

## **Islamic Historiographies** **REL 6401.10/HIST 6801.80**

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**classroom:** TBA  
**meeting times:** W 12:45-3:15  
**office hours:** TBA  
**Course CRNs:** TBA

### **Course description**

This course will (1) examine Muslim historiographic traditions from the 7<sup>th</sup> century onward, including what they looked like and how they developed; (2) introduce students to the development of scholarly methods used to evaluate the source materials for these traditions in the formative and classical periods of Islam; and (3) investigate some key developments in post-classical, non-Arabic Islamic historiographic traditions in the Indian Subcontinent, Ottoman Turkey, and the Persian lands. While most of the course will be devoted to reading and analyzing translations of historiographies, the problematics surrounding academic approaches to Islam since the 1960s will also inform our reading and analyses of many of these primary source materials. In that regard, key secondary sources that have shaped studies of Islamic historiographic traditions, such as Chase Robinson's *Islamic Historiography*, will help provide frameworks for some of our class discussions and assignments. Aside from discussing the *content* of the reading materials, this course is heavy in its emphasis on developing higher-order critical reading and writing skills, in part by using tools from the classical Islamic sciences.

*Prerequisites: knowledge of Islam and Islamic history (informal is ok); course open to graduate students and upper-level undergraduate students*

### **Course goals**

1. To outline the development of Islamic historiography in its classical and post-classical periods, in Arabic and other major Islamic languages
2. To understand the different genres of Islamic historiographic writing and their functions in society and politics
3. To sharpen writing, discussion, critical reading, and analytical skills

### **Learning Outcomes:**

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

1. Assess some of the social, cultural, and political functions of Islamic historiographic writing in the classical and post-classical periods
2. Demonstrate a basic understanding of some major developments and literature of the Islamic historiographic tradition in the classical period (7<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> centuries)
3. Evaluate and analyze patterns within historiographic writing in their Islamicate and Persianate environments
4. Formulate arguments based on logical analyses of some of the major developments in post-classical, non-Arabic Islamic historiographic traditions
5. Apply two or more scholarly methods used to analyze primary source materials in classical Islamic historiography

# COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADES

## A. Required texts for purchase

1. \*Ibn Khaldun. *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*. Abridged edition. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005.
2. Al-Jabarti, `Abd al-Rahman. *Al-Jabarti's History of Egypt*. Edited and with an introduction by Jane Hathaway. Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2009.
3. Mackintosh-Smith, Tim. *The Travels of Ibn Battutah* (2003)
4. Robinson, Chase F. *Islamic Historiography* (Themes in Islamic History). Cambridge U Press, 2002

\* \*book available in electronic format on the Gelman Library website.

## B. Recommended texts (\*Please note, reading materials from these texts are available on Blackboard. You can purchase the texts if you like, but it is not necessary)

- 1.W. Montgomery Watt (Translator), M. V. McDonald (Translator), *The History of Al-Tabari*, Vol. 6: Muhammad at Mecca (SUNY Series in Near Eastern Studies) [Paperback], 1988
- 2.Julie Meisami, *Persian historiography to the end of the twelfth century*, Edinburgh Press, 1999

## C. Additional Required Reading is located on Blackboard, in the folder marked "Reading."

On the syllabus, required readings that have been posted to Blackboard are notated with the symbol “**Bb**”

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

## D. Assignments and grade percentages

Attendance and participation are *essential*. Missing more than two classes will bring your participation grade down. Exceptions will be made in cases of illness in accordance with GW's COVID-19 guidance. E-mailing or telling me that you will be missing class does not excuse you from attendance, however: you can ‘attend’ missed classes by watching the recorded class sessions of classes in which you were not physically in attendance, or by participating via Zoom when available. Grades will be based on the following criteria:

<b>%</b>	<b>assignment</b>	<b>Deadlines</b>
20%	2-five to six-page critical reflection papers (worth 10% each)	Feb 2, Mar 9
20%	Critical literature review	Mar 30
15%	draft of research paper	Apr 13
30%	20-25-page final research paper	Due on scheduled date of final exam/TBA
15%	participation	
N/A	ungraded in-class writing	

### **E. Out-of-class, independent learning**

As per GWU's credit hour policy, students are expected to engage in a certain amount of out-of-class work each week. For this course, with approximately 2.5 hours per week of direct (in-class) instruction, students will be expected to spend a minimum of 100 minutes of independent (out-of-class) learning per week during the course of the semester, including exam week.

### **F. COVID-19 policy and guidance:**

- Please review GW's COVID-19 guidance: <https://onward.gwu.edu/campus-health>
- Masks are optional for all persons in indoor spaces per GW policy.
- If you are feeling unwell or need to quarantine because of a positive COVID test, please do not come to class. Please email Prof. Pemberton and let her know that you will not be attending class in person. You will not be penalized for missing class for health reasons.
- This course will be recorded. Recordings should not be shared with persons of the class. If you miss a class, you should watch the class recording afterward and come to Professor Pemberton's office hours to clarify material and/or class discussions as needed.

## COURSE OUTLINE

### I. Jan 12 (week 1)

**THEME:** *Islamic Historiography as a Subject and Discipline (weeks 1 & 2)*

- Introductory remarks about the course
- **Bb** Lassner, “Doing Early Islamic History: Brooklyn Baseball, Arabic Historiography, and Historical Memory” (*questions of scholarship and perspective*)
- **Bb: Learning Module 1:** video clip Shahzad Bashir, “Islamic Historiography and Memory...” (*we will watch together and discuss in class*)

### II. Jan 19 (week 2)

- Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, Part I
- **Bb:** Mourad, “On Early Islamic Historiography”

### III. Jan 26 (week 3)

**THEME:** *Islamic Historiography on the Foundational Period of Islam (weeks 3 & 4)*

- Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, Part II
- **Bb:** al-Tabari/Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca*, pp. 44-87

### IV: Feb 2 (week 4)

- Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, Part III
- **Bb:** al-Tabari/Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca*, pp.88-156

**\*\*\* first reflection paper due\*\*\***

### V: Feb 9 (week 5)

**THEME:** *Persian Historiography*

- **Bb:** Meisami, *Persian Historiography*, 1-45
- **Bb:** excerpts from the *Shahnameh*

### VI: Feb 16 (week 6)

**THEME:** *The Muqaddimah (weeks 6 & 7)*

- Ibn Khaldun, *Muqaddimah*, Introduction and Book I, chs 1-3

### VII. Feb 23 (week 7)

- Ibn Khaldun, *Muqaddimah*, Book I, chs 4-6, & “Prefatory Discussion”

### VIII: Mar 2 (week 8)

**THEME:** *Ottoman historiography*

- **Bb:** Tursun Beg, *History of Mehmed the Conqueror* pp. 11-25, 31-67

- **Bb:** Tijana Krstić, “Conversion and Converts to Islam in Ottoman Historiography of 15th and 16th centuries,” pp. 58-79
- **Bb:** Hakan Karateke, “The Challenge of Periodization,” pp. 129-54

**IX. Mar 9 (week 9)**

**THEME:** *The travelogue and the Islamic historiographic tradition (weeks 9 & 10)*

**\*\*\*second reflection paper due**

- Mackintosh-Smith, *The Travels of ibn Battutah*, intro, chs. 1-8

**\*\*\* SPRING BREAK March 14–19 (Mon-Sat)\*\*\***

**X. Mar 23 (week 10)**

- Mackintosh-Smith, *The Travels of ibn Battutah*, intro, chs. 9-18

**XI: Mar 30 (week 11)**

**THEME:** *Historiography of Egypt on the cusp of modernity (weeks 11 & 12)*

**\*\* Critical literature review due**

- Al-Jabarti/Hathaway, *Al-Jabarti’s History of Egypt*, Part I

**XII: Apr 6 (week 12)**

- Al-Jabarti/Hathaway, *Al-Jabarti’s History of Egypt*, Parts II & III

**XIII. Apr 13 (week 13)**

**THEME:** *Historiography in/on West Africa (weeks 13 & 14)*

- **Bb:** Brizuela-Garcia. “Africa in the World: History and Historiography,” (Oxford Encyclopedia entry, 23 pages)
- **Bb:** Soares, “the Historiography of Islam in West Africa: An Anthropologists’ view,” pp. 27-36

**\*\*first draft of final paper due**

**XV. Apr 20 (week 14)**

- **Bb:** Fayola & Aderinto, “A Preface to Academic Historiography,” in *Nigeria, Nationalism, and Writing History*, pp. 3-26
- Hiskett, Marvin, “*Kitab al-farq*: a work on the Habe kingdoms attributed to Uthman dan Fodio,” pp. 558-79

**\*\*\*FINAL DRAFT OF RESEARCH PAPER DUE ON SCHEDULED EXAM DATE\*\*\***

## Sources

(this bibliography is *only* for the reading materials notated “Bb” in your syllabus)

1. Lassner, Jacob. "'Doing' early Islamic history: Brooklyn baseball, Arabic historiography, and historical memory." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* (1994): 1-10.
2. Mourad, Suleiman A. "On Early Islamic Historiography: Abū Ismā‘īl Al-Azdī and His Futūḥ Al-Shām." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* (2000): 577-593.
3. Meisami, Julie Scott. *Persian historiography to the end of the twelfth century*. Edinburgh University Press, 1999.
4. Helen Zimmern, transl., *Shahnameh: The Epic of Kings, Hakim Abol Qasem Ferdowsi Tousi ed.* Digireads.com, 2008. Available at <https://www.sattor.com/english/Shahnameh.pdf> [Accessed August 26, 2020].
5. Beg, Tursun. *The history of Mehmed the conqueror*. No. 1. Bibliotheca Islamica, 1978.
6. Krstić, Tijana. "Conversion and Converts to Islam in Ottoman Historiography of the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries." *Writing History at the Ottoman Court: Editing the Past, Fashioning the Future* (2013): 58-79.
7. Karateke, Hakan T., and Lucienne Thys-Senoçak. "The Challenge of Periodization: New Patterns in Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Historiography." *Writing History at the Ottoman Court: Editing the Past, Fashioning the Future* (2013): 129-54.
8. Brizuela-Garcia, Esperanza. "Africa in the World: History and Historiography," *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2018.
9. Soares, Benjamin. "The historiography of Islam in West Africa: an anthropologist's view." *The Journal of African History* 55, no. 1 (2014): 27-36.
10. Falola, Toyin, and Saheed Aderinto. *Nigeria, nationalism, and writing history*. Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2010.
11. Hiskett, Marvin. "Kitab al-farq: a work on the Habe kingdoms attributed to Uthman dan Fodio." *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, University of London, vol. 23, no. 3 (1960), 558-579.