

RHODE ISLAND COLLEGE

Department of History

History 340

The Islamic World: Muhammad to the 18th Century

Fall Semester, 2009

Prof. Thomas
Office: Gaige 304
Email: dthomas@ric.edu

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456-8765

Meetings, Office Hours and E-mail: History 340 meets MW 11-12:20 in Gaige 211. My office hours are M. 1-2 & 4-5 W. 4-5, TTh. 11-12 & 4-5. I am happy to make appointments for other times. My office phone is: 456-8765; the department phone is 456-8039. You can also get in touch with me at any time through my Blackboard/webct email. In turn I will use your RIC email address to send messages through blackboard/webct to the class or to individual students.

Catalog Description. *The emergence of Islamic civilization in the Middle East is traced from the appearance of Islam in the seventh century to the 18th century. Emphasis is placed on the interrelationships of cultural, religious, institutional and political aspects, particularly their change over time. Primary focus is on the diversity of phenomena rather than one geographic area or group of Muslims.*

Course Purpose and Policies: History 340 surveys the formation and development of a new historical tradition,--the Islamic--tracing it from its origins in the seventh century C.E (Common Era) through a point of achievement by the thirteenth century where it would stand comparison with any other as a comprehensive pattern of civilization, to the point in the eighteenth century where it was beginning to be challenged by an increasingly powerful and expanding Western European civilization. As a one semester survey it cannot be comprehensive but organizes the material thematically within five chronological periods or units: **1) The formative period, ca. 610-950; 2) A civilization created and challenged, ca. 950-1260. 3) Mongol hegemony, ca. 1260-1405; 4) Muslim ascendancy and the Three Great Empires, 1405-1689. 5) Challenge, reform and growing weakness 1689-1798.** Within this chronological framework we will emphasize several themes: **1) piety, 2) government (or politics), 3) social and cultural diversity, 4) creativity, and,5) responses to change.**

Course Organization and Requirements: The course is organized and presented through the College's learning management system, "**Blackboard**", as *History of the Muslim World: from Muhammad to the Eighteenth Century*. All materials other than two brief texts will be available through blackboard. Quizzes and essays, will be taken and submitted through Blackboard. The goal in using Blackboard is to provide students

with web-based reading materials, more direct and substantial opportunities to enhance their learning, outside of the classroom, and to support a discussion format in class. An extensive orientation to using Blackboard and the discussion format will be given in the first week.

The material covered in readings –texts, primary materials, articles and films—whether through Blackboard or “traditional” books will be the basis of class participation, tests and essays. Class participation includes attendance, preparation, and regular informed participation in discussion. Discussions will take place each week primarily in response to questions posed in conjunction with the readings. There will be 10-12 specific discussions; four to five of the discussions will be based on brief 2-3 page précis and one discussion based on a longer, 4-5 page essay. The remainder will be based on prepared responses to questions. Discussions will be organized primarily as group discussions though individual responses will be asked for with the group format. Please. There will be a mid-term and a final consisting of multiple choice, identification, and essay questions. Graduate students are expected to meet graduate level course requirements and graduate students will meet with the instructor to discuss these.

Students are expected to attend and to be prepared for each class. This includes participation in class discussions by contributing either questions, answers, or informed comments. As you will note in the *Evaluation* section participation in discussion and oral presentations are an important component of your grade. The criteria for discussion is discussed further in the handout on *Discussion* found at the Class Materials page of the webct course. We will go over it in class. I expect that each member of the class will prepare her/his own work and will give credit (through citation) to the ideas of others. By assigning your name to your work, you admit that you have not used material without attributing its source. Any violation of this policy will be treated in accordance with the College’s policy on Academic Dishonesty. Please be sure you know what the policy is. Regular attendance with no un-excused absences is expected. Extended absences can result in a failing grade. Absences for legitimate reasons are excused, but they must be in accordance with the provisions of the *Student Handbook*.

Evaluation: the following weights are given for work done in this course.

- 5/6 discussions based on readings 25%
- 5/6 précis with discussion 50%
- Mid-term 10%
- Final 15%

Total 100%

Course Value: the foregoing description is intended to give you an overview of the course and its requirements. You should give the same consideration to your interest, willingness, and ability to commit to these requirements. The study of the history of the Muslim World, that is the study of *Islamic* History, is important, particularly at this point in its historical development, and at this juncture in the common history of humankind.

Currently there are about **one billion 300 million Muslims**, making Islam the second largest religious system after Christianity, but Islam may also be the fastest growing religious system due to rates of natural increase and most reliable demographic projections indicate that Islam could become the largest religious system on the planet by 2025. Additionally, the concept of the Islamic state, the attempts to reconcile the teachings of Islam with the mundane, everyday needs of secular government, and the division between Sunni and Shia sects, developments which occurred during the period under study, have an immediate bearing on our own contemporary world, in which the activities and ideas of Islamic revival movements are increasingly influential and threatening, even to the US.. This period of Islamic history has thus acquired an importance far beyond the boundaries of faith and religious commitment as well as specialized scholarship and academic requirements.

Please note: This course is given credit for the non-Western requirement in the History major and for the various Secondary Ed. majors and programs, but it is not restricted nor directed to these alone. It is an upper-level history course intended to be comprehensible and doable for undergraduates and graduate students from all disciplines and programs who have completed most of their General Education requirements, or in the case of history/social sciences/sec.ed. students, History 200. However, it has no intellectual prerequisites other than the ability to read critically and write academic discourse clearly.

Materials: The major text and most supplementary readings are on-line. They do not cost anything to use but time. Other required books can be purchased most easily at the *Campus Store*. Other materials will be distributed in class or on reserve in Adams.

- *The Islamic world to 1600.*

http://www.ucalgary.ca/applied_history/tutor/islam/index.html

The Internet Islamic History Sourcebook.

<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/islam/islamsbook.html>

Islam and Islamic Studies Resources

<http://www.uga.edu/islam/home.html>

- Other internet source URLs will be provided as the semester proceeds
- Bloom & Blair, *Islam a Thousand Years of Faith and Power*
- Itzkowitz, Norman. *Ottoman Empire and Islamic Tradition*
- Other readings, primary and secondary, available though Blackboard or on electronic reserve at Adams.
- Film: *Islam: Empire of Faith*

Course Calendar

Note: The course calendar below provides only a summary of which units/chapters will be covered during which week and the dates that discussion essays are due. A week by week detailed description of specific use of the on-line study system, discussion topics, the essay topics and questions to be addressed will be distributed. These will also be posted on blackboard/webct. You must be sure to check on a regular basis. Other than the first week, students should plan to finish the weekly readings and preparation for discussion by the first class of each week.

The Formative Period, 610-950

1. Week of August 31-Sept. 2: Orientation to using the Blackboard system, discussion format, historical background. Read the on-line *Islamic World ...*(hereafter 'IW') *Islamic Beginnings*, Blair & Bloom (hereafter, B&B), chapter 1 &2. Sample discussion
2. Week of Sept. 9. Muhammad, God's Messenger. Read 'IW', finish *Islamic Beginnings*; B&B, chapter 3. **Essay Based Discussion on Muhammad**
- 3: Week of Sept. 14-16. Muhammad's immediate successors and central Islamic beliefs and rituals. Read IW, *the Caliphate and the First Dynasty*; B&B, chapter 4 & 5. Discussion on Islamic beliefs and rituals

A civilization created and challenged, ca. 950-1260

4. Week of Sept. 21-23: Conquest and expansion, civil war, schism and revolution. Read IW, *The Fractured Caliphate and the Regional Dynasties*; B&B, chapter 6. Discussion on Expansion and Conquest.
5. Week of Sept 28-30: The Muslim *Ummah* and the issue of political authority. Finish IW, *The Fractured Caliphate and the Regional Dynasties*; Supplementary Readings TBA. **Essay Based Discussion on Political and Religious Authority.**
6. Week of Oct. 5-7 The Golden Age, economic dynamism and intellectual creativity. Read IW, *The Arts, Learning and Knowledge*; B&B, chapter 7 & 8. Discussion on Cultural Creativity during the Golden Age.
7. Week of Oct. 13-14: Turks, Berbers, schisms and Crusaders. Supplementary readings. **Mid-term quiz.**

Mongol hegemony, ca. 1260-1405

8. Week of Oct. 19-21: Mongols and Muslims. Read IW, *The Mongol Invasions* B&B, chapter 9. **Essay Based Discussion due**

9. Week of Oct. 26-28: Recovery and expansion . Read B&B, chapter 11, supplementary readings TBA.

Muslim ascendancy and the three great empires, the Ottoman, the Safavid, and the Mughal, ca, 1405-1750.

10. Week of Nov. 2-4: Muslim ascendancy-the Ottoman Empire. Readings, IW, *Rise of The Three Great Empires: the Ottoman Empire*, Itzkowitz (hereafter, 'I'), chapters 1 & 2. **Essay Based Discussion due.**
11. Week of November 9 (**no classes on Wednesday, Nov. 11**): Muslim Ascendancy Iran. Continue to read IW, *Rise of The Three Great Empires: the Safavid Empire*. Discussion TBA.
11. Week of Nov. 16-18: Muslim Ascendancy –Central Asia and India. Continue to read IW, *Rise of The Three Great Empires: the Mughal Empire*. **Essay Based Discussion due(?)**

Challenge, reform and growing weakness 1689-1798

13. Week of Nov. 23-25.: Weakness and Reform, challenge and Response: the example of the Ottoman Empire. Read Itzkowitz, chapters 3 & 4. Discussion TBA
14. Week of Nov. 30-Dec. 2.: Weakness and Reform, challenge and Response: the example of the Ottoman Empire. Finish Itzkowitz, chapters 3 & 4. **Final Discussion Essay due**
15. Week of Dec. 7-9.: The beginnings of descent from ascendancy—the world turned upside down. Discussion TBA

Final Exam Scheduled either on Dec. 14 or 16