

# Antiquity into Islam

CLCV 269/NELC 351/531, Spring 2015

TTh 1:00-2:15

Phelps 310

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## Instructors:

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## Course Description

The goal of this course is to understand the culture and society of Early Islam in the context of some of the major civilizations that preceded it. We will be looking for continuities between Islamic culture and the late-antique matrix from which it emerged, but also for the characteristic processes of reception and re-interpretation that make the Islamicate world undeniably different from everything that preceded it.

Our approach to these issues will involve close study of Arabic translation and appropriation of Greek and Iranian philosophical, medical, economic and political texts. In addition to this, we'll be looking at forms of continuity and change outside the written tradition, particularly in the fields of economy, social organization, and medical practice. We hope that this multifaceted approach to the problem of Islamic origins will have something to offer everyone, experts and novices alike.

Accordingly, we plan to teach this course in a way that presupposes no knowledge of the history of Islam or of the Classical World. Lectures and readings will provide some historical background. All source texts will be made available both in their original language and in translation. We'll be using the translation in class; we may arrange weekly reading groups for students with knowledge of the original languages who would like to discuss the texts in more depth.

The course will be structured as a series of lectures alternating with seminar-style discussions. You will be expected to complete all readings; you will be quizzed both on these and on the content of the lectures. Active participation in seminar discussions of primary texts is also required. What "active participation" means in concrete terms will depend on the number of students enrolled in the class. We hope to offer you a clear criterion by the third week of the term.

## Required Texts:

Hafiz Abdullah Yusuf Ali, ed. *Three Translations of the Koran*. Wilder Publications, 2012.

Hodgeson, M. *The Venture of Islam*, v. 1. University of Chicago Press, 2009.

Other required readings will be made available via the course website.

## Grading

- 15% of your grade will be based on attendance and participation in class. You should come to class every day, obviously, and prepared to discuss the assigned reading on Thursdays; more than two unexcused absences will count against your grade.
- 15% of your grade will come from two quizzes (one timeline, one map) given in weeks 2 and 6 of the term.
- 15% of your grade will come from a midterm, given in week 8 of the term, which will recapitulate material from the quizzes alongside a short essay question.
- 30% of your grade will come from a final exam. This final exam will be similar in structure to (though obviously longer than) the quizzes, with the addition of a series of short answer questions that will require you to perform some interpretive work on a series of passages from our primary readings.
- The remaining 25% of your grade will come from your term papers, which will be due a week after the last day of class. Undergraduates will be required to write a 4-6 page paper on one of a series of prompts which we will distribute after Spring Break. Graduate students should discuss with me both the length and the subject of their term papers, and should expect to give a brief (15-20 min.) presentation on their chosen topic sometime during the last three weeks of class.

Please submit term papers by 5 P.M. on Wednesday, April 29, in both electronic and hard copy. Hard copies should be left in Professor Deveck's mailbox on the fourth floor of Phelps Hall.

## Course Schedule

*(Secondary readings to be completed by Tuesday lecture. Texts for discussion to be read by Thursday's class. Texts are available for download on Classes V2 (listed by date and author's name) unless otherwise specified.)*

### Week 1: Some historical background

readings: J. O'Donnell, *Ruin*, pp. 47-106; M. Hodgeson, *Venture*, pp 187-230

tue 1/13 Lecture: Justinian through 620

thur 1/15 Lecture: 620 through the al-Mu'tasim

### Week 2: Arabia through the eyes of others

readings: *Doctrina Jacobi*; Herodotus, *Histories*, 3.92-113; Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History*, 6.37-38; R. Hoyland, *Islam*, pp. 53-79, 321-330; I. Shahid, "Byzantium and Kinda"

tue 1/20 Lecture: Ancient ethnography and red sea contacts

thur 1/22 Quiz 1: basic dates. discussion: Herodotus, Sozomen, Doctrina Jacobi

### Week 3: Qur'anic traces

readings: Qur'an, suras 1, 7, 18, 30, 112; Tabari, Tafsir on Surat al-Kahf; F. Donner, *Narratives*, pp. 64-85; C. Gilliot, "Creation of a Fixed Text;" H. Motzki, "Alternative Accounts of the Qur'an's Formation"

tue 1/27 lecture: influence and originality in Qur'an

thur 1/29 discussion: Surat al-Kahf

### week 4: History

readings: Ibn Ishaq, *Life of Muhammad*, pp. 18-30, 90-108, 133-152; Tabari, *Histories*, v. 1 pp. 1-5, v. 2, pp. 87-95; F. Donner, *Narratives*, pp. 125-146

tue 2/3 Lecture: Methodologies, chronologies, geographies

thur 2/5 discussion: Ibn Ishaq, at-Tabari

### week 5: Subject populations

readings: Tabari, *Histories*, v. 2, pp. 97-11, 126-127; H. ibn Ishaq, *The Book of Aristotle the Philosopher on Physiognomy*, pp. 1-3; al-Bukhari, Personal Manners, 511-521; P. Crone, *Nativist Prophets*, pp. 106-139; P. Crone, "Kavad's Heresy and Mazdak's Revolt;" T. Green, *City of the Moon God*, pp. 95-161

tue 2/10 Lecture: Greeks, Persians, and everything in between

thur 2/12 discussion: Al-Bukhari, H. Ibn Ishaq

### week 6: Cities and countryside

readings: Thucydides, *History*, 2.35-46; Cassiodorus, *Variae*, 1.30-31; T. Qutbuddin, *Khutbas*, pp. 237-245; P. Wheatley, *Places*, pp. 292-326;

tue 2/17 Lecture: Living together, living apart

thur 2/19 Quiz 2: maps. discussion: Thucydides, Cassiodorus, Khutbas

### week 7: Public and private economy

readings: Ps.-Bryson, *The Book on Household Management*; Ps.-Aristotle, *Economics*, bk. 2; Abu Yusuf, *The Book on the Land Tax*, v. 3, pp. 35-39, 78-93, 118-129.

tue 2/24 Lecture: Oikonomia

thur 2/26 discussion: Bryson, Ps.-Aristotle, Abu Yusuf

**week 8: Politics**

readings: Ps.-Jahiz, *The Book of the Crown*, pp.8-13; A. al-Azmeh, *Muslim Kingship*, pp. 11-34, 62-79; P. Crone, *God's Rule*, pp. 3-32

tue 3/3 Lecture: signs and practices of sovereignty

thur 3/5 midterm

Spring Break!

**week 9: "Native" Sciences: Grammar and Dream Interpretation**

readings: F. Rosenthal, *Classical Heritage*, pp. 54-61; Aristotle, *On Interpretation*, I-V; Artemidorus, *Interpretation of Dreams*, 1.1-40; Sibawayh, *al-Kitab*, pp. 1-3; ps.-Ibn Sirin, *Interpretation of Dreams*, pp. 1-2, 5-7, 38-40; J. Lamoreaux, *The Early Muslim Tradition of Dream Interpretation*, pp. 135-168; P. Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity*, pp. 107-123; I. Goldziher, *History of Grammar Among the Arabs*, pp. 1-9; K. Versteegh, *The Arabic Language*, pp. 74-90

tue 3/24 Lecture: Techniques and Rules of Interpretation

thur 3/26 Discussion: Aristotle, Artemidorus, Sibawayh, Ibn Sirin

**week 10: The Hellenic Intellectual Tradition.**

readings: F. Rosenthal, *Classical Heritage*, pp. 52-71; D. Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture*, pp. 1-74; F. Peters, *Aristotle and the Arabs*, pp. 3-31

tue 3/31 Lecture: The Graeco-Arabic translation movement.

thur 4/2 discussion: Rosenthal

**week 11: Translation 1: Science and Medicine.**

readings: D. Gutas, *Greek Thought*, pp. 75-120; M. Ullmann, *Islamic Medicine*, pp. 55-71; D. Pingree, "Astrology," E. Kennedy, "The Exact Sciences," D. King, "Astronomy"

tue 4/7 Lecture: Sources of the sciences in the Arabic-Speaking World

thur 4/9 discussion: Science and Power

**week 12: Translation 2: Philosophy**

readings: Avicenna, *Psychology*, pp. 25-39; Kindi, *Philosophical Works*, pp. 279-325; D. Gutas, *Greek Thought*, pp. 121-192; D. Gutas, "Origins in Baghdad;"

tue 4/14 Lecture: The Uses of Ancient Philosophy

thur 4/16 discussion: al-Kindi, Avicenna

**week 13: The Islamic World as a Late Antique Society?**

readings: C. Ando, "Decline, Fall, and Transformation;" P. Brown, *The Making of Late Antiquity*, pp. 1-26; G. Fowden, *Before and After Muhammad*, pp.1-17

tue 4/21 Lecture: Looking Forward, Looking Back

thur 4/23 concluding discussion and review for final