

# Muslims in America (AAS 258, LLS 258, RLST 258)

**Professor Junaid Rana**

**Spring 2009, Davenport Hall 211, TR 1-2:20**

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## **Course Description**

When did Muslims arrive in the Americas? What is the history of Muslim immigrants in the United States? This course is an introduction to the study of Muslims in the United States. In examining the multiple racial, cultural, and national groups that make-up this diverse community, we will question what it means to be Muslim in America. We begin with the first contact between Islam and America in the “Age of Discovery” and the African slave trade to think through the roots of Islam and its role in the contemporary moment. In this moment we also examine how indigenous Americans, referred to as American Indians, are conceptualized in relation to the Muslims of Europe and simultaneously racialized. In historicizing Islam we examine the communities who first arrived as crypto-Muslims to understand the place of Latinos in American Islam. Second, we will examine African American Islam in its myriad formations. These two examples will then be used comparatively to understand how the historical narrative of African American and Latino Muslims is related to newer immigrant populations. In large part, we will survey Arab American and South Asian American Muslim communities particularly in urban contexts. These later two populations grew through large immigrant waves in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the late twentieth century, particularly after 1965. In addition to the multi-racial and comparative perspective, this course will examine intra-religious (sectarian) and interfaith differences and dialogues. This material is explored through an interdisciplinary approach focusing on the scholarship mainly from anthropology, history, sociology, religious studies, and ethnic studies. For many of our discussions we will use Chicago as an ethnographic site to explore the complex make-up and history of Muslim America.

This course is also part of the Ethnography of the University Initiative (EUI, <http://www.eui.uiuc.edu>), a web-based archive of student research at the University of Illinois. Each student in this class will be part of an important research project to document the role of the U of I in student life and the communities they come from. The EUI cross-campus initiative sponsors undergraduate research on the university and archives it in web-accessible form for the UIUC community. EUI also functions as a learning group for students, staff, and faculty interested in what it means to conduct research on universities as institutions.

## **Requirements**

1. Two short essay exams (Take-home). 3-4 pages double-spaced take-home exams on the reading and lecture material. Exam questions will be issued the class period before they are due.
2. Short Assignments. These assignments described in the course schedule include and op-ed (2 double-spaced typed) and a critique of a found image (1 page typed). The other two assignments are part of your research project.

3. Working Groups. This is your chance to work with other people and learn about Muslim Americans. Each group of 3 to 4 class members will meet together regularly to discuss their group theme and their individual projects. As a group you will share research information and ideas. The idea of the group is to act as peer review for your ideas and research.

Possible Group Topics: Islamic Diversity, Gender and Muslim Americans, Islamic Feminisms, Racism in the Muslim Community after 9/11, Community Organizing, Youth Culture, Muslims and the Patriot Act, Muslims and the Media, Interfaith Organizing, Multiracial Organizing.

4. Research Project. The major project of this class is your individual research. Hence interviews, oral narratives and testimonials should be a part of your research and final report. The final written paper should be 10-15 pages in length.

*Assignments:*

- a) Field Notes: these are all of your research notes from stray thoughts, research ideas, interviews, research data, etc. You may collect these however you see fit: hand written journal, typed computer notes, etc. They should be provided as an appendix as part of your Final Paper.
- b) Presentation (see 5)
- c) Final Paper: 10-15 page double spaced paper

5. Final presentation. Each group will be given 40 minutes to present individual projects. You will present your findings for approximately 10 mins each. Each group member should prepare a 5-7 page summary of their individual. The research group will present their research as a panel. You will be graded on the quality of your project and the ability of the group to explain the coherence of their theme and the elaboration of individual research projects.

<i>Grading:</i>	1. 2 Exams	30%
	2. Short Assignments	20%
	3. Research Project	
	a. Field Notes	15%
	b. Presentation	10%
	c. Final Paper	25%

**Required Books**

Bayoumi, Moustafa

2008 *How Does it Feel to be a Problem? Being Young and Arab in America.* New York: Penguin Press.

Kahf, Mohja

2006 *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf.* New York: Carrol and Graf.

Patel, Eboo

2007 *Acts of Faith: The Story of an American Muslim, the Struggle for the Soul of a Generation.* Boston: Beacon Press.

Turner, Richard Brent

1997 *Islam in the African-American Experience.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

All **books** can be purchased at the Illini Union Bookstore, 807 South Wright.

**Course Packet** available at Notes and Quotes, 502 E. John, 217-344-4433.

## **Course Schedule**

### **Week 1**

**Jan 20**

Introductions and Agenda

**Jan 22**

Turner, Introduction and Ch. 1, pps. 1-46

### **Week 2 Signposts of Islam in America**

**Jan 27**

Diouf SA. 1998. *Servants of Allah: African Muslims Enslaved in the Americas*. New York: New York University Press. Ch. 1, 3

**Jan 29**

Turner, Chs. 2, pps. 46-70

Rana, Junaid (2007) "The Story of Islamophobia." *Souls: A Critical Journal of Black Politics, Culture, and Society*, 9, 1-14.

### **Week 3 Early American Islam**

**Feb 3**

Turner, Chs. 3-4, pps. 71-146

(In Class handout) Lisa Viscidi June 2003 "Islam in America: Latino Muslims a Growing Presence in America" Washington Report on Middle East Affairs

Break into Groups of 3-4

**Feb 5**

Turner, Chs. 5-6, pps. 147-237

### **Week 4 Community and Identity**

**Feb 10**

Leonard, Chs. 1-3, 8 pps. 1-47, 129-142

Discuss Research Topics/Themes

RESEARCH PHASE BEGINS

**Feb 12**

What are Field Notes, Interviews, and Oral Histories  
Discuss Research Projects

## **Week 5 Immigration and the Law**

### **Feb 17**

Gualtieri, Sarah. 2004. Strange Fruit? Syrian Immigrants, Extralegal Violence and Racial Formation in the Jim Crow South. *Arab Studies Quarterly* 26 (3):63-85.

Moore, Kathleen M. 1995. *Al-Mughtaribun: American Law and the Transformation of Muslim Life in the United States*: State University of New York Press. Ch. 2, pps. 19-42

\*\*\*\***Short Assignment 1:** Write an op-ed concerning an issue we have covered in class. Use this as an opportunity to present an argument about your thoughts on a particular issue. Your op-ed should be well-reasoned and thought out. The op-ed should be a maximum of 500 words.

### **Feb 19**

Moore, Kathleen M. 1995. *Al-Mughtaribun: American Law and the Transformation of Muslim Life in the United States*: State University of New York Press. Ch. 3, pps. 43-68

Cole, David. 2003. *Enemy Aliens: Double Standards and Constitutional Freedoms in the War on Terrorism*. New York: New Press. Pps. 1-84

## **Week 6 Gender and Kinship**

### **Feb 24**

Naber, Nadine C. 2006. Arab American Femininities: Beyond Arab Virgin/American(ized) Whore. *Feminist Studies* 32 (1):87-111.

Shryock, Andrew. 2000. Family Resemblances: Kinship and Community in Arab Detroit. In *Arab Detroit: From Margin to Mainstream*, edited by N. Abraham and A. Shryock. Detroit: Wayne State University Press.

\*\*\*\***Short Assignment 2:** Find an image on the internet that pertains to the Muslim population in the US. Analyze this image in terms of the message conveyed. What do the objects in this image convey about the categories of race, gender, class, sexuality? How does the image tell a story? Is there a story not being told? Prepare for class discussion. Maximum 250 words.

### **Feb 26**

Abdo, Geneive. 2006. *Mecca and Main Street: Muslim life in America after 9/11*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press. Ch. 6, pps. 137-164

Naber, Nadine C. 2006. Muslim First, Arab Second: A Strategic Politics of Race and Gender. *Muslim World* 95 (4):479-95.

## **Week 7 9/11 and Its Aftermath**

### **Mar 3**

Mamdani, Mahmood. 2004. *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: America, the Cold War, and the Roots of Terror*. 1st ed. New York: Pantheon Books. Introduction and Chapter 1, pps. 3-62

**\*\*\*\*Short Assignment 3:** Write an abstract that describes your intended research project.  
Describe the research question in detail. Maximum 250 words.

**Mar 5**

Abdo, Geneive. 2006. *Mecca and Main Street: Muslim life in America after 9/11*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press. Ch. 4-5, pps. 87-136

**Week 8 Muslims and Comparative Racial Perspective**

**Mar 10**

Karim, Jamillah Ashira. 2008. *American Muslim women: negotiating race, class, and gender within the Ummah*. New York: New York University Press. Pps. 51-88

**\*\*\*\*Short Assignment 4:** Provide a research question, 4-5 keywords and 10 sample questions to ask your in your research interviews.

**Mar 12**

Karim, Jamillah Ashira. 2008. *American Muslim women: negotiating race, class, and gender within the Ummah*. New York: New York University Press. Pps. 89-162

**Week 9 Youth Culture**

**Mar 17**

Maira, Sunaina. 2004. Youth Culture, Citizenship and Globalization: South Asian Muslim Youth in the United States after September 11th. *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 24 (1):219-231.

Naber, Nadine C. 2006. The Rules of Forced Engagement: Race, Gender, and the Culture of Fear among Arab Immigrants in San Francisco Post-9/11. *Cultural Dynamics* 18 (3):269-292.

**EXAM 1 DUE**

**Mar 19**

Bayoumi, *How Does it Feel to be a Problem?*, pps. 1-80

WRITING PHASE BEGINS

**Spring Break (Finish the Bayoumi book!)**

**Week 10 Writing Oral History**

**Mar 31**

Bayoumi, *How Does it Feel to be a Problem?*, pps. 83-185

**Apr 2**

Bayoumi, *How Does it Feel to be a Problem?*, pps. 189-270

**Week 11 Activism and Organizing**

**Apr 7**

Patel, *Acts of Faith*, pps. Xi-36

**Apr 9**

Patel, *Acts of Faith*, pps. 37-76

**Week 12**

**Apr 14**

Patel, *Acts of Faith*, pps. 77-124

**Apr 16**

Patel, *Acts of Faith*, pps. 125-182

EDITING PHASE BEGINS

**Week 13 Muslims in the Midwest**

**Apr 21**

Kahf, *Girl in Tangerine Scarf*, First half

**Apr 23**

Kahf, *Girl in Tangerine Scarf*, Second half

**Week 14 Presentations**

**Apr 28**

Preparation for Conference Presentation

**EXAM 2 DUE**

**Apr 30**

EUI Conference

**Week 15**

**May 5**

Final Thoughts and Talk-back

**PAPERS DUE**