

RELI 4851-B
Seminar in Western Religions: Readings in Gender and Islam
Fall 2009 Mondays, 8:35 am-11:25 am

Professor A. Geissinger
2A57 Paterson Hall
Office Hours: Mondays 12:30-2:30 pm, or by appointment

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Course Description

This is a seminar course which is designed to provide an in-depth introduction to several contemporary Muslim discourses about gender. After beginning with the historical background of the rise of Islam and the origins of and development of the textual sources which furnish much of the material for contemporary Muslim discourses and debates about gender and Islam, several topics will be examined in detail: gender, spirituality, and religious authority; legal discourses; and critical belonging. In addition to reading several books authored by contemporary Muslim women that deal with these topics, a couple of recent films addressing these issues will be viewed.

Course Evaluation

As a seminar, this class depends on the thoughtful participation of every student. Please take note of the amount of weekly preparation that this upper level seminar requires: Regular attendance, reading the required texts in advance of the class meeting, preparing discussion points, and taking an active role in class discussion are all essential to your success in this class.

Ongoing weekly participation—25%
Class presentation—20%
Term paper proposal (due Oct 5 in class)—5%
Term paper (due Dec 7 in class)—50%

Course Textbooks and Readings

Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).

Kecia Ali, *Sexual Ethics and Islam: Feminist Reflections on Qur'an, Hadith, and Jurisprudence* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2008).

Abu 'Abd ar-Rahman as-Sulami, *Early Sufi Women: Dhikr an-niswa al-muta'abbidat as-sufiyyat*, Trans. Rkia E. Cornell (Louisville, Ky: Fons Vitae, 1999).

Shahnaz Khan, *Zina, Transnational Feminism, and the Moral Regulation of Pakistani Women* (Vancouver and Toronto: UBC Press, 2006).

Several translations of the Quran are available online. For the Shakir translation:
<http://quod.lib.umich.edu/k/koran/browse.html>

The Sahih Collection of al-Bukhari:
<http://www.sunnipath.com/library/Hadith/H0002P0000.aspx>

Al-Muwatta' of Imam Malik:
<http://www.sunnipath.com/library/Hadith/H0001P0000.aspx>

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1

Mon, Sept 14—Introduction to the course

I. Historical Context

Week 2

Mon, Sept 21—The Middle East before Islam; the Meccan phase of Muhammad's career
Readings: Ahmed, Chs. 1, 2 and 3; Quran chapters 19 (Mariam), 53 (The Star), 85 (The Celestial Stations), 91 (The Sun), 108 (The Abundance of Good).

Week 3

Mon, Sept 28—Muhammad in Medina; the early Islamic period
Readings: Ahmed, Ch. 4; Quran chapters 4 (The Women), 24 (The Light), 33 (The Clans), 58 (She Who Pleaded), 60 (The Examined One).

Week 4

Mon, Oct 5—Medieval Muslim discourses on gender
Readings: Ahmed, Chs. 5 and 6.

Week 5

Mon, Oct 12—Statutory holiday (no class)

II. Discourses on gender, religious authority and spirituality

Week 6

Mon, Oct 19—Introducing Sufism and Sufi women; recovering women's history
Readings: *Early Sufi Women*, 15-70.

Week 7

Mon, Oct 26—Medieval representations of female spirituality

Readings: *Early Sufi Women*, 74-140, 276-282.

Week 8

Mon, Nov 2—Knowledge and religious authority

Readings: *Early Sufi Women*, 142-212; *The Sahih Collection of al-Bukhari*, Chapter 3 (The Book of Knowledge).

III. Discourses on law and modernity**Week 9**

Mon, Nov 9—Introducing Islamic law (*Sharia*); marriage

Readings: Ali, “Introduction” and Ch. 1; *Al-Muwatta’ of Imam Malik*, Ch. 28 (Marriage)

Week 10

Mon, Nov 16—Divorce, concubinage, licit and illicit sex

Readings: Ali, Chs. 2-4; *Al-Muwatta’ of Imam Malik*, Ch. 29 (Divorce)

Week 11

Mon, Nov 23—Sexualities

Film: “A Jihad for Love”

Readings: Ali, Chs. 5-7

IV. Community and critical belonging**Week 12**

Mon, Nov 30—Stereotypes and binary constructions; the dilemma of native informing

Readings: Khan, 3-82.

Week 13

Mon, Dec 7— Challenging the Zina Ordinance; transnationality

Film: “Nazrah”

Readings: Khan, 83-128.

COURSE POLICIES

Email Communication

Carleton's communications policy requires faculty to communicate with students only through their Carleton Connect account, in compliance with FIPPA. Therefore, any emails sent to me must be from your Carleton Connect account.

All assignments are to be submitted in hard copy form, in class. Do not submit your assignments electronically.

Course Assignments and Evaluation

A. Ongoing weekly participation—25%

The centre of class discussion will be the readings. It is essential for all students to come to class regularly, to do the readings beforehand, and to come prepared to discuss them. In order to facilitate class discussion, every week students will be asked to prepare and submit a one-page response to the assigned readings at the beginning of class. Each response should outline two or more main points, and provides two or more leading questions based on the readings. Students are asked to bring an additional copy to class so that they can refer to it during class discussion. These responses will not be graded or returned, but they are worth 2% each for a total of 20%. Please note that since these responses are assigned in order to facilitate class discussion, they will not be accepted outside of class.

B. Class presentation—20%

On the first day of class, each student will sign up for a class presentation on one of the readings. The presentation (10-15 minutes max) should introduce material for class discussion, highlighting major concepts and issues. The written text of the presentation is to be submitted for grading. Expectations for the presentation will be discussed in class.

C. Term paper proposal (due Oct 5 in class)—5%

Please note that no term paper will be accepted unless the proposal has already been submitted and approved. Proposals must contain: the working title of the paper, a paragraph summarizing the paper topic, and a bibliography.

D. Term paper (due Dec 7 in class)—50%

The paper is to be written on a topic which is directly related to the course materials. It is to be 10-15 typed pages, double-spaced, 12-point type with 1-inch margins. Standard academic methods of citation must be used. This assignment will be discussed in detail in class.

Copies of work submitted

Always keep a hard copy of all written work submitted for a course.

Late assignments

For the sake of fairness to students who hand their work in on time, the following penalties for **late paper proposals or term papers** will be strictly enforced: 2 marks (i.e. 2% of the total grade) per day or partial day. Exceptions can only be made in extreme cases (such as a documented medical emergency).

Response papers will not be accepted after the class has already met. You can only replace the response paper with a 2-3 page analysis of the week's readings, which you are to hand in the next day you come to class.

If you miss your class presentation, it is not possible to reschedule. Hand in the written text of your presentation for partial credit.

REGULATIONS COMMON TO ALL HUMANITIES COURSES

COPIES OF WRITTEN WORK SUBMITTED

Always retain for yourself a copy of all essays, term papers, written assignments or take-home tests submitted in your courses.

PLAGIARISM

The University Senate defines plagiarism as “*presenting, whether intentional or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one’s own.*” This can include:

- reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else’s published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one’s own without proper citation or reference to the original source;
- submitting a take-home examination, essay, laboratory report or other assignment written, in whole or in part, by someone else;
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, or paraphrased material, concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;
- using another’s data or research findings;
- failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another’s works and/or failing to use quotation marks;
- handing in “*substantially the same piece of work for academic credit more than once without prior written permission of the course instructor in which the submission occurs.*”

Plagiarism is a serious offence which cannot be resolved directly with the course’s instructor. The Associate Deans of the Faculty conduct a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student, when an instructor suspects a piece of work has been plagiarized. Penalties are not trivial. They range from a mark of zero for the plagiarized work to a final grade of “F” for the course, and even suspension from all studies or expulsion from the University.

GRADING SYSTEM

Letter grades assigned in this course will have the following percentage equivalents:

A+ = 90-100 (12)	B+ = 77-79 (9)	C+ = 67-69 (6)
A = 85-89 (11)	B = 73-76 (8)	C = 63-66 (5)
A - = 80-84 (10)	B - = 70-72 (7)	C - = 60-62 (4)
D+ = 57-59 (3)	D = 53-56 (2)	D - = 50-52 (1)

F	Failure. No academic credit
WDN	Withdrawn from the course
ABS	Absent from the final examination
DEF	Official deferral (see “Petitions to Defer”)
FND	Failure with no deferred exam allowed -- assigned only when the student has failed the course on the basis of inadequate term work as specified in the course outline.

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean.

WITHDRAWAL WITHOUT ACADEMIC PENALTY

The last date to withdraw from Fall term courses is November 16, 2009. The last day to withdraw from Fall/Winter (full year) and Winter term courses is March 12, 2010.

REQUESTS FOR ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request the processes are as follows:

Pregnancy obligation: write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details visit the Equity Services website: http://www.carleton.ca/equity/accommodation/student_guide.htm

Religious obligation: write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details visit the Equity Services website: http://www.carleton.ca/equity/accommodation/student_guide.htm

Students with disabilities requiring academic accommodations in this course must register with the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) for a formal evaluation of disability-related needs. Documented disabilities could include but are not limited to mobility/physical impairments, specific Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/psychological disabilities, sensory disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and chronic medical conditions. Registered PMC students are required to contact the PMC, 613-520-6608, every term to ensure that I receive your Letter of Accommodation, no later than two weeks before the first assignment is due or the first in-class test/midterm requiring accommodations. If you **only** require accommodations for your formally scheduled exam(s) in this course, please submit your request for accommodations to PMC by the last official day to withdraw from classes in each term. For more details visit the PMC website: http://www.carleton.ca/pmc/students/acad_accom.html

You can visit the Equity Services website to view the policies and to obtain more detailed information on academic accommodation at <http://carleton.ca/equity/accommodation>

PETITIONS TO DEFER

Students unable to complete a **final** term paper or write a **final** examination because of illness or other circumstances beyond their control or whose performance on an examination has been impaired by such circumstances may apply in writing within five working days to the Registrar's Office for permission to extend a term paper deadline or to write a deferred examination. The request must be fully and specifically supported by a medical certificate or other relevant documentation. Only deferral petitions submitted to the Registrar's Office will be considered.

ADDRESSES: (Area Code 613)

College of the Humanities 520-2809	300 Paterson
Classics and Religion Office 520-2100	2A39 Paterson
Registrar's Office 520-3500	300 Tory
Student Academic Success Centre 520-7850	302 Tory
Paul Menton Centre 520-6608	500 Unicentre
Writing Tutorial Service 520-6632	4 th floor Library
Learning Commons 520-1125	4 th floor Library