**RLST 164**

**Engendering and Experience: Women in the Islamic Tradition**

RLST 164/264 Zayn Kassam

Pearsons 102 *zkassam@pomona.edu*

M. 7-9.50 pm (909) 607-4095

Fall 2015 Office hours by appointment

or W 2-4 pm PR 104

**Course Description**

How have the sources of authority in the Islamic tradition constructed theories of gender? How have these determined the role, status and expectations of women in Islamic societies? What has been women’s experience of these social, legal and scriptural norms? Is there a relationship between the religion of Islam and cultural codes of behavior? Does one influence and express the other? How have Muslim women themselves sought to articulate their realities and their visions for what it means to be a Muslim woman? Is the recent wave of Islamic revivalism a step forward for women’s rights or not? What are some of the “hot button” issues pertaining to Muslim women?

**Course Texts (available at Huntley Bookstore, Honnold Library, and RS Dept Library)**

Leila Ahmed. *Women and Gender in Islam*.

Barbara Stowasser. *Women in the Qur’an, Traditions, and Interpretation*.

All other readings are under the Resources tab on Sakai.

**Course Goals**

1. To identify theoretical frameworks enabling us to understand gender issues.
2. To become aware of how Islam in general and gender issues in particular are framed in the west.
3. To extend knowledge of key foundational and authoritative texts for Muslim views on gender.
4. To investigate Muslim feminist or woman-friendly activism and leadership, both theoretical/theological, and practical/activist, in a Muslim-majority nation and in the United States.
5. To examine how key “hot button” issues such as female circumcision, wife-beating, and sexuality came about and are being reconsidered.
6. To further hone your presentation, discussion, analytical, and research & writing skills.

**Course Assignments**

* 5 out of 8 1000-word **reflections on each week’s readings**: 10 points each in a Word .doc or docx format.

**Due the Sunday before each class**

For tips on writing your reflections, see <http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/book-reviews/>

* **Research essay**: 30 points

Select a topic of your choice and write at minimum a 12-page research essay.

Oct 5: Send me a paragraph describing the topic or problem you’re addressing in your research essay in a sentence or two, and the central question you are trying to answer about your topic with a bibliography of at least 5 sources.

Nov 2: Send me a 5-page draft of your essay; meet with a writing fellow before you send it in, and include evidence of your meeting.

Nov 30: Final Essay due. Be prepared to make a 15-20 minute presentation of your research essay on the last two days of class; the essay itself is due Nov 30. Your research essay must be seen by a writing fellow at the writing center, so have a draft of the paper done in plenty of time – and make an appt with a writing fellow ahead of time. Writing Center details below.

* Three two-page **event reflections**, to be posted appropriately under Assignments tab under Event 1, 2, 3. Ideally, please post your reflection shortly after attending the event, which must have some connection to Islam and/or Muslims, and relate your reflection to class readings/discussions. Baig, Winegar, and Bennoune are recommended for event reflections. 3 points each
* **Class presentations**: Since this class is a discussion/seminar, you will be responsible for presenting the readings and formulating discussion questions for the weeks you have signed up for (up to two); 10 points total
* Class **attendance** is mandatory unless permission is sought. If you decide to drop the class and/or have been assigned a presentation, please let me know ahead of time rather than simply not showing up to class.

The Writing Center provides Pomona students and 5C students in Pomona courses a community of experienced readers and writers, offering free, one- on-one consultations at any stage of the writing process - from brainstorming ideas to fine-tuning a draft. We work with students on a broad range of writing, including written and oral academic assignments in any discipline, in addition to creative writing, personal statements, resumes, and cover letters. The Writing Fellows are Pomona students—sophomores, juniors, and seniors—majoring in disciplines as varied as Biology, Spanish, and Politics. They are trained to work with writers at all levels, and on work in any area. Consultations are available by appointment, which students can make online at [writing.pomona.edu](http://writing.pomona.edu/). The Writing Center also offers drop-in hours Sundays through Thursdays from 8-10pm.

**Statement on Academic Honesty**:

<http://catalog.pomona.edu/content.php?catoid=12&navoid=1753#Academic_Honesty_Policy_and_Procedures>

**Academic Honesty Policy and Procedures**

1. **Standards of Academic Integrity**
2. Pomona College is an academic community in which all members are expected to abide by ethical standards both in their conduct and in their exercise of responsibilities towards other members of the community. The College expects students to understand and adhere to basic standards of honesty and academic integrity. These standards include but are not limited to the following:
3. In projects and assignments (including homework) prepared independently, students never represent the ideas or the language of others as their own.
4. Students do not destroy or alter either the work of other students or the educational resources and materials of the College.
5. Students neither give nor receive assistance with examinations.
6. Students do not represent work completed for one course as original work for another or deliberately disregard course rules and regulations.  In laboratory or research projects involving the collection of data, students accurately report data observed and do not alter or fabricate data for any reason.

**Civic Discourse**

* One mike
* Step up, Step back
* Respond to the idea, not the person, in a respectful manner

**To request academic accommodations due to a disability, please contact the Office of the Dean of Students at your college.**

**Course Schedule and Readings**

**Sept 7: Introduction and Sign-ups**

Film: Hollywood Harems

Film: <http://islamicommentary.org/2015/07/watch-alaa-murabit-on-what-islam-really-says-about-women/>

Film: <http://islamicommentary.org/2015/08/watch-jerusha-lamptey-robert-wright-discuss-islam-pluralism-the-quran-and-muslima-theology/> 21 to 31

**Sept 14: The Lenses Through Which We Look**

Chandra Talpade Mohanty, “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses,” in Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Ann Russo, Lourdes Torres, ed., *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991), 51-80.

Jasmine Zine, “Between Orientalism and Fundamentalism: The Politics of Muslim Women’s Feminist Engagement,” in *Muslim World Journal of Human Rights* 3 (2006): 1, Article 5 (<http://www.bepress.com/mwjhr/vol3/iss1/art5>), 1-26.

Valentine Moghadam, Ch. 1 in *Modernizing Women* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2003), 2nd ed.

Film: *Women on the Frontlines* 1 hour

(if interested, on your own time you can also watch Deepa Kumar, Imperialist Feminism, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UrWYb7u3jKo>

**Sept 21: Patriarchy**

Gerda Lerner, “Introduction”, Ch. 2, and Ch. 11 in *The Creation of Patriarchy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 3-9; 36-53; 212-229.

Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992), Chs. 1 and 2.

Deniz Kandiyoti, “Islam and Patriarchy: Comparative Perspective” in N.R. Keddie and B. Baron (Eds.), *Women in Middle Eastern History: Shifting Boundaries in Sex and Gender* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991). (Ch. 2)

Valentine Moghadam, Ch. 4 in *Modernizing Women* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2003), 2nd ed.

Film: *Me and the Mosque* 1 hour

**Sept 28: Context, Content, and Contestation**

Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992), 41-78 (Chs. 3, 4, 5, 6)

Barbara Freyer Stowasser, *Women in the Qur’an, Traditions, and Interpretation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 13-49 (Chs. 1-7).

Film: *Taller Than the Mountains* 30 mins

**Oct 5: Class meets at Rose Hills Theater, Smith Campus Center, PO**

**Oct 12: The Hadith Literature**

Fatima Mernissi, *The Veil and the Male Elite*, trans. Mary Jo Lakeland (Cambridge, MA: Perseus Books, 1991), 25-81 (Chs. 2,3,4).

Barbara Freyer Stowasser, *Women in the Qur’an, Traditions, and Interpretation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), Chs. 8 and 9 (85-118).

Asma Barlas, *“Believing Women” in Islam: Unreading Patriarchal Interpretations of the Qur’an* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2002), 31-89, Ch. 4.

Film: *Divorce Iranian Style* 1 hr 20 min

**Oct 19: No class, Fall Recess**

**Oct 26: Colonization, and ... Veils**

Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992), 127-168 (Chs. 7 and 8).

Farzaneh Milani, *Veils and Words: The Emerging Voices of Iranian Women Writers* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1992), Ch. 5.

Joan Wallach Scott, *The Politics of the Veil* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2007)

Film: <http://www.theatlantic.com/video/index/391583/what-does-it-mean-to-be-fashionably-modest/>

Film: Amina Wadud Dutch TV 30 mins

**Nov 02 and 09:** **Hot Button Issues: FGC/Honor Killings/Sexuality/Fundamentalism**

Noor Kassamali, “When Modernity Confronts Traditional Practices” in Herbert L. Bodman and Nayereh Tohidi, eds., *Women in Muslim Societies* (Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner, 1998), 39-62.

Amnesty International report, Crime or Custom, found at:

<http://www.hrw.org/reports/1999/pakistan/>

Rochelle Terman, “Islamophobia, Feminism and the Politics of Critique”, *Theory, Culture, and Society*, 0(0) (2015), 1-26.

Siraj al-Haqq Kugle, “Sexuality, Diversity, and Ethics in the Agenda of Progressive Muslims,” in *Progressive Muslims: On Justice, Gender, and Pluralism*, ed. Omid Safi (Oxford: Oneworld, 2003).

Serena Tolino, “Homosexuality in the Middle East”, DEP n 25/2014, 72-91.

Karima Bennoune, *Your Fatwa Does Not Apply Here* (New York: Norton, 2013), Chs. 3 & 8

Film: *Against All Odds* 30 mins

Film: Fire Eyes

ABC Nightline film

A Jihad for Love

**Nov 16**: **Feminist and Islamist Responses**

Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992), 169-249 (Chs. 9, 10 and Conclusion)

Barbara Freyer Stowasser, *Women in the Qur’an, Traditions, and Interpretation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 119-134 (Ch. 10)

Ziba Mir-Hosseini, “Stretching the Limits: A Feminist Reading of the Shari’a in Post-Khomeini Iran,” in Mai Yamani, ed., *Feminism and Islam* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 285-319.

Film: *Veiled Voices* 1 hour

**Nov 23: No class**

**Nov 30 and Dec 7: Research Paper Presentations**