

HIS 180 Age of Islamic Empires
GE: Thinking Historically & Oral Communication

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Course Description

This is a course about Islamic Empires from the early 600s to the early 1600s

The course will address the following questions:

- Why was expansion, conquest, and state-building a part of the first Islamic society?
- What led to the power and wealth of the great Islamic Empires?
- What was it like to live in the cosmopolitan capitals of these empires?
- What was the role of travel and trade in these empires?
- What makes these empires 'Islamic'; what are the merits and problems with using that term?
- How can we know what we know about them; what types of primary sources are available to us and how have historians used them?

This course is not a survey of a thousand years of history! Instead we will stride across time and space some times with measured steps, sometimes with big leaps, and then stop and take a closer look around at a particular city in a particular century, before setting off again.

The course includes two short role play games.

The first is set in a literary salon in 847 where the great and the good of Abbasid Baghdad gather to discuss the theological and philosophical disputes of the time.

The second, is with Saladin on campaign against the Crusaders in 1197. He and his advisers debate the prescriptions of jihad and the practicalities of waging war and maintaining peace.

Thinking Historically GE Criterion

Students will be able to:

1. Read primary sources historically—asking and answering basic questions about historical sources (historical context, author, audience, genre); drawing historical conclusions from the sources and assessing their reliability and usefulness; and reflecting on how their own background shapes their interpretation;
2. Identify the arguments of secondary sources and recognize differences in interpretation.
3. Articulate responsibly how the past is relevant for the present, drawing informed connections between their study of past events and their bearing on the present.

Oral Communication GE Criterion

Students will be able to:

1. Craft and deliver public speeches (and statements) that are:
 - a. based on reliant and relevant evidence

- b. appropriate for the context and the audience
- c. well organized, argued, and delivered
- 2. Facilitate discussion and deliberation that:
 - a. Respects others
 - b. Responds to different points of view & tough questions
 - c. Anticipates the unexpected
- 3. Acknowledge when others have made a strong point and when they have made a weak one.

Put another way:

Students will be able to

1. analyze historical sources with appropriate attention to their various contexts;
2. describe and analyze the dynamics of the religious, cultural, political, social, and economic connections of “Islamic” Empires, from the 7th to the 17th centuries and from India to Morocco.
3. Students will effectively communicate orally as informed by rhetorical situation, audience, genre, and purpose.

Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

Students will be able to:

Describe the shared and unique characteristics of pre-modern Islamic empires

- Assessed through class discussion, exams and group presentations

Commented [MOU1]: THGE CC #1 on historical context

Summarize historical debates over what can be reliably known about early Islamic history

- Assessed through class discussion, exams, primary source analysis portfolio and annotated bibliography

Commented [MOU2]: THGE CC #1 & #2 also a history dept PLO

Interrogate their own historical, cultural, and religious biases and assumptions

- Assessed through class discussion, exams and group presentations

Commented [MOU3]: THGE CC #3

Work with others to accomplish a goal

- Assessed through role play games and group presentations

Use primary and secondary source evidence effectively and ethically in order to communicate clearly and persuasively

- Assessed through class discussion, exams, role play games, primary source analysis portfolio; and group presentations

Commented [MOU4]: THGE CC #1 & #2

Readings

Course Reader of selected primary and secondary sources

Lindsay, James, *Daily Life in the Medieval Islamic World*. Indianapolis, Hackett Publishing Co., 2008.

Dunn, *Journeys of Ibn Battuta*

Dale, Stephen F. *The Muslim Empires of the Ottomans, Safavids, and Mughals*. 1st pub., 7th print. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

Emily Selove. *Popeye and Carly : 120 Days in Medieval Baghdad*. Moorhead, Minnesota: Theran Press, 2021.

Assessment

Engagement -- 20%

- Engagement is about forming and belonging to a learning community and respecting and contributing to that community.
- Our time together is precious. Please remove your phone and other devices from your work space and your person for the time that we are meeting. We want to try, as much as we can, to be fully present to each other.
- Class will *analyze* rather than *repeat* the reading.
- If you do not understand reading or are feeling lost in the details *PLEASE* reach out to me – sooner rather than later!
- If you miss class, you are responsible to find out what material and announcements you missed.

Commented [MOU5]: THGE #1-3 & Oral Comm GE CC #3

Role Play Games 20%

Students will craft and present positions as a part of the game debates. In addition they will lobby and network with other students to achieve their victory objectives. This requires:

- Close reading and contextualizing of different types of primary sources
- Crafting of persuasive arguments appropriate to the historical context and role
- Presenting speeches following the conventions of effective oral communication in regards to eye contact, pace, tone of voice, etc.
- Participating in Multi-day deliberations from a particular perspective to achieve specific objectives that are supported and opposed by others
- Working with others to achieve a goal
- listening for and responding to the arguments and concerns of others

Commented [MOU6]: THGE CC #1 and #2. Post-game reflection in class and possibly with some written prompt also addresses THGE CC #3 and Oral Comm CC #1-#3

Commented [MOU7]: THGE CC #2 annotated bibliography pushes students to identify how different historians treat the same subject and to enter into the “dialogue” of scholarship and learning. It also draws students’ attention to the fact that scholars are making arguments not simply conveying information. Oral Communication CC #1 the presentors must consider what fellow students do and do not know on the subject, maintain their interest, have clear and memorable main points. They must also present material in a way that recognizes and seeks to avoid false assumptions and stereotypes such as orientalism about the peoples and cultures in their presentatino. Oral Comm CC #2 Presenters will be graded for the quality of their delivery. Oral Comm CC #3 working in a group requires listening well to each other. Presenters will need to respond to questions from the class after their presentation and will be assessed on how prepared they are for that.

“Muslim Empires” presentation – 10%

Students will be divided into groups and each group will present on one of the “gunpowder empires” and in particular the culture of the capital city of that empire. Students will draw upon what was modeled earlier in the semester looking at Abbasid Baghdad and Mamluk Cairo. Prior to the presentation, the professor will interview each student based on their annotated bibliography outline for the presentation.

Commented [MOU8]: THGE CC #1. Oral Comm CC #1-3: students will need to present the meat of the reading clearly and succinctly, draw students into discussion, respond to what students bring or don’t bring to the discussion, be sensitive to historicism, presentism, orientalism, Islamophobia, etc.

Primary source Analysis portfolio and class discussion – 10%

Students will keep a journal of their analyses of the numerous primary sources we discuss through the semester. They will also lead the class in a discussion of one primary source.

Commented [MOU9]: Exam questions require students to identify the arguments of both the secondary texts we are reading as well as my own lectures as a secondary source. THGE CC #2. It is typical to assess history exam essays based on how well they incorporate secondary AND primary sources as supporting examples. THGE CC #1 and #2.. Much of the course is about comparing one emperial capital to another or the trade and cultural networks that sustain an empire and its metropole. TGGE CC # 1 & #3

2 Midterms – 20%

Short answer and essay questions over the material of the course

Final Exam – 20%

Short answer and essay questions over the material of the course

Course Schedule

Week 1: Pre-Islamic West Asia

Secondary sources: Hoyland, *In God's Path*, chpt 1; Lindsay *Daily Life*, pgs 1-15; & 33-55; 173-178

Primary Sources: St. Daniel the stylite; pre-Islamic poetry

Commented [MOU10]: THGE CC #1 #2 & #3

Week 2: Muhammad & the early conquests

Secondary Sources: Donner, *Muhammad & the Believers*, chpt 2 & Hoyland, *In God's Path*, chpt 2; Lindsay, pgs 57-68

Primary Sources: Ibn Ishaq. *The Life of Muhammad*, the Constitution of Medina; The Quran, selected verses

Commented [MOU11]: THGE CC #1 #2 & #3

Week 3: The Rightly guided Caliphs & the Caliphate

Secondary source: Lindsay, pgs, 16-17; Reza Aslan, *No God but God*, chpt 5 pgs 109-141; Keaney, *'Uthman*, chpt 3

Primary source: Tabari on 'Uthman & fitna

Commented [MOU12]: THGE CC #1 #2 & #3

Week 4: Damascus to Baghdad

Secondary Sources: Lindsay, pgs 70-73; chpt 4; Jonathan Berkey, *The Formation of Islam*, chpt 8 pgs 76-82;

Primary Sources: inscriptions on the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem; Selove, *Popeye & Curly*

Commented [MOU13]: THGE # 1 & #2

Commented [MOU14R13]:

Midterm #1

Short answer and essay questions over the readings & class discussions

Week 5: Baghdad Role Play Game Prep

Prep: game book – 'Abbasid Baghdad

Prep: gamebook – 'theological debates & cultural life

Week 6: Baghdad Role Play Game

Week 7: Baghdad debrief: law and life: Sunni & Shii

Secondary Source: Lindsay, pgs 73-81

Primary Source: Nizam al-Mulk, select passages; Nasr al-Khusraw, select passages

Commented [MOU15]: This role play game is situated in theological debates around the sovereignty of God and the nature of the Quran. Muslims were interacting with Greek philosophy and Christian theology as well. Students must use primary sources to support their role's positions. THGE CC #1 & #3 and Oral Communication CC #1-3

Week 8: The Crusades Role Play Game

Week 9: The Crusades Role Play Game

Week 10: Mamluk Cairo

Secondary Sources: Lindsay, pgs 178-203; Boaz Shoshan; *Popular Culture in Medieval Cairo*, select chapter

Commented [MOU16]: A role play game set on the cusp of Saladin's capture of Jerusalem, it historically contextualizes Muslim-Christian relations and appeals to holy war by both Muslims and Crusaders. Students must use primary sources to support their role's positions. THGE #1 & #3 and Oral comm CC #1-#3

Rapoport, Yossef. *Marriage, Money and Divorce in Medieval Islamic Society*, selections
Primary Sources: Geniza docs; market manual

Week 11: The journey of Ibn Battuta:
Dunn, *The Journeys of Ibn Battuta*

Midterm #2

Week 12: The rise, political ideology & economic base of the “Muslim empires”
Dale, *The Muslim Empires of the Ottoman, Safavids, and Mughals*, chpts 2-4

Week 13: Court & popular Culture in the Golden Age of the “Muslim Empires”
Dale, chpts 5-7

Week 14: Group Presentations on the Ottomans, Safavids, and Mughals
Students submit annotated bibliographies for their presentations

Week 15: Conclusions

Final Exam:

Commented [MOU17]: Between the treasure trove of the Geniza documents and the administrative acument of the Mamluk bureaucracy we know a suprising amount about Mamluk Cairo. THGE #1 & #3.

Commented [MOU18]: Ibn Battuta was from north Africa and traveled through Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. He is a fabulous guide to the 14th century world and the lanes of trade and pilgrimage that held it together as well as commenting on what was familiar to him in Muslim cities across the eastern hemisphere as well as what he found noteworthy and strange. THGE #1 3

Commented [MOU19]: The course SLO #1 is about shared and unique characteristics which also addresses THGE criteria #1& #2 & #In these latter weeks of the semester students will read together a book that does exactly that. Each chapter takes a shared aspect of the 3 so called “gunpowder” or “Muslim” empires and then in subsections in the chapter looks more closely at each empire. In addition, students will be divided into 3 groups, one for each empire, and the members of the group will do a deeper dive on a particular aspect of the particular empire of their group. This will not only provide oppourtntny to develop the skills of SLO #1 but also #3 (working in a group) and #4 using primary and secondary sources to communicate clearly. Their submitted annotated bibliographies for their presenations THGE CC #1 & #3 – working with primary and secondary sources. As stated above these group presentations also fulfill Oral Comm CC #1-#3