# Women in Islam

# Religion/WSTU 3481 D80

# SAMPLE SYLLABUS AND SCHEDULE

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**\*\*this course is taught asynchronously\*\***

# Course description

This online course will investigate gender identity and relationships between men and women in Islam theologically, historically, culturally, and in consideration of political, social, and economic developments. We will also look at some of the ways in which Muslim women have constructed, reassessed, and articulated Islam and their place within. A variety of source materials, including the foundational texts of Islam, historical, narrative and ethnographic accounts, film and other visual sources, and a range of women’s studies scholarship, will provide the framework for narrated Power Point lectures. Lectures will investigate how constructions, articulations, and understandings of women in Islam emerge in different aspects of the lives of women and men in Muslim countries and communities around the world. Towards the end of the course, we will engage in an online discussion (or series of them) with one or more Muslim women activists. The discussion(s) will center on questions about studying and understanding Islam from multiple perspectives, and will expose you to some of the meanings of being Muslim today, given current geopolitical realities and trends.

# Course goals

1. to appreciate the diversity of women’s voices in Islam and their experiences as Muslims in different parts of the world - individually, culturally, and according to their particular social location;
2. To begin to develop the self-awareness that will help you to understand how your own life experiences, biases, and pre-existing ideas about Islam may affect your reception and understanding of the material we read and the issues we discuss/debate;
3. to sharpen basic recall and critical thinking skills

**Learning Outcomes:**

**at the end of this course, students will be able to**

1. demonstrate a basic comprehension of how women’s roles, place, rights, and obligations have been discussed and understood in the Muslim world at various critical junctures in the history of Islam;
2. critically analyze the texts we read, with understanding of the author’s main argument(s) and perspectives;
3. compare and contrast different views on women in Islam
4. communicate some of the ways in which economic, social, political, and religious changes affecting Muslims have shaped their understanding, and expression, of gender identity and relationships in Islam

# Required texts for purchase

1. Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (Yale U Press, 1992)
2. Susan Rasmussen, *Those who Touch: Tuareg Medicine Women in Anthropological Perspective* (Northern Illinois U Press, 2006)
3. Tanvi Nandini Islam, *Bright Lines: A Novel* (Penguin/Random House Books, 2015)

# Additional Required Reading is located on Blackboard, in the folders marked "Files-Required Reading" (Bb: = reading located on Blackboard)

**…You are responsible for completing all assigned reading listed in the syllabus on or before the day it is listed.**

**Assignments and grade percentages (see descriptions below):**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Percentage of total grade** | **Assignment** |
| **WRITING AND DISCUSSION** | |
| 40% | Four (4) open discussions (worth 10% each) |
| 20% | Two 2-page response papers (worth 10% each) |
| 15% | One 4-5 page paper |
| **PRESENTATION** | |
| 15% | Narrated Power Point Presentation |
| **QUIZZES AND EXAMS** | |
| ungraded | Test your knowledge about Islam and women |
| 10% | final exam |

**Assignments: details**

# There will be a variety of writing assessments:

* Four (4) are open discussions, using the discussion board, in which you post a minimum 2-paragraph message in response to two of the themes we have been discussing that week. I will comment on the quality of these discussions and post your grade within 3 business days of the assignment due date.
* Two (2) are 2-page responses to specific questions I post on the discussion board. These questions are directly related to one or more of the reading selections for the class.
* One (1) is a longer report of 4-5 pages on a topic you select from a short list I will provide.

Power Point Presentation

* For this assignment you are required to design and post a Power Point Presentation in relation to the themes explored in section VII of the class: “Debates on Islam, Gender, and Women: Post-Modern Predicaments”. You must narrate the slides in addition to providing citations and notes to support your data. The presentation must consist of at least 12 narrated slides (including title slide). It should contain 7-12 minutes of narration. You may select a topic for this presentation from a list I will provide, or choose your own, subject to instructor’s prior approval. (As an alternative to using Power Point you may use Prezi (download at <http://prezi.com>; please don’t use Keynote, as I always have problems opening those files).

Final Exam

* The final exam is open book and covers key themes we have explored throughout the class.

# POLICIES AND SUPPORT SERVICES

**A. Academic Integrity**

I personally support the GW Code of Academic Integrity. It states: “Academic dishonesty is defined as cheating of any kind, including misrepresenting one's own work, taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and without appropriate authorization, and the fabrication of information.” For the remainder of the code, see: <http://www.gwu.edu/~ntegrity/code.html>

**B. *University Counseling Center (UCC) 202-994-5300***<http://counselingcenter.gwu.edu/>

The University Counseling Center (UCC) offers 24/7 assistance and referral to address students' personal, social, career, and study skills problems. Services for students include

* crisis and emergency mental health consultations
* confidential assessment, counseling services (individual and small group), and referrals

**C. Netiquette**

While it is important for you to be able to express your opinions, no matter whether or how much they differ from others, you should remain civil, professional, and courteous at all times. Each person who writes will have his or her post read by other (real!) people. It is sometimes easy to misinterpret what others are saying, so don’t rush to conclusions. Don’t attack others for their opinions, although I readily encourage you to express your disagreements. If you need clarification on something I or someone else wrote, just ask! Please also respect the following additional requests:

* proofread and use spell check when you write ;
* write in complete words and sentences, and do not use texting shorthand;
* remember, you can always go back and reopen something you have written, in order to modify or correct the post. There is no need to make multiple posts of the same material;
* if something someone has written makes you very upset, give yourself at least a day before responding. Messages written in anger are usually regretted later.

The instructor reserves the right to remove any post deemed offensive or otherwise inappropriate, without prior notification to the student. This includes posts containing language that is rude, hateful, racist, sexist, insulting, profane, or otherwise offensive. Posts that are off topic or that only serve to vent your frustrations will also be promptly removed.

**D. DSS SERVICES**

Any student who may need an accommodation based on the potential impact of a disability should contact the Disability Support Services office at 202-994-8250 in the Rome Hall, Suite 102 (801 22nd St), to establish eligibility and to coordinate reasonable accommodations. For additional information please refer to: <https://disabilitysupport.gwu.edu/>

# COURSE OUTLINE

**I. Introductory remarks**

**II. Women in Early and Medieval-era Islam (week 1)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| * Ahmed, 1-63 | |
| * Bb: Excerpts from the Qur’an; Excerpts from the Hadith | |
| * Ahmed, 64-101 | |
|  | |
| **III. Debates on Islam and Gender: the Woman Question in the Age of Colonialism (week 2)**   * Ahmed, 102-23 * Bb: Hambly, “Becoming Visible,” pp. 3-27 * Ahmed, 127-168 | |
| * Ahmed, 169-188 | |
| * Bb: Qasim Amin “The Emancipation of Women” and “The New Woman”, 61-69 * Bb: Bahithat al-Badiyya, “A Lecture in the Club of the Umma Party,” 70-76 | |
| **IV:** **Weaving Stories of Women and Islam beyond the Arab Lands (week 3)**   * Bb: Hassan (Turkey), 451-73 | | | |
| * Bb: Rezai-Rashti (Iran), 469-86 | | | |
| * Bb: Shehabuddin (Bangladesh), 111-153 * Bb: Feillard and van Doorn-Harder (Indonesia), 139-59   **V: Women, Gender, and the Feminine in Islamic Mystical Traditions (week 4)** |
| * Bb: Ernst, “What is Sufism?” pp. 1-31 * Bb: Ahmed, D. “Gender and Islamic Spirituality,” pp. 11-34 |
| * Bb: Sells, “Rabi’a” pp. 151-170 |
| * Bb: Clancy-Smith, The House of Zainab,” pp. 254-274 |
| * Bb: Pemberton, "Singing and Reciting," pp. 105-27 | | |
| **VI: Whose Stories? Ethnography and the Question of (Re)presentation (week 5)** | | |
| * Susan Rasmussen, *Those Who Touch: Tuareg Medicine Women in Anthropological Perspective* | | |

**VII: Debates on Islam, Gender, and Women: post-modern predicaments (week 6)**

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| * videos on modest fashion * Lewis “Uncovering Modesty,” pp. 243-69 |
| * Tanvi Nandini Islam, *Bright Lines* |
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**Bibliography for reading materials on blackboard**

1. Excerpts from the Qur’an: <http://www.altafsir.com> (Abdullah Yusuf Ali translation); Excerpts from the *Sahih* Bukhari: <http://www.usc.edu/dept/MSA/reference/searchhadith.html> (USC-MSA compendium of texts). *Note:* this URL is no longer working. Cf. <http://sunnah.com/bukhari> or <http://msawest.net/islam/272-introduction-to-translation-of-sahih-bukhari> for alternative translations.
2. Hambly, Gavin R.G. “Becoming Visible,” in *Women in the Medieval Islamic World: Power, Patronage, and Piety.* New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999.
3. Amin, Qasim. “The Emancipation of Women” and “The New Woman,” in Charles Kurzman, ed. *Modernist Islam* 1840-1940: *a Sourcebook.* London: OUP, 2002.
4. al-Badiyya, Bahithat. “A Lecture in the Club of the Umma Party,” in Charles Kurzman, ed. *Modernist Islam* 1840-1940: *a Sourcebook.* London: OUP, 2002.
5. Hassan, Mona, “Women Preaching for the Secular State: Official Female Preachers (*Bayan Vaziler*) in Contemporary Turkey.” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 43 (2011): 451-73.
6. Osanloo, Arzoo. "Whence the Law: The Politics of Women’s Rights, Regime Change, and the Vestiges of Reform in the Islamic Republic of Iran." *Radical History Review.* Issue 101 (Spring 2008): 42-58.
7. Shehabuddin, Elora. "Contesting Development: Between Islamist and Secularist Perspectives" in *Reshaping the Holy: Democracy, Development, and Muslim Women in Bangladesh*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2008.
8. Feillard, Andrée and Pieternella van Doorn-Harder, “A New Generation of Feminists within Traditional Islam: an Indonesian Exception.” In Jajat Burhanudin and Kees van Dijk,eds. *Islam in Indonesia: Contrasting Images and Interpretations.* Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2013.
9. Ernst, Carl W. “What is Sufism?” in Carl W. Ernst, *The Shambhala Guide to Sufism.* Boston: Shambhala Books,1997.
10. Sells, Michael. “Rabi’a” in Michael Sells, *Early Islamic Mysticism* Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1996.
11. Clancy-Smith, Julia. “The House of Zainab: Female Authority and Saintly Succession in Colonial Algeria,” in Nikki R. Keddie and Beth Baron, eds., *Women in Middle Eastern History: Shifting Boundaries in Sex and Gender*. New Haven, CT; Yale University Press, 1991.
12. Pemberton, Kelly. "Singing and Reciting," in Kelly Pemberton, *Women Mystics and Sufi Shrines in India*. Columbia, SC: [University of South Carolina Press](http://www.newasiabooks.org/profile/university-south-carolina-press), 2010.
13. Saikal, Amin. “Women and Jihad: Combating Violent Extremism and Developing New Approaches to Conflict Resolution in the Greater Middle East.” *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* vol 36, no. 3 (2016), 313-22.
14. Lewis, Reina. "Uncovering modesty: Dejabis and dewigies expanding the parameters of the modest fashion blogosphere." *Fashion Theory* 19, no. 2 (2015): 243-269.

# Weekly Schedule *(please note, these dates below do not correspond to this year’s dates, since this is only a sample syllabus)*

Below are the schedules at a glance. These are only meant as a quick reference; you should also consult the detailed schedules that are posted under Week 1, Week 2, etc. on the sidebar (the detailed schedules contain the links to narrated Power Points, et al.).

Week 1

**DAY 1: Wednesday, July 5th**

**READING AND LECTURE:**

* Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam*, pp. 1-63
* Listen to narrated Power Point Presentation for Day 1, week 1

**DAY 2: Thursday, July 6th**

**READING AND LECTURE:**

* Selections from the Qur'an (see left sidebar, under "reading")
* Selections from the Hadith (see left sidebar, under "reading")
* Listen to narrated Power Point Presentation for Day 2, week 1

**DAY 3: Friday, July 7th**

**READING AND LECTURE**

* Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam*, pp. 64-101
* Listen to narrated Power Point Presentation for Day 3, week 1

WEEK 2

**DAY 1: Monday, July 10th**

**READING:**

* Leila Ahmed,*Women and Gender in Islam*, pp. 102-23
* Gavin Hambly, "Being Visible," p. 3-27

**DAY 2: Tuesday, July 11th**

**ASSIGNMENT: Open discussion 1:**

* Discussion Assignment: see discussion prompt under the "Assignments" header on the sidebar to the left; look for the “Discussion Forum” link; in there you’ll see the folder marked "Open Discussion 1"
* **Take a look at the Learning Module for Week 1, consult materials as needed**

**DAY 3: Wednesday, July 12th**

**READING:**

* Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam*, pp. 127-68

**DAY 4: Thursday, July 13th**

**READING:**

* Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam*, pp. 169-88

**DAY 5: Friday, July 14th**

**READING:**

* **Bb:** Qasim Amin “The Emancipation of Women” & “The New Woman”, 61-69
* **Bb:** Bahithat al-Badiyya, “A Lecture in the Club of the Umma Party,” 70-76
* **Take a look at the Learning Module for Week 2.** Readsupplementary information for you on Bahithat al-Badiya, and colonialism in Egypt and the MENA, a lecture by the late Professor Edward Said, one of the most influential intellectuals of the 20th century and the progenitor of the academic category (and debate on) Orientalism. While this information is optional reading and listening, it will help you with the paper that is due next Tuesday.

WEEK 3

**DAY 1: Monday, July 17th**

**ASSIGNMENT: Paper, READING**

* 2 pg response paper due (don’t forget to look at the grading rubric before you finish your paper)
* Food for thought (please read this short piece before beginning the reading on Tuesday)

**DAY 2: Tuesday, July 18th**

**READING:**

* Hassan 451-73
* Osanloo 42-58
* Shehabuddin 111-153
* Feillard and van Doorn-Harder, 139-59

**DAY 3: Wednesday, July 19th**

**LECTURE AND ASSIGNMENT Open discussion2:**

* Listen to narrated Power Point Presentation for Day 1, week 3
* Discussion Assignment: see discussion prompt under “Discussion Forum” link

**DAY 4: Thursday, July 20th**

**READING:**

* Continue with the reading; work on 4-5 page paper

**DAY 5: Friday, July 21st**

**ASSIGNMENT: Paper**

* 4-5 page paper due

WEEK 4

**DAY 1: Monday, July 24th**

**READING**

* **Bb:** Ernst, pp. 1-31
* **Bb:** Sells, pp. 151-170

**DAY 2: Tuesday, July 25th**

**READING AND LECTURE:**

* **Bb:** Clancy-Smith, pp. 254-274
* **Bb:** Pemberton, pp. 105-27
* Listen to Lecture 1, Week 4

**DAY 3: Wednesday, July 26th**

**ASSIGNMENT: Open discussion 3**

* Discussion Assignment due: see discussion prompt under “Discussion Forum” link

**DAY 4: Thursday, July 27th**

**LECTURE, ASSIGNMENT PREP:**

* Read through the prompt for your narrated Power Point assignment (due Aug 3rd) and begin formulating your topic.
* Listen to Lecture 2, Week 4

**DAY 5: Friday, July 28th**

**ASSIGNMENT: 4 AND READING**

* Discussion Assignment: see discussion prompt under “Discussion Forum” link
* Learning Module (optional, but contains valuable information to fill in some of the gaps in the reading and lectures)

WEEK 5

**DAY 1: Monday, July 31st**

**READING AND LECTURE:**

* Begin reading the Rasmussen book, *Those Who Touch*
* Watch narrated Power Point video on the Tuareg

**DAY 2: Tuesday, August 1st**

**ASSIGNMENT: Paper**

* 2-page response paper due.

**DAY 3: Wednesday, August 2nd**

**READING:**

* Continue reading the Rasmussen book; some of this information will be on your final exam (use the narrated Power Point as your guide right now to what kind of information about the Tuareg is most important for you to know)

**DAY 4: Thursday, August 3rd**

**ASSIGNMENT: NARRATED POWER POINT**

* Upload your narrated Power Point Presentation here or under the appropriate link in the “Assignments tab.” If you have any problems uploading it, or need an extra couple of days to complete the assignment, please let me know asap.

**DAY 5: Friday, August 4th**

**EXAM PREP; READING AND VIDEOS:**

* Start preparing for the final exam. See exam prep materials under the “testing” link in the sidebar to the left
* (**Optional**) – see the learning module to find out more about the Tuareg and to watch music videos by two of the most popular Tuareg bands in the world: Tinariwen and Tamikrest

WEEK 6

**DAY 1: Monday, August 7th**

**READING**

* Read the first half of Tanvi Nandini Islam, *Bright Lines: A Novel*

**DAY 2: Tuesday, August 8th**

**READING**

* Read the second half of Tanvi Nandini Islam, *Bright Lines: A Novel*

**DAY 3: Wednesday, August 9th**

**Reading**

* Lewis R. “Uncovering Modesty,” pp. 243-69

**DAY 4: Thursday, August 10th**

**FILM and WRAP-UP OF COURSE**

* Watch videos on modest fashion (under "films and videos" link on sidebar to the left)

**DAY 5: Friday, August 11th**

**FINAL EXAM**

* Final exam