

HTS 3051- Women and Gender in the Middle East

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Introduction

Debates over the status of Middle Eastern women figure centrally in current events and contemporary political struggles. Whether as an example of everything which is wrong with Middle Eastern societies today, as a model of resistance to Western domination, or as victims of violence, the figure of “the Middle Eastern Woman” (invariably conflated with “the Muslim woman”) has served as a potent symbol within various political programs and as a site of political and cultural intervention. Students will learn how social, political, and economic forces influence social behavior through an examination of the changing social, political and economic roles of women in the area which has come to be known as the Middle East from pre-Islamic times to the present. Students will learn about the social, political, and economic forces that influence the global system by looking at how the politics of gender in the Middle East shaped (and been shaped) by the interplay between local, national and transnational forces over time and across geographic contexts. Special attention will be given to the ways in which the position of Middle Eastern women has been debated within imperial, nationalist and Islamist political programs and the role that women themselves have played in shaping those debates.

Gen Ed Learning Outcomes

Gen Ed Area E Approved Learning Outcome

This course examines the history of gender relations in the Middle East with a focus on how political, social and economic changes over time have impacted women’s lives. Students will learn how social, political, and economic forces influence social behavior by examining such topics as how the emergence of Islam affected women's public participation, how legal systems regulated gender relations, the effects of colonialism and modernization in the 19th century on social and economic institutions and the rise of feminism and women's participation in nationalist and other political movements. Students will demonstrate that they have met the Area E learning outcome through handing in weekly discussion points on the readings, completing a five page written mid-term essay and completing a final research paper on a topic related to the course material.

Gen Ed Area II Approved Learning Outcome

Students will learn about the social, political, and economic forces that influence the global system by looking at how the politics of gender in the Middle East shaped (and been shaped) by the interplay between local, national and transnational forces over time and across geographic contexts. Special attention will be given to the ways in which the position of women in the Middle East was transformed as Islam spread outside of the Arabian peninsula and was transformed by its encounters with other cultures, how gender relations were transformed by European colonialism and imperialism and how the global spread of the Islamic revivalism has shaped women's lives and public participation. Students will demonstrate that they have met the Area II learning outcome through writing weekly response papers, participating in discussions and completing a take home midterm and writing a paper based on original research.

Required Texts (Available at the Engineers Bookstore)

Leila Ahmed: *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate*
Amina Wudud : *Qu'ran and Women*
Leslie Pierce : *Morality Tales*
Fatima Mernissi: *Dreams of Trespass*
Rajaa al_Sanea: *Girls of Riyadh*
Nadje al-Ali: *Iraqi Women: Untold Stories from 1948 to the Present*

Supplementary materials:

Other required readings are available on T-Sq in the "Resources" section in the folder designated for the week's lectures. They are designated by an asterisk (*)

Honor Code

Students in this class will be expected to abide by the Georgia Tech Honor Code and avoid any instance of academic misconduct, including but not limited to the substitution of material that is wholly or substantially identical to that created or published by another individual or individuals; false claims of performance or work submitted by the student; possessing, using, or exchanging *improperly* acquired written or verbal information in preparation for, or in writing, an exam or paper. If you have any questions, please consult with me and read the Honor Code, which is available at:

www.deanofstudents.gatech.edu/Policy/code.in.sections.htm#AHC .

Grading

Take Home Midterm: 35%

Participation: 30%

Group Research Project: 35%

Reaction Papers

To facilitate discussion, students are required to write 5 informal papers based on the readings. These "reaction papers" are designed to get you thinking and to give you an opportunity to reflect on the issues raised by the course. They should be approximately 1.5-2 pages double spaced (450-600 words). These posts are not intended as summaries; they are exercises in critical thinking and an opportunity to digest and synthesize course material--to formulate questions, suggest alternative interpretations and shape our discussion. They will be graded on a pass/fail (satisfactory/unsatisfactory) basis and will count towards your participation grade. In general, while I expect you to adhere to some basic standards of grammar, spelling and presentation, these posts are more intended to give you an opportunity to reflect critically on the issues raised in lecture and in the course readings than they are to be formal writing assignments. Papers are due **by 1 pm the day of class**. You should post your reactions in the "Forum" section of T-Sq.

Communication and E-mail policy

I encourage you to contact me concerning questions or problems you may have in relation to the course by coming to office hours. Office hours provide an extra occasion to discuss the contents of the course and questions you may have about the material. Office hours are also an opportunity to talk broadly about historical or philosophical ideas you may wish to explore further or things which may be outside the confines of the class. I enjoy visitors and office hours are boring if no one comes, so you'll be doing me a favor. Note: *Unless your question requires only a quick (mostly yes or no) answer or you are notifying me of technical problems with T-square, email should be avoided.* If you cannot make it to office hours, we can schedule another time to meet. Also, I do not respond to e-mail after 5 pm in the evening or on Saturday or Sunday, so please try and plan accordingly.

Participation and Classroom Conduct

Participation is a significant part of your grade in this class. You are expected to come to class prepared to contribute actively to classroom discussions and activities. This will not only enhance your own learning experience but the experience of your fellow students. Good participation entails not only speaking and sharing your thoughts on a regular basis, but also being considerate and respecting the views of others. To earn high points in the participation part of the final grade, students will have demonstrated their awareness of the different functions of classroom comments by:

1. varying their discussion strategies,
2. considering what they say before they say it,
3. taking intellectual risks, and

4. always respecting the feelings of peers by not interrupting classmates while speaking and acknowledging interesting ideas.

Any successful learning experience requires mutual respect on the part of the student and the instructor. Neither instructor nor student should be subject to others' behavior that is rude, disruptive, intimidating, or demeaning. The instructor has primary responsibility for and control over classroom behavior and maintenance of academic integrity.

Instructor responsibilities:

- Start and end class on time.
- Treat all students with courtesy and respect.
- Be open to constructive input from students in the course.
- Ensure that opportunities to participate are enjoyed equally by all students in the course.

Student responsibilities:

- Come to class on time, and refrain from packing up belongings before class ends.
- Turn off all electronic devices that might create a disruption in class.
- Be quiet and give full respectful attention while either instructor or another student is speaking.
- When speaking, use courteous, respectful language and keep comments and questions relevant to the topic at hand.

I expect you to fulfill your responsibilities to me and to your fellow students. By the same token, if I am not meeting my responsibilities to you I expect you to let me know. In short, let's make our classroom a comfortable space for real intellectual dialogue, where everyone has the opportunity to contribute.

Class Schedule

Week 1: Introduction

Aug. 19 (T) Overview

Aug. 21 (Th) Problems in the Study of Middle Eastern Women

*Lila Abu-Lughod: "Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving?" (1-8)

*Chandra Mohanty: "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses"

Week 2: Middle Eastern Women and the Politics of Knowledge

Aug. 26 (T): Gender and Orientalism

*Sarah Graham Brown "Images of Women in the Middle East"

*Edward Said: "Orientalism"

Take a look at http://lens.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/05/14/showcase-161/?_r=0

Assignment: Please bring in cuttings/clips of images of Middle Eastern Women and men from newspapers, magazines, internet, TV etc.

Aug. 28 (Th): Presentations of Findings: Gaze Assignment

Reaction paper 1 due: Reflect critically on your individual findings from the assignment. What did you find? Were you able to discern a particular "gaze" at work?

Week 3: Women and the Emergence of Islam

Sept. 2 (T) Women in Pre-Islamic Arabia

Ahmed: 1-37

Sept. 6 (Th) The Formation of Islamic society

Ahmed: 41-78

*Spellman: Political Action and Public Example: 'Aisha and the Battle of the

Camel

Week 4: The Politics of Interpretation

Sept. 9 (T) Women in the Qur'an I

Ahmed: 79-101

Wudud, *Qur'an and Woman*: Intro.

Sept. 11 (Th) Women in the Qu'ran II

Wudud: Chap. 2-4, Conclusion

Reaction paper 2 due: Did Islam improve or undermine the position of women in the Arabian Peninsula? In what ways? Hint: feel free to argue that it stayed the same, that it improved in some ways and not others etc. In other words, don't be imprisoned by the way the question is framed into approaching it as an either/or.

Week 5: Medieval and Early Modern Societies

Sept. 16 (T) Female Sexuality and the Organization of Society

Ahmed: 102-125

*Lutfi: Manners and Customs of the 14th Century Cairene Women

Sept. 18 (Th) Gender and Power in Early Modern Societies

Week 6: Case Study: Law and Gender in an Ottoman Court

Sept. 23 (T) Pierce, *Morality Tales*
Intro, Part 2

Sept. 25 (Th) Pierce, Part 4 and Conclusion

Reaction Paper 3: Write about any aspect of *Morality Tales* you wish.

Week 7: The Transformation of Political, Social and Economic Institutions in the 19th Century

Sept. 30 (T) Ahmed: 127-143

Oct. 2 (Th) The Liberation of Women

Ahmed: 144-168

*Qasim Amin: "The Liberation of Women"

Reaction Paper 4: Is Qasim Amin a feminist? Why or why not? In answering this question you should engage with Leila Ahmed's arguments about Qasim Amin in chap.8 of her book.

Week 8 Gender and the Politics of Modernity

Oct. 7 (T) Class Discussion: *Dreams of Trespass: Tales of a Harem Girlhood*

Reaction Paper 5: Write a response on any aspect of *Dreams of Trespass* that you wish. I will give you some suggestions of topics, but feel free to develop your own.

Oct. 9 (Th) Case Study "The New Woman" in Iran

*Najmabadi: Veiled Discourses, Unveiled Bodies

*Najmabadi: Crafting and Educated Housewife in Iran

Week 9 Midterm

Oct. 14 (T) Fall Break: Class Cancelled

Oct. 16 (Th) Discussion of research projects

Take Home Midterm Due

Week 10&11: The Politics of Gender, Nationalism and Feminism

Oct. 21 (T) Ahmed: 169-207

*Ellen Fleischmann, "The Other 'Awakening': the Emergence of Women's Movements in the Middle East"

Oct. 23 (Th) Palestine

*Fleischmann: The Emergence of the Palestinian Women's Movement

Oct. 28 (T): Algeria

* Women, Nationalism and Religion in the Algerian Liberation

Oct. 30 (Th) The Debate Over Islamic Feminism

Readings TBA

Week 12&13 Islam, Feminism and Social Change

Nov. 4 (T) The New Veiling

Ahmed: 208-234

*Arlene MacLeod: "Hegemonic Relations and Gender Resistance: The New Veiling as Accommodating Protest in Cairo."

Nov. 6 (Th) Gender in the Islamic Republic

Reading TBA

Extra credit due

Nov. 11 (T) Class Discussion: Girls of Riyadh

Reaction Paper 6: Write on any aspect of *Girls of Riyadh* you wish.

Week 14 Law and the Family

Nov. 13 (Th) Film: Divorce, Iranian Style I

Nov. 18 (T) Film: Divorce, Iranian Style II

Week 15: Women in Conflict

Nov. 20 (Th) TBA

Nov. 25 (T): Class Discussion: Iraqi Women: Untold Stories
Reaction paper 7: Topic TBA

Nov. 28 (Th) Class Cancelled. Happy Thanksgiving!

Week 16: Student Presentations

Dec. 6 (T) Presentations

Dec. 8: (Th) Presentations