Wednesdays on Zoom at 10-11 AM. Please sign up for office hours using the link under "Collaborations" on Canvas. If you need to meet at a different time, please email me to set up an appointment.

Class time: 1:10-3:05 PM MTWR, Reiss 284

***Please note that if you have received AP or IB credit for History, you cannot take this class**

Course Description:

From debates about the hijab in France to Laura Bush's appeal to invade Iraq for the supposed benefit of Iraqi women, Middle Eastern women often show up in our media as voiceless objects of male oppression and Western pity. This class will fundamentally challenge assumptions of the passivity and lack of agency of Middle Eastern women, placing the

experiences of women into specific historical contexts and highlighting the richness and diversity of past women's voices, lives and actions. Class materials and discussions will engage with constructions of gender and sexuality in past societies as well as with gendered rhetoric and gendered conceptions of power. The class will highlight both continuity and change from the birth of Islam to the end of the 20th century, with a focus on the modern period. Discussions and assignments will challenge you to think about the past not in terms of binaries (tradition vs. modernity; power vs. powerlessness; men vs. women; conservative vs. progressive) or as a linear, inevitable road to "progress," but rather as complex and contradictory, and often surprising to our 21st century eyes and sensibilities.

The purpose of this class is threefold. First, the class aims to introduce you to the fundamentals of historical thinking and the discipline of history. You will learn how to analytically read primary sources from other time periods. We will explore a range of different primary sources in our labs: Quranic verses, women's speeches, short stories, photographs, cartoons and magazines. You will learn how to craft historical arguments on the basis of your analyses of these sources, and to place them in conversation with the work of historians. While these are the basic tools in any historian's toolbox, they are also applicable beyond the discipline and are not limited to historical writing or thinking. In a time of both misinformation and an overwhelming quantity of information, analytical thinking is more important than ever. Second, as a writing intensive class, you will learn how to improve your writing skills. You will improve how you structure your papers and the clarity and precision of your writing, and most importantly, how you use evidence to effectively communicate and support convincing arguments about the past. Third, the class aims to give you an overview of the concrete history of women and gender in the Middle East. Having an understanding of the complexities of gender and sexuality will entail exploring tensions and contradictions in primary sources and the particular historical contexts that informed both the lived experiences of humans in the past as well as their conceptions and understandings of what it meant to be a gendered being in their specific historical and social context.

The concrete learning goals for this class are as follows:

- Gain an understanding of the discipline of history as a series of conversations about past societies in which historians promote arguments anchored in primary source analyses
- Develop the skills to critically read and evaluate both primary and secondary sources
- Analytically use primary sources along with secondary sources to make coherent, balanced arguments about the past in writing
- Improve your writing skills in terms of clarity, structure and flow
- Place discussions of women, gender and sexuality in the Middle East in their historical context

- Develop an understanding of the basic issues, events and trajectories of women and gender in Middle East history

Attendance Policy:

Attendance is mandatory. You may miss 1 class unexcused. Any missed class past your first absence will negatively affect your participation grade. For absences connected to illness, please see the Student Health Center and acquire documentation the same day.

Grade breakdown:

- Participation in discussions and labs: 30 %
- Short writing assignments: 30 %
- Weekly reflection papers: 15 % (3% each)
- Term paper: 25 % (5% proposal; 20 % paper)

Please note that all written assignments should be submitted on Canvas using the Turnitin feature to scan for plagiarism (see the section about plagiarism below). I will not accept paper copies or email attachments.

Grading scale:

- 93 - 100 % = A
- 90 - 92 % = A-
- 87 - 89 % = B+
- 83 - 86 % = B
- 80 - 82 % = B-
- 77 - 79 % = C+
- 73 - 76 % = C
- 70 - 72 % = C
- 67 - 69 % = D+
- 60 - 66 % = D
- Below 60 % = F

Participation:

Simply attending class does will not yield a good participation grade. Active participation in class is a prerequisite to a meaningful engagement with the class materials. Your participation in class should show not only that you completed the assigned reading, but that you engaged critically with the material. While you will mostly not need to prepare in advance for lab

sessions, your participation in labs is an opportunity to link the materials from lab with concepts and material from lectures, readings and discussions.

Short writing assignments:

You will complete 4 short writing assignments for this class. The aim of these assignments is to prepare you to write your final paper, and so each assignment is designed to help you practice specific skills you will need to write a research paper in the field of history. A separate document on Canvas in the “Assignments” folder under “Files” has a detailed description of each of the short writing assignments.

Weekly reflection papers:

You are required to write 5 short weekly reflection papers. All reflection papers should be around 250-300 words. You may choose freely which assigned secondary readings of the week to write about. The reflection papers should be an analytical reading of a historian’s work in preparation for discussion. You may approach the assignment in different ways, but you could address one or several of the following questions: How does the author support their argument? What kinds of sources does the author use, and how effectively do they use them? What is the scope of their argument and its limitations? How does the author conceptualize women and gender?

Please note that all reflection papers are due before class.

Term paper:

The most important assignment of the semester will be writing your own research paper. The term paper must include both primary and secondary sources not assigned for the class. You will be required to submit a research proposal of 300 words, which will count as 5% of your grade. 20% of your grade will be your term paper, due at the end of the semester. Further information can be found on Canvas in the “Assignments” folder under “Files.”

Required book:

While almost all materials will be available online through Canvas, you will need to purchase a copy of Leila Ahmed’s *Women and Gender in Islam* (1992).

Schedule & Assigned Readings:

Week 1: Gender Theory, History & Early Islam

Students must meet with me individually within the first week

July 11: History & Sources (lecture + lab)

Lab: reading primary and secondary sources

July 12: Women and Gender Theory (lecture + discussion)

Read before class: Joan Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," *American Historical Review* 91(5), 1986.

July 13: Women/Gender Pre-Islam + Intro to Islam (lecture + discussion)

Read before class: Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam*, chapters 1 & 2 (pp. 11-37).

July 14: Early Islam, the Quran and Gender (lecture + lab)

Lab: Quranic verse translations

Read before class: Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam*, chapter 3 (pp. 41-63).

Assignment 1 due Friday July 15 (primary source analysis)

Week 2: Medieval & Early Modern Periods

July 18: The Abbasid Period (lecture + lab)

Lab: poetry by female poets

Read before class: Leila Ahmed, chapter 5 (pp. 79-101).

July 19: Early Modern Empires: The Mamluk and Ottoman Empires (lecture + lab)

Lab: analytical writing

Read before class: TBA

July 20: Islamic Jurisprudence and Sharia Court (lecture + discussion)

Read before class: Scalenghe, *Disability in the Ottoman Arab World*, chapter 4 “Intersex” (pp. 124-162).

July 21: Fluidity in Gender and Sexuality (lecture + discussion + lab)

Lab: homoerotic poetry

Read before class: Afsaneh Najmabadi, *Women with Mustaches and Men without Beards*, chapter 1 “Early Qajar” (pp. 11-25).

Assignment 2 due Friday July 22 (primary source w. secondary source -- poetry with Ahmed/Najmabadi)

Week 3: Orientalism and Civilizational Anxieties in the 19th Century

July 25: Orientalism & Colonialism (lecture + discussion + lab)

Lab: Orientalist writing and rhetoric

Read before class: Edward Said, *Orientalism*, Introduction (pp. 1-28).

July 26: Gendered Colonialism (discussion + lab)

Lab: writing a thesis statement

Read before class: Yael Simpson Fletcher, “‘Irresistible Seductions’: Gendered Representations of Colonial Algeria around 1930,” in Clancy-Smith and Gouda, eds., *Domesticating the Empire* (pp. 193-210).

July 27: Orientalist Imagery (discussion + lab)

Lab: Orientalist photography

Read before class: Linda Nochlin, “The Politics of Vision: Essays on Nineteenth-Century Art and Society”

July 28: Civilizational Anxieties, the Nahda & Debates about Women in the late 19th century (lecture + lab)

Lab: Qasim Amin’s writings

Assignment 3 due Friday July 29 (two secondary sources: compare Fletcher and Nochlin)

Week 4: Mothers of/in the Nation in the Early 20th Century

July 31: The Rise of Arab States & Women's Movements (lecture + lab)

Lab: Arab feminists’ speeches (Huda Sharawi etc.)

Read before class: Fleischmann, “The Other ‘Awakening’: the Emergence of Women’s Movements in the Middle East, c. 1900-1940,” in *Globalizing Feminisms*.

August 1: Gender and the Nation (lecture + lab)

Lab: the “new” woman

Read before class: Lisa Pollard, *Nurturing the Nation*, “The Home, the Classroom, and the Cultivation of Egyptian Nationalism” (pp. 100-131).

August 2: Backlash and Anxieties (lab + discussion)

Lab: misogynistic cartoons

Read before class: Thompson, *Colonial Citizens* (pages TBA).

August 3: State Feminism (lecture + discussion)

Read before class: Laura Bier (pages TBA).

Submit a research proposal with at least two primary sources and one secondary source.

Assignment 4 due August 4 (primary sources: compare writings by Qasim Amin and Huda Sharawi OR pictures/cartoons from the Tuesday and Wednesday labs)

Week 5: Voices & Experiences of the Mid-20th Century

August 8: Feminism & Islam (lecture + discussion + lab)

Lab: bring a primary source from your term paper to class along with an analysis

Read before class: Fatima Mernissi, *The Veil and the Male Elite: A Feminist Interpretation of Women's Rights in Islam*, “A Tradition of Misogyny” (pp. 49-61).

August 9: Voices, Society, Experiences & Arab Nationalism (lecture + lab + discussion)

Lab: women's magazines

Read before class: Layla Baalbeki, “A Spaceship of Tenderness to the Moon” (1964).

August 10: Contemporary Colonial Legacies (lecture + discussion + lab)

Lab: BCC's "Gay, trans and illegal in Lebanon"

Read before class: Massad, "Re-Orienting Desire: The Gay International and the Arab World," in *Desiring Arabs* (pp. 160-190).

August 11: Today's MENA & Final Thoughts (lecture + lab)

Lab: bring your introduction + thesis statement + layout

Term paper due Friday August 12 end of the day

Communication with Instructors:

Please feel free to email me with your questions, concerns, and/or to schedule a time to meet over Zoom. When sending emails please remember to follow the guidelines outlined below.

- Check the syllabus. Before sending your email or message, be sure that your question has not already been addressed in the syllabus or announcements.
- Specify subject. Subject line should include the topic of the message and class title.
- Greet & Close. E-mails should begin with a formal greeting and end with you signing your name in all messages/emails.
- Check writing. Proofread (i.e. grammar and spelling) your message before sending.

Discussion Etiquette:

To promote the highest degree of education possible, we ask each student to respect the opinions and thoughts of other students and be courteous in the way that you choose to express yourself. Students should be respectful and considerate of all opinions.

In order for us to have meaningful discussions, we must learn to genuinely try to understand what others are saying and be open-minded about others' opinions. If you want to persuade someone to see things differently, it is much more effective to do so in a polite, non-threatening way rather than to do so antagonistically. Everyone has insights to offer based on his/her experiences, and we can all learn from each other. Civility is essential.

I am committed to creating a learning environment for my students that supports a diversity of thoughts, perspectives and experiences, and honors your identities (including race, gender,

class, sexuality, religion, ability, etc.). If your name or pronoun needs to be corrected, please let me know early in the semester so that I can make the appropriate changes to my records.

Students with Disabilities:

Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, individuals with disabilities have the right to specific accommodations that do not fundamentally alter the nature of the course. Some accommodations might include note takers, books on tape, extended time on assignments, and interpreter services among others. Students are responsible for communicating their needs to the Academic Resource Center, the office that oversees disability support services, (202-687-8354; arc@georgetown.edu; <https://academicsupport.georgetown.edu/disability/>) before the start of classes to allow time to review the documentation and make recommendations for appropriate accommodations. The University is not responsible for making special accommodations for students who have not declared their disabilities and have not requested an accommodation in a timely manner. Students are highly encouraged to discuss the documentation and accommodation process with an Academic Resource Center administrator.

Academic Integrity:

Students at Georgetown University are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic and personal integrity. Although most Georgetown students conduct themselves in accordance with these standards, occasionally, there are students who violate the code of conduct. Cheating harms the University community in many ways. For example, honest students are frustrated by the unfairness of cheating that goes undetected and students who cheat can skew the grading curve in a class, resulting in lower grades for students who worked hard and did their own work.

Academic dishonesty in any form is a serious offense, and students found in violation are subject to academic penalties that include, but are not limited to failure of the course, termination from the program, and revocation of degrees already conferred. All students are expected to fully adhere to the policies and procedures of Georgetown's Honor System and to take the Honor Code Pledge.

Honor Code Pledge:

In pursuit of the high ideals and rigorous standards of academic life I commit myself to respect and to uphold the Georgetown University honor system:

To be honest in every academic endeavor, and

To conduct myself honorably, as a responsible member of the Georgetown community as we live and work together.

Plagiarism:

Stealing someone else's work is a terminal offense in the workplace, and it will wreck your career in academia, too. Students are expected to work with integrity and honesty in all their assignments. The Georgetown University Honor System defines plagiarism as "the act of passing off as one's own the ideas or writings of another." More guidance is available through the Gervase Programs. If you have any doubts about plagiarism, paraphrasing, and the need to credit, check out www.plagiarism.org.

All submissions must be your original work. Any submission suspected of plagiarism will be immediately referred to the Honor Council for investigation and possible adjudication. All students are expected to follow Georgetown's honor code unconditionally. If you have not done so, please read the honor code material located online at the Honor Council website.

Title IX Syllabus Statement (endorsed by Faculty Senate):

Georgetown University and its faculty are committed to supporting survivors and those impacted by sexual misconduct, which includes sexual assault, sexual harassment, relationship violence, and stalking. Georgetown requires faculty members, unless otherwise designated as confidential, to report all disclosures of sexual misconduct to the University Title IX Coordinator or a Deputy Title IX Coordinator. If you disclose an incident of sexual misconduct to a professor in or outside of the classroom (with the exception of disclosures in papers), that faculty member must report the incident to the Title IX Coordinator, or Deputy Title IX Coordinator. The coordinator will, in turn, reach out to the student to provide support, resources, and the option to meet. [Please note that the student is not required to meet with the Title IX coordinator.]. More information about reporting options and resources can be found on the Sexual Misconduct Website: <https://sexualassault.georgetown.edu/resourcecenter>.

If you would prefer to speak to someone confidentially, Georgetown has a number of fully confidential professional resources that can provide support and assistance. These include:

- Health Education Services for Sexual Assault Response and Prevention: confidential email sarp@georgetown.edu

- Counseling and Psychiatric Services (CAPS): 202.687.6985 or after hours, call (833) 960-3006 to reach Fonemed, a telehealth service; individuals may ask for the on-call CAPS clinician.
- More information about reporting options and resources can be found on the [Sexual Misconduct Website](#).

(Above statement and TIX faculty resources found at:

<https://sexualassault.georgetown.edu/get-help/guidance-for-faculty-and-staff-on-how-to-support-students/>)

Title IX Pregnancy Modifications and Adjustments:

Georgetown University is committed to creating an accessible and inclusive environment for pregnant students. At any point throughout their pregnancy students may request adjustments/modifications based on general pregnancy needs or accommodations based on a pregnancy-related complication or medical need. Students may also request accommodations following labor and delivery based on a complication or medical need.

SCS students must complete the [Pregnancy Adjustment Request Form](#) (<https://titleix.georgetown.edu/title-ix-pregnancy/student-pregnancy/>) and submit it to the SCS Deputy Title IX Coordinator at titleixscs@georgetown.edu. Upon receiving the completed form, the Deputy Title IX Coordinator will schedule a meeting with the student to discuss the requested adjustments and implementation process.

More information about pregnancy modifications can be found on the [Title IX at Georgetown University Website](#).