

**Honor-Shame:
Middle Ages, Middle East**
Richard Landes

This course examines the dynamics of “honor-shame” cultures generally and then applies such insights in understanding their role in the European Middle Ages and the contemporary world. Students are expected to overcome the cognitive egocentrism of Western beliefs and understand how other cultures can emphasize significantly different values and social interactions.

The purpose of this course is to examine the role of a relatively underestimated phenomenon in historical investigations, what anthropologists call “honor-shame” culture. Although we will address various definitions of the problem, I will use the following one for warrior honor-shame: *a culture in which it is not only permitted and expected, but even required to shed someone else’s blood for the sake of one’s own honor*. In such societies, “self-help” justice (i.e., personal or family revenge, feud, duel and vendetta,) play a prominent role in the resolution of disputes. This contrasts markedly with modern civil societies, which raise the threshold for resort to “legitimate” personal violence, and seek to resolve disputes in courts governed by a consensual discourse of fairness. Of course all cultures deal with the universal desire to seek honor and avoid shame. The primary distinction, then, revolves around public (peer group) conception of acceptable behavior. This course seeks to examine both politico-legal structures of honor-shame cultures, and the psycho-social dimensions.

The course divides into three major segments

- Honor-shame culture, conceptual and theoretical concerns
- Honor-shame culture in the European Middle Ages
- Honor-shame culture in the contemporary world

The first section addresses the broad conceptual issues, drawing from writings in anthropology, psychology, sociology and history. Here we will look at a wide range of examples from tribal cultures. The second looks at various aspects of medieval culture from this perspective, analyzing both relatively straightforward topics (early medieval tribal warrior culture, feuds and vendettas) as well as the uneasy and complex interaction of Christianity with these prevailing lay norms. This section concludes with a brief look at some of the ways in which Western culture began to domesticate honor-violence and move towards modern civil societies. Finally we will look at Arab culture, considering the role of honor-shame concerns in the Arab reaction to modern western societies, and in particular in the Arab-Israeli conflict. This section grapples with Saïd’s hostility to honor-shame analysis in *Orientalism*. The class will conclude with a comparison of the prevailing IR models explaining the dynamics of the conflict (security and economic gain) and those generated by an understanding of honor-shame cultures.

Course Bibliography:

Marc Weiner, *Rule of the Clan*

Phillip Salzman, *Culture and Conflict*

David Pryce-Jones, *The Closed Circle*

Lee Smith, *The Strong Horse*

Anthony Kwame, Appiah, *Honor Code and Moral Revolutions*

SYLLABUS

Week I: Honor-Shame Culture vs. Dynamics: Some Definitions

Introduction: *Liberal Cognitive Egocentrism and tribal values*

Readings: Landes, *Medievalist's Guide to 21st Century*, Chapters 2, 3.

The Rule of the Clan

Readings: Weizman, *Rule of the Clan* ch 1-3; Creighton, "Revisiting Shame and Guilt Cultures: A Forty Year Pilgrimage" *Ethos*, 18:3 (September, 1990): 279-307;
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/640338>.

Week II: Honor among Men: Tribal Warrior Societies

Warrior's Honor

Readings: Wrangham, *Demonic Males*, ch. 1, 4*; Salzman, *Culture and Conflict*, chs 3-4; Pitt-Rivers, "Honour and Social Status"*; Sagan, *Lust to Annihilate*, chs 3-4*;

Self-Help Justice and Vendetta

Readings: Weizman, *Rule of Clan*, ch. 4; Boehm, *Blood Vengeance*, chaps. 4-5, 10-12;* Jared Diamond, "[Revenge](#)"; Blok, Chapter 6*; Stetkevych, *Mute Immortals Speak*, ch. 2.

Week III: Gender and Shame Murders

Gender and Honor:

Readings: Stetkevych, *Mute Immortals Speak*, ch. 5*; Pryce-Jones, *The Closed Circle*, chap. 5; Wilson, "[Patriarchy: Feminist Theory](#)"

Honor Killings/Shame Murders

Readings: Sev'er and Yurdakul, "[Culture of Honor, Culture of Change](#)"; [Case Study: "Honour" Killings and Blood Feuds](#); Larry Derfner, "[Family, Honor, Killing](#)"; James Emery, "[Reputation is Everything: Honor Killing among the Palestinians](#)"; Aujilla, "Conceptualizing 'Honour' Killings in Canada: An Extreme Form of Domestic Violence?"; Phyllis Chesler, "[Are Honor Killings Simply Domestic Violence?](#)"

Week IV: Monotheism and Honor-Shame culture

Hebrew Bible and the Jews

Bible, Genesis 26, 33:18-34, 37-38, Exodus, 20, Leviticus 19, Deuteronomy 19; Landes, "Genesis and Honor-Shame"*; Berman, *Created Equal*, pp. 51-80*; Seth Schwartz, *Were the Jews a Mediterranean Society*, chapter 5.

New Testament and the Christians

Matthew 5-6 (Sermon on the Mount); I and II Corinthians; Revelation.
Justin Martyr, "Dialogue with Trypho"*; Jerome Neyrey, *Honor and Shame in the Gospel of Matthew*, chaps 8-10.

Week V: Christian and Muslim Honor, Supersessionism, and Invidious Identity Formation

Envy and Zero-Sum Emotions

Readings: Schoek, *Envy*, chap. 1, 3, 5*; Foster, "Anatomy of Envy"*; ****Envy and the Greeks*,

Suggested: "Peasant Society and the Image of the Limited Good"*; Douglass C. North, John Joseph Wallis, and Barry R. Weingast, "[The Natural State: The Political-Economy Of Non-Development](#)."

Religious Envy and Supersessionism

Vlach, "Supersessionism"*; Bat-Ye'or, *Dhimmitude*, ch. **; Beker, *The Chosen*, ch. 3*; Guy Stroumsa, "[From anti-Judaism to anti-Semitism in Early Christianity?](#)"

Week VI: Imperial Monotheism

Iconic Monotheism: One God one Emperor

Readings: Eusebius, *Praise of Constantine**; Cranz, "Kingdom and Polity in Eusebius"*; Drake, "Lambs into Lions"*;
Suggested: MacMullen, "Judicial Savagery in the Roman Empire"*; Lendon, *Empire of Honor*, ch. 30-106.

Imperial Christianity and the Germanic Warrior Tribes

Readings: Tacitus, *Germania*, Selections*; Gregory of Tours, "Sichar and Chramnesind"*; Bede, Selections*; Miller, *Bloodtaking and Peacemaking*, chap. 6 (pp. 179-220)*; Weiner, *Rule of the Clan*, ch. 5; James Russell, *Germanization of Christianity*, chap. 5, and pp.148-54*; Ward Perkins, *The Fall of Rome*, ch. *
Suggested: John Chance, *Honor and Shame in the World of the Bible* (Semeia 68 [1994]), 139-61*. Duby, *Early Growth of the European Economy*, Part I, chap. 3*

Week VII: High Middle Ages 1000-1400

The Peace of God and Demotic Religiosity

Readings: Peace of God Documents*; Brown, "License to Kill"*; Landes, "Demotic Religiosity"; Weiner, chap. 5; Geoff Koziol, "Monks, Feuds, and Making Peace in Eleventh Century Flanders"*

Vengeance, The King's Peace and the Law

Readings: Song of Roland; *Vengeance in the Middle Ages*, pp.161-210*; Weiner, ch. 9; Salimbene, "The Great Alleluia"*;
Suggested: Thompson, *Revival Preachers*, ch. 6, 9*.

Week VIII: The West Transcends Honor-Shame

Renaissance and Honor Problematicized

Readings: view [Falstaff on honor](#); George Jones, *Honor Bright*, pp. 59-74; Bowman, *Honor: A History*, pp. 41-66*; Alice Shalvi, "'Honor' in Troilus and Cressida"*
Suggested: Casselas, "[Social Function of the Renaissance Concept of Honor](#)"; Regine Vital, "The Dualities of Hamlet"*; Burke, "[Insult and Blasphemy in Early Modern Italy](#)."

Democracy as a Rejection of Honor Society

Readings: Montesquieu, *Spirit of the Laws*, 3.6, 4.2, 28.17-25; De Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, II.2.19; II.3.18*; Appiah, *Honor Code*, chs. 1, 3; Weiner, ch. 9; Bowman, "Democracy: Honor Modernized," *Honor*;

Suggested: Clarke, "Finding and founding liberty: Montesquieu's 'Gothic thesis' of modern liberty"*

Week IX: Arab Culture and Honor-Shame

From the Tent to the Town: Bedouin Culture and Arab Culture

Readings: Smith, *Strong Horse*, Part I; Shrinkwrapped, "The Arab Mind: Parts I-XVI"; Lila Abu-Lughod, "[Zones of Theory in the Anthropology of the Arab World](#)," Suggested: Patai, *The Arab Mind*, chaps. 1-7; Elaine Hagopian, "[Review of Patai](#)"

Journal of Palestine Studies, 1977; Ellen Feghali, "[Arab Cultural Communications Patterns](#)"; Lazar Berman, "[Understanding Arab Culture](#)," *Small Wars Journal*; Brian Whitacker, "[Its best use is as a doorstep](#)," [Review of Patai]; Ann Marlow, "[Sex, and The Arab Mind](#)"; Sania Hamady, *Temperament and Character of the Arabs*, ch. 2*

Islam and Arab Honor Culture

Readings: Quran, Selections*; Patai, *Arab Mind*, chap. 9, "[There is no Dignity except Islam](#)"; Landes, "The Apocalyptic Origins of Islam"*; Bowman, *Honor*, ch. 1; Smith, *Strong Horse*, Part II.

Suggested: Bat Ye'or, *Islam and Dhimmitude*, chaps. 2-3*; Harris, chap. 11*; Goodwin, *The Price of Honor*, chap. 2 (pp. 29-46)*;

Week X: The Challenge of the West, the Challenge of Zionism

What Went Wrong? Modernity and the Humiliation of the Arab-Muslim World

Reading: Pryce-Jones, *The Closed Circle*, chap. 1-2; Said, *Orientalism*, pp. 1-49; Sean Yom, "[Civil Society and the Arab World](#)"; Ali Abootalebi, "[Civil Society, Democracy and the Middle East](#)"; Bernard Lewis, *What Went Wrong?* chap. 3-4; Suggested: David Landes, *Wealth and Poverty of Nations*, chap. 24*; [UN Development Report Arab World](#), Overview and look at the rest of the report.

The Limits of the Tolerable: The Naqba as Unbearable Humiliation

Readings: Documents on 1948 War*; Harkabi, *Arab Attitudes to Israel*, chap. 7*; Landes, "[The Emotional Nakbah](#)"; "[Documenting the Catastrophe](#)"; Edward Said, "[Israel 50 Years On](#)"; Ephraim Karsh, "[Rights and Wrongs](#)"; "[Refugees Forever?](#)"; Benny Morris, *Righteous Victims*, pp. 252-69; Fawaz Turki, *The Disinherited*, ch. 2*; Smith, *Strong Horse*, ch. 11.

Suggested: [Palestine Remembered](#), Nakba Online;

Week XI: Hyper-Asabiyya and Western Incomprehension

Hyper-Asabiyya and the Pathologies of Honor-Shame Culture

Akhbar Ahmed, "Hyper-Asabiyya"*; "[The Palestinian Mystique](#)," pp. 39-53; Jessica Stern, "[Beneath the Bombast and Bombs, a Caldron of Humiliation](#)"; Suzanne Fields, "[Male Humiliation, Muslim Rage](#)"; Phyllis Chessler, "[The Psychoanalytic Roots of Islamic Terrorism](#)"; visit [this site](#) and look at some of the [case studies](#).

Cognitive Egocentrism and the Logic(s) of Oslo

Readings: *Concise History of Arab-Israeli Conflict*, chaps.10-11; Eisenberg and Caplan, "Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process in Historical Perspective"*; Husseini, "[Interview](#)"; Fishman, "[Oslo Ten Years Later](#)"; Kenneth Levin, *The Oslo Syndrome*, :

XII: The (Predictable) Failure of Oslo and the Oslo Intifada

Dead End to Negotiations: The Failure of Camp David

Readings: *Concise History*, chap. 12; Itamar Marcus, "[Rape, Murder, Violence and War for Allah Against the Jews: Summer 2000 on Palestinian Television](#)"; Agha and Malley vs. Barak and Morris in the *NYRB*, [Part I](#); [Part II](#); [Part III](#); Robert Wright, "[Was Arafat the Problem?](#)"; Samuels, "[In a Ruined Country](#)"; Jimmy Carter, *Peace or Apartheid**; Landes, "Paradigms and the Middle East Conflict"*

Pallywood, Al Durah, and the Politics of Incitement

View Pallywood, *Al Durah: Making of an Icon*, and *Icon of Hatred* at [Second Draft](#).

Week XIII: From Intifada to Global Jihad: The Dynamics of Global Culture

T: *The Mind of Jihad*

Landes, "Enraged Millennialism"*; Hawali, *The Day of Wrath**; Murawiec, *Mind of Jihad*, "Manichaeism Tribalism"*; Cook, *Understanding Jihad*, "Radical Islam and Martyrdom"*; Wictorowiczq, "[The New Global Threat](#)"

Th: *Eurabia: Praeparatio Caliphatae*

Readings: Huntington, *Clash of Civilizations*, TBA; Ahmad, "[Islam and the West](#)"; Ahmed, *Islam Under Siege*, TBA; Harris, chap. 13-14; Bat Ye'or, *Eurabia*, Selections*

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Week XIV: Whither Global Culture?

Invasive, Honor-Shame, Cognitive War

Victimology: Yielding to Honor-Shame Culture

Honor/Shame Bibliography

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<http://www.unl.edu/rhames/courses/war/diamond-vengeance.pdf>.
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