

**PRESIDENTIAL SEMINAR 315:
THE SHAPING OF MUSLIM IDENTITIES IN THE MIDDLE EAST**

Spring 2011

Tuesdays 1:00-2:50 pm, Hatfield Hall 206

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COURSE DESCRIPTION: The story of Islam unfolded in an Arabian Peninsula accommodating multiple belief systems and forms of worship but was necessarily refashioned many times as it interacted with the diverse cultures and empires embraced by a geography stretching from the Indian subcontinent to the southern Mediterranean. This course focuses on what may accurately be described as Islam's many religious identities in the Middle East because more than any other part of the world, it is the Middle East that imprinted on Islam its many distinctive characteristics, and it is Islam that stamped these lands as a distinctive region. What is it to be a Muslim? Is it a matter of creed, of culture, of family, of blood? Does it prescribe a particular relationship to language, to place, to a politics and/or to a definite set of social relations? How were Muslims taught to relate to Jews and Christians who lived with them across the cities and villages of the Middle East? ***How did they intermingle with these so-called 'people of the book'? How did political encounters between Islam and the West and between Christians, Jews, and Muslims influence their separate religious identities?*** Muslim discourse started out as the business of the elite but it has become the obsession of the masses. How have class, education, and demography changed Islamic discourse and informed new kinds of religious identities in the Middle East. How did Muslim respond to the challenge of modernization? How does globalization and the expanded utilization of its technologies—Facebook, twitter and other social networks—affect religious identities and shape the conversation around “traditionalism” vs. “reform”? Finally, we will probe how the Middle East conflict structures Muslim identities.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS: Seminar participants will be expected to lead one seminar and write a twelve to fifteen page paper. Students will be grouped in pairs for purposes of leading seminar discussions and will be required to select one or two short essays for class to read before the discussion. Topics may include recent Islamist

movements— Hamas, Hizbullah or earlier groups such as the Muslim Brethren. Students may also want to explore some of the early women's groups that emerged in the early twentieth century. In each case, students should attempt to read some of the descriptions of these movements written by the participants themselves to be able to describe and deconstruct the discourse and ascertain what these particular groups drew from their religious culture and history. Students should also examine what factors shaped the discourse and how this discourse informed how these people understood themselves and where they belonged in the world.

TEXTBOOKS:

- Amin Maalour, *In the Name of Identity* (Penguin Books, 2003).
- Fred Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers* (Harvard University Press, 2010).
- Isobel Coleman, *Paradise beneath Her Feet* (Random House, 2010).
- Roxanne Euben & Muhammad Qasim Zaman (eds.), *Princeton Readings in Islamist Thought* (Princeton University Press, 2009).
- Irshad Manji, *The Trouble with Islam Today* (St. Martin's Griffin, 2005).
- Other readings on the course Moodle site.

REQUIREMENTS & GRADE POLICY: The grade will be calculated on the basis of

1. Attendance and class participation (25%).
2. Twelve-Fifteen page research paper (75%).

CLASS SCHEDULE

January 25: What is Identity?

- A. Maalouf, *In the Name of Identity*.

February 1: The Muhammad Movement

- F. Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers*, pp. 1-144 (Chapters 1-3).

February 8: The Formation of Islamic Identities

- F. Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers*, pp. 145-224 (Chapters 4-5)

February 15: Feminism & Islam: the Issues

- I. Manji, *The Trouble With Islam Today*.

- A. Hirsi Ali, *The Caged Virgin*, pp. 9-70 and 101-110 (Moodle)

February 22: Feminism & Islam: Reconstructing the Past

- I. Coleman, *Paradise beneath Her Feet*, pp. 3-125 and 203-275.

- R.L. Euben & M.Q. Zaman (eds), *Princeton Readings in Islamist Thought*, Part III, pp. 249-317

March 1: Revival

- R.L. Euben & M.Q. Zaman (eds), *Princeton Readings in Islamist Thought*, Part I, pp. 49-78.

- A. Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age*, pp. 67-83 (Moodle).

- Tahtawi in Ch. Kurzman, *Modernist Islam*, pp. 31-39 (Moodle).

March 8: Islam as State

- R.L. Euben & M.Q. Zaman (eds), *Princeton Readings in Islamist Thought*, Part II, pp. 155-180 and 207-245

- A. Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age*, pp. 130-160 (Moodle).

- Muhammad Abduh in Ch. Kurzman, *Modernist Islam*, pp. 50-60 (Moodle).

March 22: Genesis of Militant Islam

- R.L. Euben & M.Q. Zaman (eds), *Princeton Readings in Islamist Thought*, Part I, pp. 129-152 and Part IV, pp. 321-402.

March 29: Global Jihad

- R.L. Euben & M.Q. Zaman (eds), *Princeton Readings in Islamist Thought*, Parts IV and V, pp. 403-471.

April 5: Research Reports

April 12: Research Reports

April 19: Research Reports

April 26: Research Reports