RELS 221/HIST 221
Texas A&M University
Fall 2010

Instructor: Dr. Side Emre (sideemre@tamu.edu)
Class Location: CHEN 106 / Class Hours: Tu-Th, 9:35-10:50AM
Office: 13-GLAS / Office Hours: Th, 3:45-5:00PM and by appointment

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Office: GLAS-004 / Office Hours: T, 11:00AM-12:30PM and W, 1:00PM-2:30PM.

HISTORY OF ISLAM (ca. 600- ca. 1500 C.E.)

Course Description:
The aim of this course is to introduce students to some of the main themes in Islamic history and civilization from the time of Prophet Muhammad (ca.600 C.E.) to ca. 1500 C.E. We will proceed chronologically and thematically with focus on political, religious, social and cultural events of significance. We will connect our analysis of significant historical events with important primary documents to grasp and question the first hand versions of what is established as historical fact. The goal here is to observe, evaluate and think critically about the formation of the Islamic tradition as well as its transformation over time across different regions and cultures alongside its interaction with other traditions and world religions.

Prerequisites:
None

Core Objectives for Language, Philosophy and Culture Foundational Component Area

Critical Thinking (to include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information)

Communication (to include effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral and visual communication)

Social Responsibility (to include intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national and global communities)

Personal Responsibility (to include the ability to connect choices, actions and consequences to ethical decision-making)

Student Learning Outcomes:
Through this course, students will be able to:
1) evaluate and synthesize primary and secondary historical writings related to the history of Islamic civilization from 600 CE-1500CE.
2) express their own ideas effectively in written and oral form.
3) identify historical and social contexts that created diversity in the past history of Islamic civilizations and in present-day human cultures.
4) apply knowledge about the human condition in the Islamic World’s past and present to their personal lives and studies.

Course Aim and Objectives:
Very broadly, this course is guided by two primary objectives: First, to introduce students with little or no prior knowledge of Islam, history of Islam and the Middle East to the main religious, political, social and cultural contours of the tradition and its diverse participants. Second, this course aims to guide students in thinking, speaking and writing analytically about Islam and Islamic history. One of our primary goals is to give students conceptual tools, historical information and analytical skills necessary to contextualize Islam in today’s world and make sure that they respond to the events and information they encounter and observe in a critical and knowledgeable manner. During the course of the semester you will watch several documentaries and movies. You will also participate in exercises to evaluate the historical content as well as the narrative qualities of some of controversial audio-visual and narrative sources on Islam and the Middle East.

Required Readings:

*Additional reading materials, such as newspaper articles and extensive selections from other primary or secondary sources, will be posted on the HIST 221 E-Learning site for you to prepare for our bi-weekly in-class discussion sessions.

Recommended Readings:

Attendance Policy:
Regular attendance is of paramount importance for this course. The TA will take attendance each class period based on a seating chart we will distribute and you will sign on the second day of class. Each lecture is designed to build on the information and analysis made in the previous session. Attending a class means that you did the
required readings before Tuesdays and Thursdays, and that you are ready to answer questions and discuss in class. I will handle all absences and any late work related to them according to Student Rule 7. Refer to http://student-rules.tamu.edu/rule7.htm

Three unexcused absences are allowed for the duration of the semester. If you miss one class after that (and that absence is also unexcused), that will result in a two point reduction from your final grade. If you miss a fifth class (and that absence is unexcused), then two more points will be taken off your final grade for this class. More than five unexcused absences will result in an automatic F as the final grade.

Helpful Reading Hints:

1. Remember that this class is an ultra-marathon! This means you have to work doubly hard to prepare well, be patient, and not get intimidated with the hardships on the path.
2. This is a READING INTENSIVE CLASS: Before every class you have to read the assigned textbook pages, primary source materials and be prepared to answer the study questions when asked in class discussion. We will analyze and interpret some sections of the assigned primary materials after each lecture so be prepared.
3. Time management and attention are keys for success: Give ample time to complete readings. You are not familiar with the jargon, historical context, political dynamics and the protagonists. It will take time before you can begin to see the patterns and grasp the inner dynamics of the data. As weekly lectures will focus on both the information given in the textbook, primary materials, and other sources, if you rely solely on my presentation, you will be lost.

Requirements and Grading:

You are required to do all of the readings, watch all the assigned audio-visual materials, as well as read the articles posted on the E-Learning site. You will be evaluated based on three exams and class participation.

*Exams are not comprehensive. They will include multiple-choice, primary source identification(s) and essays. Each will have approximately thirty multiple-choice questions and you will be using a #2 pencil and GREY scantrons to answer them. Data from the Egger book, the study questions on your primary reading materials as well as relevant information pertaining to these materials will be the basis of your multiple choice questions. Questions based on the audio-visual materials you will watch during the course of the semester will also be asked in the multiple choice section. You will also have one and/or two primary source identification question(s) which you will answer in one and/or two short paragraphs. Primary text identification questions will be asked from a variety of sources such as Egger’s book, materials covered in class lectures and discussions, and sources available on E-Learning. The last part of your exam will consist of an essay question. You will be given two essay options, and will choose one. Your essay will be written in ink in three to four bluebook pages. Data
from the Egger book, the study questions on your primary reading materials as well as relevant information pertaining to these materials will be the basis for the essay questions. Your essays/paragraphs will be graded on content, clarity, analytical substance, and interpretive ability.

*Class participation* will count for 10% of your grade and will be based on your informed and consistent (at least once every class period) contributions to our Thursday class discussions. I have provided detailed study questions to help guide you in your reading of the primary sources we will discuss each session. I will collect your written answers/notes for those questions at the end of each discussion day and will consider them when calculating your class participation grade. Please note, however, that even detailed responses cannot take the place of your oral contributions in class.

**Grading Scale:**
89.5-100 = A  
79.5-89.4 = B  
69.5-79.4 = C  
59.5-69.4 = D  
59.4 & below = F

**Grading Summary:**
- Participation: 10%
- Midterm I: 25%
- Midterm II: 30%
- Final Examination: 35%

**Extra Credit Option:**
If you have perfect attendance, meaning you have no unexcused absences, then you get two extra credit points added to your final class average. There are no exceptions on this rule.

**Classroom Behavior**
Always remember that Aggies are respectful and well-behaving to their class mates and to their instructors. I will not tolerate any behavior that disrupts the flow of our class and goes against respectful rules of conduct. Please do not use your cell phones to talk or send messages during class sessions.

**ADA- Students with Disabilities:**
The Americans with Disabilities Act is a federal anti-discrimination law that provides civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this law requires that students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If a student believes that they have a disability requiring accommodation, they should contact the Department of Student Life, Services for Students with Disabilities, in Cain Hall (campus phone 845-1637). For additional information visit [http://disability.tamu.edu](http://disability.tamu.edu)
Academic Integrity:

Course Schedule:

Important dates:
MIDTERM I: October, 14 Thursday
MIDTERM II: November, 18 Thursday
THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY: November, 25 Thursday = NO CLASS!
LAST DAY OF CLASS: December, 7 Tuesday
FINAL EXAM: December 10 Friday, 12:30-2:30PM

WEEK 1
August 31
General Introduction, organizational introduction for the course, discussion of the syllabus will be given. In the second half of the class we will be watching selections from PBS documentary Islam, Empire of Faith: Produced and directed by Robert Gardner; writers, Jonathan Grupper (series writer), Patrick Prentice (head writer), Richard Roughton (writer, episode one); a Gardner Films production in association with PBS and Devillier Donegan Enterprises. Publisher: [Alexandria, Vir.]: Distributed by PBS Home Video, [2004]

September 2
PBS documentary Islam, Empire of Faith, continued

WEEK 2
September 7:
Pre-Islamic World (500-610 C.E.) Lecture focus: Introduction of terms, protagonists, basic concepts, setting the stage and historical background to the Near East before advent of Islam. Topics: Origins and Arabia on the eve of Islam: Judaism, Christianity, Zoroastrianism, Manichaeism and Paganism within the context of the Byzantine Empire, its rival the Persian Sasanian Empire, and Arabian Peninsula before Islam’s emergence.

September 9:
Primary Source Readings posted on E-Learning: Sources on the pre-Islamic world and its peoples
Study Questions:
1. Having done the assigned readings, how would you describe the main features of the social, cultural and religious and economic life of the majority of the inhabitants of the Arabian peninsula prior to the rise of Islam and its relationship to the wider Near East at that particular time? What are the hardships do you face in answering questions on the pre-Islamic Arabian Peninsula and what are the difficulties facing the historians of this period?
2. When reading the primary source selection titled "Theophanes, The Confessor (d. 818), Chronographia (or "Chronicles") covering the years 616-629" answer these questions: How can you describe the nature of the conflict between Byzantine Empire (the Romans), the Sassanid Persians and others? Who emerges victorious in this confrontation and why? What are the messages Theophanes intended for his audiences who had access to his account of the Byzantine victory?

3. When reading the primary source selection titled "The History of Ja\"far al Tabari (d. 923 C.E.) on Persia and Yemen" answer these questions: What does Al-Tabari's History tell us about the relations between Arabs and civilizations that they interacted with during the pre-Islamic period? Considering that some of narratives were written approximately 400 years after the events transpired, how did the messages resonate with later audiences? What can these narratives tell or hide about the spread of Judaism and Christianity, as two major monotheistic predecessors to Islam, into Arabia during the time of and before the emergence of Islam?

WEEK 3

September 14:
The rise of Islam and the Mission of Prophet Muhammad in Mecca (610-622 C.E.):
Topics: Muhammad's life, family; His early prophetic career with reference to primary sources; Meccan society, political, economic and spiritual life of the Arab tribes prior to the rise of Islam; introduction to the literature and culture that Muhammad inherited; Qur\"an; biographies of Muhammad.

September 16:
Primary Source Readings posted on E-Learning: Pre-Islamic Arabia and the origins of Islam in Mecca
Study Questions:
1. What was the role of Mecca in the political, economic and spiritual life of the Arab tribes prior to the rise of Islam?
2. What did Muhammad change? How did he challenge the political and social authorities of the Meccan communities?
3. When reading the primary source selection titled "Pre-Islamic Arabia and the origins of Islam in Mecca: Selections of pre-Islamic and poetry from „Antara, Thabit, al-Khansa" (ca. early sixth/seventh century C.E and Ibn al-Kalbi (d.817)" answer these questions: What does the pre-Islamic literature say about the values and customs of the Arabian world? What do these folks practice? Do you see problems in interpreting these sources and why?
4. When reading the primary source selection titled "Pre-Islamic Arabia and the origins of Islam in Mecca: Al-Qur\"an (the Recitation), verses from the Meccan period (ca. 610-622 C.E., including chapters 1, 19, 26, 53, 80, 81, 95, and 96)" answer these questions: What types of messages did these early verses convey? Who is the audience? Can you see references to other monotheistic traditions in these verses? How different and/familiar is the Qur\"an for you?
5. When reading the primary source selection titled "Pre-Islamic Arabia and the origins of Islam in Mecca: Selections from the Sirat Rasul Allah (Biography of the Messenger of God) compiled by Ibn Ishaq (d. 768) and edited by Ibn
Mecca from the *Tarikh al-rusul wa'l-muluk* (*History*) of al-Tabari (d. 924) answer these questions: What can you say about the ways in which these narratives add to our knowledge on the pre-Islamic context? What were the characteristics of the populations in the Arabian Peninsula before Muhammad? How authentic are these sources? Who were Muhammad's enemies during the early period of his career? Do these narratives help you to understand some ideas in the Qur'anic verses you read?

**WEEK 4**
**September 21:**
Second phase of Muhammad's prophetic career:
The formation of the Islamic community in Medina and the death of a prophet (622-632 C.E.): Topics: Later prophetic career of Muhammad with reference to primary sources; biographies of Muhammad; The significance of *Hijra*; The death of Muhammad and the shock of the *ummah*.

**September 23:**
Primary Source Readings posted on E-Learning: The Prophet Muhammad's career in Medina.
Study Questions:
1. When reading the primary source selection titled "The Prophet Muhammad's career in Medina: *Al-Qur'an* (the Recitation), verses from the Medinan period (ca. 622-632 C.E., including chapters 2, 4 and 24" answer these questions: How does the selection from Chapter 2 (the Cow) provide commentary on the interactions between the various monotheistic communities of Arabia? What problems Chapter 24 (the Light) addresses for the early community?
2. When reading the primary source selection titled "The Prophet Muhammad's career in Medina: Selections from the *Sirat Rasul Allah* (*Biography of the Messenger of God*) by Ibn Ishaq (d.768?) and Ibn Hisham (d.834)" answer these questions: What were some of the arrangements negotiated between the early Muslim community and the people of Medina? Was this damaging on the existing order? In what ways the discussion on the Qur'anic verses reflect on the tension between the *ummah* and Jewish communities of Medina? Was the peace of Hudaybiya in 628 C.E. discussed in Ibn Hisham as a source of victory for Muhammad?
3. Why/w hy not?
4. When reading the primary source selection titled "The Prophet Muhammad's career in Medina: Selections on Muhammad's activities as political and religious leader in Medina from the *Tarikh al-rusul wa'l-muluk* (*History*) of al-Tabari (d.923), History compiled in ca. early 900s" answer these questions: What are the political and religious problems that challenged Muhammad in Medina? Were there problems in his community? How were those addressed? How do these texts communicate with the issues raised in Chapter 24 (the Light) of the Qur'an? Why was the final pilgrimage of Muhammad important for al-Tabari? What are the main points of emphasis in al-Tabari's narrative?

**WEEK 5**
September 28
After Muhammad: Establishment of the Islamic Empire, The Rightly Guided Caliphs and Muslim expansion (632-661 C.E.) Topics: The expansion and conquest of the ummah during the rule of the first four Rightly Guided caliphs, 632-661 C.E.; introduction to the Umayyad dynasty
Readings: Egger v.1, pp. 33-44.

September 30
Primary Source Readings posted on E-Learning: The Rightly Guided Caliphate, 632-656 C.E.
Study Questions:
1. What were the main challenges which the ummah faced in the aftermath of 632 and what were the responses?
2. When reading the primary source selection titled “The Rightly Guided Caliphate, 632-656 C.E.: Selections from al-Tabari’s History on the activities of Abu Bakr (d.634) and „Umar b. al-Khattab (d.644) as successors to Prophet” answer these questions: Why was Muhammad’s death so traumatic an experience for the ummah? How was the problem of succession solved? What were the problems that the Muslim armies and leaders faced in the wake of their defeat by the Sassanid Persian army in Mesopotamia? Why was „Umar obligated to create pay systems, and military registers and what were the issues that arose from his executive decision-making process?
3. When reading the primary source selection titled “The Rightly Guided Caliphate, 632-656 C.E.: Theophanes the Confessor’s (d. 818 C.E.) views on the history of the Arab conquests under the early caliphs; with texts of early peace treaties between Arabs and non-Muslims” answer these questions: How knowledgeable was Theophanes on Muhammad’s career? Do you find his data valuable or not? Why? How does Theophanes’ narrative tackle with the mistakes done by the Byzantine leaders as they confronted the Arab invasions? What elements characterized the texts of various peace treaties drawn up among Arab leaders, towns and regions they captured?
4. When reading the primary source selection titled “The Rightly Guided Caliphate, 632-656 C.E.: Selections from al-Tabari’s History on the evolution of the Caliphate under Caliph „Uthman b. Affan (d.656)” answer these questions: Why did „Uthman come to be a controversial persona in the early Islamic History? How does the author present „Uthman as distinctive from his predecessor, „Umar, as the caliph of the ummah? What kind of developments and issues complicated „Uthman”s attempts to administer the early Islamic Empire?

WEEK 6
October 5
Umayyads and „Abbasids; the Establishment of Sectarianism (661-800 C.E.)
Topics: The role of the Syrian Umayyad monarchy, 661-750 C.E.; development of sectarianism in the ummah; Ideological split between supporters of community consensus versus the partisans of „Ali; Interpretations of how the ummah should be ruled; Fitna wars; Problem of authority; Kharijites, Sunnis and Shi”is; Introduction to the Abbasid Revolution and its impact.
Readings: Egger v.1, pp. 44-84.
October 7
Primary Source Readings posted on E-Learning: The first civil war and the Umayyad Caliphate.

Study Questions:
1. When reading the source selection titled “The first civil war and the Umayyad Caliphate: Selections from al-Tabari’s History on the origins of the First Civil War in 656-657 C.E., followed by various anecdotes and Umayyad-period correspondence” answer these questions: Why did „Ali“s position pose a challenge in 656 C.E. as he assumed power? How did the mission of Muhammad’s wife „A“ishah and her supporters demonstrate the conflicts rising within the ummah? What do these narratives hint with reference to the concerns of the Umayyad rulers at this time? What roles did non-Muslims or non-Arabs play in these concerns?
2. When reading the source selection titled “The first civil war and the Umayyad Caliphate: Non-Muslim historical reports on Umayyad administration, Theophanes the Confessor (d. 818), Dionysius of Tel-Mahre (d. 845) and Ibn al-Athir (d. 1234) on reflections of the Arab-Byzantine world in coinage and architecture” answer these questions: According to these sources why was there an increase of conflict during this period of Islamic history? Why was the coinage reform important to the Byzantines and the Umayyads? How would you characterize the coinage and architecture of the Umayyad period? Does it represent a continuum or departure with respect to earlier traditions?
3. When reading the source selection titled “The first civil war and the Umayyad Caliphate: Selections from al-Tabari’s History on the reign of Mu”awiyah b. Abu Sufyan (d. 680) and his followers” answer these questions: How did Mu“awiyah’s governors like Ziyad b. Abihi try to solve conflicts, such as rebellion and sedition in the cities of „Iraq? Why did the appointment of Yazid b. Mu“awiyah as direct heir to the Umayyad throne prove to be a controversial act? How can we define Mu“awiyah’s reign? What were his points of success, where did he fail?

WEEK 7
October 12:
Umayyads and Abbasids; the Establishment of Sectarianism (661-800 C.E.) – Continued Topics: Problem of authority; Kharijites, Sunnis and Shi“is; The Abbasid Revolution, and its impact.
Readings: Egge“ v.1, pp. 44-84.
Primary Source Readings posted on E-Learning: The Abbasid Revolution and the Sunni Shi“i split.

Study Questions:
1. When reading the source selection titled “The Abbasid Revolution and the Sunni-Shi“i split: Various sources on the rebellions against the Umayyad dynasty and its representatives” answer these questions: What do these anecdotes tell us about the problems faced by the later Umayyad dynasty? How did they face these challenges? What were the main problems that fuelled various rebellions in the later Umayyad period? How do you regard these sources?
2. When reading the source selection titled “The Abbasid Revolution and the Sunni-Shi“i split: The History of al-Tabari (d. 923) and the Chronographia of Theophanes the
Confessor (d. 818) on the origins of the „Abbasid revolution and its victory under Abu"l-, „Abbas and his successors” answer these questions: How did Abu Muslim (d. 755) rebel against the Umayyads? How did Abu"l-, „Abbas al-Saffah (d. 754), the first „Abbasid caliph, justify the right of his partisans to seise the control of the Islamic empire? What does Theophanes’ narrative add to the existing knowledge of the „Abbasid revolution and why was he intensely interested in the revolution? In your opinion did the condition of the Byzantine Empire affect his perspective?

3. When reading the source selection titled “The Abbasid Revolution and the Sunni-Shi'i split: The History of al-Tabari on the killing of Abu Muslim and the revolt of the various early Shia partisans” answer these questions: Why did the second „Abbasid caliph Abu Ja'far al-Mansur (d. 775) view Abu Muslim as a rival and order his death and why did this order prove to be problematic for the „Abbasids? What were the major points of contention between Abu Ja'far and the „Abbasid ruling house from the partisans of the house of „Ali under Muhammad b. „Abdullah (d. 762)? How do these narratives interpret the problem of a final split between the Sunni and the Shia sects of Islam?

October 14: MIDTERM I

WEEK 8
October 19:
Introduction to the Political Fragmentation of the Abbasid Caliphate (800-1050 C.E.):
Topics: The golden age of the Islamic authority under the „Abbasid Caliphate; The legacy of the „Abbasids for Islamic history and civilization; Sources on the „Abbasids; Introduction to the political decentralization and fragmentation in the Muslim world; Sunni-Shi'i Caliphates; Sources on Medieval Islamic Spain, Buyids and Fatimids.

October 21:
Primary Source Readings posted on E-Learning: The Abbasid Caliphate at the height of its power.
Study Questions:
1. When reading the source selection titled “The Abbasid Caliphate at the height of its power: Arab geographer al-Ya'qubi (d. 897) on medieval Baghdad in his Kitab al-Buldan (Book of lands); recollections of „Abbasid times in Abu „Ali al-Tanukhi (d. 995) Nishwar al-Muhadara (Judge’s Table Talk)” answer these questions: Why did the Abbasid capital Baghdad attract such fame in medieval times and how does al-Ya'qubi’s description of the city provide insight on „Abbasid politics? What can the anecdotes such as al-Tanukhi reveal about the „Abbasid period? What are the themes that dominate al-Tanukhi’s stories?
2. When reading the source selection titled “The Abbasid Caliphate at the height of its power: The History of Abu Ja'far al-Tabari (d. 923) on the fall of the Persian Barmakid viziers and selections from Alf Layla wa Layla (One Thousand One Nights, late ninth century)” answer these questions: Among the numerous narratives that depict the fall of the Barmakid vizier Ja'far b. Yahya and his family, which ones are most interesting? Why did Ja'far b. Yahya’s story important for Al-Tabari and to later generations? How does One Thousand and One Nights portray „Abbasid rulers
and their viziers? Can you connect Al-Tabari’s account and the *One Thousand and One Nights*?

3. When reading the source selection titled “The Abbasid Caliphate at the height of its power: Abu Ubayd al-Qasim b. Sallam (d.837) on Cyprus in the *Kitab al-Amwal (The book of Taxation)* and al-Tabari on policies of the Abbasid Caliphs Harun al-Rashid and Abdullah al-Ma’mun” answer these questions: What was the administrative decision made on the case of the island of Cyprus and what logical position was taken by the jurists to make that decision? Why did Harun al-Rashid come to his particular decision on the succession issue, why did it fail? Why were the theological debates about the *Qur’an* so important to caliph al-Ma’mun and why was his position controversial among his contemporaries?

**WEEK 9**

**October 26:**
Political Fragmentation of the Abbasid Caliphate (800-1050 C.E.): Topics: Political decentralization and fragmentation in the Muslim world; Sunni-Shi’i Caliphathe; Sources on Medieval Islamic Spain, Buyids and Fatimids.
Readings: Same as last week, Egger v.1, pp.85-113, 139-144 and 154-171

**October 28:**
Primary Source Readings posted on E-Learning: Political fragmentation in the medieval Islamic world.
Study Questions:
1. When reading the source selection titled “Political fragmentation in the medieval Islamic world: Al-Tabari’s *History* on the rise of sectarian movements such as the Zanj and Qaramita revolts under the later „Abbasids” answer these questions: What strategems did Isma”ili Shi”ite leader „Ali b. Muhammad b. Ahmad use to challenge the „Abbasid caliphate, and what does this tell us about ninth century „Iraq? Why was the Qarmatian movement hated and feared by the „Abbasids? Can we consider al-Tabari a reliable source on the history of these anti-„Abbasid movements?
2. When reading the source selection titled “Political fragmentation in the medieval Islamic world: Sunni theorists Ibn Batta (d.997), Abu”l-Hasan al-Mawardi (d.1057), and Fatimid Sh”ite missionary Abu”l-Fawaris Ahmad b. Ya”qub (d. ca. 1017) interpret theories of political authority in Islam and the Imamate” answer these questions: How did Sunni writers like Ibn Batta and al-Mawardi define the rights and duties of the Imam and his subjects? In what ways does Abu al-Fawaris’ understanding of the Imamate, as a Shi”ite missionary, differ from that of Ibn Batta, al-Mawardi and the Sunni Muslim consensus? How do these writers back their assertions on the nature of the Imamate, which construction of authority was more compelling to the contemporary Muslims?
3. When reading the source selection titled “Political fragmentation in the medieval Islamic world: Various Muslim and Jewish sources on the history of the Spanish Umayyad caliphate from the eight to the eleventh century C.E.” answer these questions: Relying on the sources you have read, explain how Spain’s political and religious position is different, and in some ways, unique when compared to the rest of the Islamic world? What role did the prominent Jewish members of the community
play in the Umayyad caliphate in Spain and how can we define the Muslim relations with non-Muslim groups?

WEEK 10
November 2:
The Saljuq Turks (1000-1200 C.E.); non-Muslims in Islamic culture and civilization
Topics: Central Asian migrations into Islamicate lands, coming of the Turks; sources on Turkish incorporation into the Islamic world; non-Muslim participation in commercial and rural life and its sources.
Readings: Egger v.1, pp.145-154 and 229-256

November 4:
Primary Source Readings posted on E-Learning: The Great Turkish Migrations and the Saljuq Turks and Non-Muslims and daily life in the medieval Islamic world.
Study Questions:
1. When reading the source selection titled “The Great Turkish Migrations and the Saljuq Turks: The Arab essayist al-Jahiz (d.869) writes on the “Merits of the Turks” and Yusuf Khass Hajib (fl.ca. 1070) writes the Kutadgu Bilig (Wisdom of Royal Glory), a counsel manual for a Turkish speaking ruler” answer these questions: How does al-Jahiz justify the role of Turkish soldiers in Islamic society and why do you think he wrote this text towards the end of his life? According to Yusuf Khass, what are the factors that make a good army commander, secretary and treasurer? Are these qualities mutually compatible across the three positions? Do you think both of these works illustrate a synthesis between an ethnic-Turkish ruling class and their subjects by the end of the eleventh century? If so, how is that synthesis working?
2. When reading the source selection titled “The Great Turkish Migrations and the Saljuq Turks: Selection from the chronicle of Zahir al-Din al-Nishapuri (d. 1175), the Saljuq-nama (Story of the Saljuqs)” answer these questions: Why did the Saljuqs begin migrating from Central Asia and how did they establish themselves in Muslim lands? What were the reasons for the failure of the Ghaznavids, as rival ethnically Turkish dynasty, according to this text? What problems did the early Saljuq state face during the reign of Tughril Bey (d.1063) and how were those challenges met?
3. When reading the source selection titled “The Great Turkish Migrations and the Saljuq Turks: Selections from the universal history of „Izz al-Din ibn al-Athir (d.1233), al-Kamil fi’l-tarikh (The Complete History) and selections from work of Saljuq vizier Nizam al-Mulk (d.1092) Siyasat-nama (Tract on Governance)” answer these questions: Why do you think Ibn al-Athir placed emphasis on policies of both the Saljuq Sultan Malik Shah and his grand vizier Nizam al-Mulk (both d. 1092) in his text? How did the deaths of Saljuq Sultan Malik Shah and his grand vizier Nizam al-Mulk impact the Saljuq state? Who do you think Ibn al-Athir favors and why? How can we characterize the Persian vizier Nizam al-Mulk’s political philosophy based on the readings from his Tract of Governance?
4. When reading the source selection titled “Non-Muslims and daily life in the medieval Islamic world: „Abbasid diplomat Ibn Fadlan (ca. 922) and the Arab geographer al-Mas“udi (d.956) report on the frontier zones of the Islamic world” answer these questions: What was Ibn Fadlan’s reaction to the peoples from the Rus and the northern frontier of the Islamic world and how did he communicate them?
How did the Khazar peoples differ from the Rus and how would you characterize these frontier communities? What does al-Mas'udi tell us about Arab-Byzantine relations during the medieval period of Islamic history and their frontiers?

5. When reading the source selection titled “Non-Muslims and daily life in the medieval Islamic world: Various sources on the experiences of non-Muslims, especially Jewish communities under Muslim rule during the medieval period (ca. seventh to twelfth centuries)” answer these questions: What is the general legal framework by which dhimmis (non-Muslim subjects) came to be administered in Muslim societies? In what ways do the realities of everyday life differ from the depiction of these rules? What are the dynamics between medieval Jewish and Muslim communities and how did that differ from the relationship patterns from the time of Muhammad?

6. When reading the source selection titled “Non-Muslims and daily life in the medieval Islamic world: The Arab essayist al-Jahiz (d. 869) and ruler Kaykaus b. Iskandar (d. after 1082) on medieval period slavery, Persian joke book (The Kulliyat) of „Ubayd-e Zakkani (d.1370)” answer these questions: In what ways do the depictions of slavery and slaves differ from what you had learnt in your American history classes? Do you think that these narratives can tell us something different about medieval Islamic society that go beyond practices in regard to slavery? What do you think about the jokes of „Ubayd-e Zakkani? Do you think his tongue is sword-edged?

WEEK 11

November 9:
Islamic Law, Philosophy, Mysticism and Intellectual life Topics: Formation of Islamic law, sects, and schools of thought
Readings: Egger v.1, pp.114-138 and 199-228

November 11:
Primary Source Readings posted on E-Learning: The development of Islamic law and theology.
Study Questions:
1. When reading the source selection titled “The development of Islamic law and theology: Prophetic traditions collections (pl. Hadith- hadith) of al-Bukhari (d.870), Shi’ite traditions from Ibn Babawayh (d.991), and the Forty-Two Traditions of al-Nawawi (d.1277)" answer these questions: How do the hadith traditions of al-Bukhari (d.870) differ from the content of the Qur’an that you read earlier in the semester and what topics do you see emerging in the hadith collections? How do the Shi’ite hadith traditions differ from those of Sunni compilers like al-Bukhari? Why do you think the collection of traditions from al-Nawawi became popular in the Muslim world?

2. When reading the source selection titled “The development of Islamic law and theology: Early Muslim scholar and founder of a school of Islamic law al-Shafi’i (d.820), Spanish Muslim scholar Ibn Hazm (d.1064) and the legal decisions (fatwas) of al-Nawawi (d. 1277)” answer these questions: According to al-Shafi’i what are the sources of Islamic law, and how should they be ordered and ranked? What is the role of ijtihad and ijma’ in Islamic law? To what type of need do you think Ibn Hazm is responding when he discusses the formation of the Maliki School of law in the early
centuries of Islam? What is his main point? What kinds of questions was al- Nawawi asked by the public, what kind of strategies did he adopt to answer them and what can we gather about the formation of the Shari‘ah through his arguments?

3. When reading the source selection titled “The development of Islamic law and theology: Theological work of al-Ash”ari (d. 935), the political writings of al- Mawardi (d.1057) on judges and various observers of the legal and theological tradition in everyday life” answer these questions: Why did al-Ash”ari dislike the theological arguments of groups like the Mu’tazila (rationalists) and the ahl-al qadar (advocates of predestination of souls) and how was the idea of bi-la kayfa (without knowing how) employed to challenge them? Why are creeds, such as the ones al- Ash”ari gives, were considered an important thing to develop by the period of early 900s in Islamic history? What were some of the qualifications necessary for being a judge in an Islamic polity and how do you consider judges and theologians might have been regarded by the public?

WEEK 12
November 16:
Islamic Law, Philosophy, Mysticism and Intellectual life – Continued Topics: The role of philosophy, mysticism and institutions of learning in the development of Muslim intellectual life.
Readings: Same readings as last week, Egger v.1, pp.114-138 and 199-228
Primary Source Readings posted on E-Learning: Philosophy and Islamic Mysticism (Sufism) in Medieval Islam.
Study Questions:
1. When reading the source selection titled “Philosophy and Islamic Mysticism (Sufism) in Medieval Islam: Anonymous author of the famous mystic Mansur al- Hallaj (d.922), and Ibn al-„Arabi”s (d.1240) biographies of his mystical teachers in Spain” answer these questions: Why was al-Hallaj eventually put to death? What type of threat did the pose to the Abbasid society? Why do you think al-Hallaj”s spirituality was received with curiosity and enthusiasm among Muslim peoples? What were some of the tensions that could emerge between mystics and the communities they lived in, why does Ibn al-„Arabi criticize many of the Islamic jurists and theologians of his time?
2. When reading the source selection titled “Philosophy and Islamic Mysticism (Sufism) in Medieval Islam: The political philosophy of al-Farabi (d.950) and the autobiography, career of Ibn Sina (Avicenna, d. 1037) with the continuation of his biographical notice by his pupil Abu „l-Hayd al-Juzjani” answer these questions: What was al-Farabi”s agenda? Do you think a Muslim intellectual could find his ideas controversial and his political philosophy challenging, if so why? How does Ibn Sina”s self-perception differ than from the description of his student al-Juzjani, who actually completed his biography? What does his account tell us about the intellectual climate of the medieval Islamic civilization by the end of the 10th century C.E.? Do you consider Ibn Sina solely as a philosopher?
3. When reading the source selection titled “Philosophy and Islamic Mysticism (Sufism) in Medieval Islam: Debated points of view between the great Muslim philosophers al-Ghazali (Algazel, d. 1111) and Ibn Rush (Averroes, d. 1198)” answer these questions: Why does al-Ghazali ultimately reject logic and reason as guides to
ultimate truth and why do you think this vision proved so compelling for later
generations of Muslims? How do the politics of these men’s worlds get reflected on
their intellectual productions? How do Ibn Rush’s ideas on philosophy and religion
differ from those of al-Ghazali and which of the two positions do you find more
convincing? Why?

November 18: MIDTERM II

WEEK 13
November 23:
Crusaders and Mongol Invasions; the legacy of outside non-Muslim invasions Topics:
The Crusades of Latin Europe, Crusader Kingdoms, Muslim responses to the crusades;
Mongol invasions and the collapse of the medieval Islamic world.
Readings: Egger v.1, pp. 172-198
Primary Source Readings: Readings posted on E-Learning: The Crusades and their legacy for the
Muslim World.
Study Questions:
1. When reading the source selection titled “The Crusades and their legacy for the
Muslim World: Accounts of the Latin West: Life of Charlemagne by Einhard (d.840)
and various ecclesiastical activities and councils, two versions of Urban II’s sermon
summoning the First Crusade and the Alexiad of Byzantine historian and princess
Anna Komnena (d.1153) and the Gesta Francorum (ca.1100)” answer these questions
How does Einhard and Frederick’s accounts of the career on Charles the Great
(d.814) shed light on the expansion of Christianity in early medieval Europe and what
were the perceptions on this later on? What do the arrangements characterizing the
“Peace of God” contribute to the situation surrounding the calling of the Crusades by
Pope Urban II? What were the responses of the Byzantine leadership to the coming of
the Latin Crusaders? What was Anna Komnena’s reaction to the coming of the
Western Europeans? Based on these narratives how do you characterize the rifts
between the Byzantine and Latin understanding of the Crusades?
2. When reading the source selection titled “The Crusades and their legacy for the
Muslim World: Three accounts of the Crusades: Chronicler Ibn al-Athir (d.1234) on
the First Crusade; Arab chronicler and frontier warrior „Usama b. al-Munqidh
(d.1188); and „Imad al-Din al-Isfahani (d.1201) on the re-conquest of Jerusalem by
Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi in 1187” answer these questions: According to Ibn al-Athir,
what were the factors that resulted in the victory of the First Crusade and its
establishment of Crusader states in the region of Jerusalem? What are the main
characteristics of the social environment of the eastern Mediterranean in the era of
the Crusades according to „Usama b. al-Munqidh? What are „Usama’s ideas on the
culture of the newcomers and does he see all “Franks” and Crusaders under the same
light? If you examine the Muslim chronicler „Imad al-Din al-Isfahani’s account on the victory of Salah al-Din”s (Saladin) over the
Franks at Jerusalem, how would you depict Salah al-Din?

November 25: THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY
WEEK 14
November 30
Mongol Invasions; the legacy of outside non-Muslim invasions – Continued Topics: Mongol invasions and the collapse of the medieval Islamic world.
Readings: Egger v.1, pp. 172-198

December 2
Primary Source Readings posted on E-Learning: The Mongol Empire and the collapse of the Islamic East.
Study Questions:
1. When reading the source selection titled “The Mongol Empire and the collapse of the Islamic East: Anonymous Mongol author, the Secret History of the Mongols, written ca.1230s, both Chinese and Mongol versions” answer these questions: What does the conflict between Temujin (Chinggis Khan) and Jamuhra reveal about the political and social context of Mongol life before their unification in 1206? How did Chinggis Khan’s decision to attack eastern Islamic lands spark political controversy among his own people and what does this tell us about the political and social dimensions of the Mongol interests in history? Do you think that the author of the Secret History has a definitive perspective in his reporting on Chinggis Khan’s life? If so, what is it and how does it affect the history?
2. When reading the source selection titled “The Mongol Empire and the collapse of the Islamic East: Muslim historians Rashid al-Din (d.1317) and „Ala al-Din „Ata Malik al-Juvayni (d.1283) write on Mongol conquests and their subsequent rule over the Near East and Eurasia” answer these questions: How do the Muslim historians present the Mongol conquests in their respective works? Do you see any tension? What intelligent insights can we gather on the nature of Mongol rule over the eastern regions of Islamic world during the late 13th and early 14th century? What are the main differences between the Muslim perspectives on the Mongol activities from those expressed in the Secret History?
3. When reading the source selection titled “The Mongol Empire and the collapse of the Islamic East: Various Russian chronicles on the Mongol conquests and their subsequent administration; the account of Roman Catholic emissary Willem van Ruysbroeck (d.1295) and his journey to the Mongol capital at Karakorum in his Itinerarium” answer these questions: What was the reaction of the conquered Russians to the Mongol conquests and do the sources reveal a change over time in the relationship between the two groups? What was Mongol society like in Karakorum during the 1250s and what was Friar Ruysbroeck’s reaction to it? What subjects interested him most? How did the great Mongol Khan Mongke (referred to as Mangu, d. 1259) describe his beliefs and ideas to Ruysbroeck and are there problems in the interpretation of this narrative?

Reassigned Day:

December 7:
Post Mongol World and the disastrous 14th century
Topics: Contours of the post-Mongol world; Mamluk Egypt and Anatolia; The disastrous fourteenth century in world history and the end of the Pax Mongolica
1. When reading the source selection titled "Contours of the post-Mongol World: Egypt and Asia Minor, Shams al-Din Ahmad-e Aflaki"s (d.1360) hagiography of Baha" al-Din-e Valad (d.1231), a refugee from the Mongol invasions in Asia Minor, from his Manaqeb-e Arifia" answer these questions: How does the author"s biography of Baha' al-Din-e Valad reflect upon the experience of those displaced by the Mongol invasion, and how does he assign blame for the disaster? How does this biography reflect on the relationship between religious and political leadership in the post-Mongol world? What role does Baha" al-Din-e Valad"s son Jalal al-Din Rumi play in the narrative and why might this source pose challenges for the historian?
2. When reading the source selection titled "Contours of the post-Mongol World: Writings and Poetry of Mevlana Jalal al-Din Rumi (d.1273), famed Sufi mystic of Asia Minor under the later Rum Saljuqs" answer these questions: How did the historical context of the post-Mongol world influence Rumi"s poetry and why do you think he is still a very popular figure? What are the points in Rumi"s stories and how did they pose a challenge to the established wisdom and traditions of the Islamic world up to that time? What kinds of thinking or policies did Rumi advocate with regard to the Mongol Ilkhanid powers sweeping in from the east?
3. When reading the source selection titled "Contours of the post-Mongol World: Mamluk scholar Taqi al-Din b. Taymiyya"s (d.1328) and Ahmad b. Ali al-Maqrizi"s (d.1442) work on the Mamluk economics, Ighathat al-ummah bi-kashf al-ghummah (Help for the Community by Examining its Distress)" answer these questions: What do you think the purpose and goal of Ibn Taymiyya"s letter to the King of Cyprus was and how would you characterize the tone of the letter? What does Ibn Taymiyya introduce the subject of the Mongols into the letter and what role do they play in his arguments? What kinds of economic and political problems did Egypt have under the Mamluk rulers from 1260 up to al-Maqrizi"s own time (ca. 1405)? How do you regard his assessment of the problems?
4. When reading the source selection titled "Collapse of the Islamic World: Fourteenth century disasters: Various sources on the impact of the Black Death in Egypt, North Africa and England; North African historian and sociologist Ibn Khaldun"s (d.1406) al-Muqaddima (the Introduction to History), written ca. 1370s" answer these questions: What kind of impact did the Black Death have on the psychologies of both elites and ordinary people in the region of Egypt and North Africa? What role do the Bedouin, or nomadic peoples play in Ibn Khaldun"s ideas about history and what role does the idea of "group feeling and solidarity" play in his thought processes? How is Ibn Khaldun"s work (he is regarded as the father of the discipline of sociology) a product of the fourteenth century in which he lived? What does the comparison of the charts of respective Black Death pandemics in England and Egypt reveal? How do you explain what you see?
5. When reading the source selection titled "Collapse of the Islamic World: Fourteenth century disasters: Selection from Persian chronicler Ahmad b. "Arabshah"s (d. 1450) biography of Timur-e Leng (Tamerlane, the lame)" answer these questions: How did Timur-e Leng establish himself as a regional power in the
area of Transoxiana (modern day Uzbekistan and Afghanistan)? How did he defeat the Golden Horde in Central Asia? How did Ibn „Arabshah view Timur-e Leng and why do you think he took the position he did?

6. When reading the source selection titled “Collapse of the Islamic World: Fourteenth century disasters: Various sources on Timur-e Leng”s reign and activities: Timur”s historian Nizam al-Din Shami (fl.ca. 1392); the historian Ibn Khaldun (d.1406) and the embassy of the Spanish diplomat Ruy Gonzales de Clavijo (d.1412)” answer these questions: How do Nizam al-Din Shami (writing around 1392) and Ibn Khaldun”s views on Timur-e Leng differ from those of Ibn „Arabshah and why? How did Ibn Khaldun fit Timur-e Leng into his theories of history? What was the Spanish emissary Clavijo”s impression of Timur”s court and capital city at Samarqand, and did his impression differ from that of his Muslim contemporaries?

December 10 Friday: FINAL EXAM, 12:30-2:30PM