

Course Description

Please read this document at the start of our course and post any questions you may have about it to the Ask and Answer forum.

Welcome to our course! This capstone seminar in your program of major explores the theme *Immigration and America Identity* by examining our history as a “nation of immigrants” - and concepts of what it means, and has meant, to be American - through the special lens of the history and experience of a particular “immigrant community” of importance in American life today – Muslim Americans. To do this we explore a wealth of materials online – essays, opinion pieces, news articles, interviews, academic presentations, and more – and read books that frame our subjects in different ways and represent the disciplines of history, religious studies, sociology, journalism, and literature. *The course meets requirements 5A and 5B of the University Studies curriculum.*

1. David Gerber’s ***American Immigration: A Very Short Introduction*** presents the seminal history of American immigration from colonial times to the present, highlighting signal concepts of polity and law concerning access and citizenship across the tumult of American history.
2. Jane I. Smith’s ***Islam in America*** illuminates the rich complexity of Muslim identity, and of Muslim American contribution to the plurality of American identity and experience. It begins by explaining basic tenets of the faith and tracing the American history of Islam. Later chapters take up particular issues of Muslim American experience, such as women’s identity and agency, the education of children, codes of dress and behavior, encounters with prejudice, and daily challenges of living within the faith while being or becoming “American.” From this historical foundation (Gerber’s and Smith’s books), we explore readings that, in a range of ways, extend our understanding of what it means to be American, and to be Muslim in America.
3. Loukia Sarroub’s ***All American Yemini Girls: Being Muslim in a Public School*** makes a sociological case study of a group of six *hijabat*, high school girls living in an insular, conservative Muslim immigrant community in Michigan, and trying to forge their own senses of self in ways that conjoin their religion, culture, and American experience.
4. Paul M. Barrett’s ***American Islam: The Struggle for the Soul of a Religion*** depicts the diversity of Islam in contemporary America by telling the stories of seven Muslim Americans – the publisher, the scholar, the imam, the feminist, the mystic, the webmaster, and the activist – across our country. A literary journalist, he reveals compelling enigmas and challenges of their lives at home, at work, and in their spiritual communities. Their stories express our key themes about immigrant experience: otherness and exclusion, accommodation and assimilation, identity and agency.
5. In a collection of essays based on personal experience, ***This Muslim American Life*** (2015) CUNY professor Moustafa Bayoumi describes post-9/11 life for Muslims as a harrowed existence in which one’s identity is continually shaped and distorted by others’ fears and assumptions. He focuses on life in the New York City area, where authorities aggressively spied on and persecuted Muslims for more than a decade after the terror attacks of 2001. Bayoumi’s concern is not just for the victims themselves but also for the principles of civil liberty on which our society is founded.
6. We conclude our studies with two plays about American Muslim experience set on opposite ends of the continent. In ***The Who and the What*** (2014), Ayad Akhtar turns the searchlight on issues for American Muslim women. New Yorker Zarina battles with her loving but intensely

conservative father's assumptions about her character and duty and with her own conflicts of loyalty and faith. This charged drama's contexts (single parent homes, the dangers of social media, the politics of faith) connect it with larger anxieties about being and believing in contemporary America.

Wajahat Ali's play *The Domestic Crusaders* (2010) brings together three generations of a Pakistani–American family in Los Angeles to celebrate the youngest family member's 21st birthday. Ali packs into this play a wealth of themes concerning intergenerational conflict, capitalism, scarifying history, divided religion, and more. The familial dissonances and fretted love of Ali's "crusaders" show the strains and fault lines of conflicted identity in a family in process of becoming "American."

A note about the readings: As your capstone seminar, the course requires significant reading. I thus recommend you start reading before the course begins. All of the books are available at the UMD campus store, but all are also available through online vendors (like Amazon), where you can often purchase them less expensively. Most are available in Kindle editions, which diminishes the costs more and provides instant access. You can also get most of these books at a library, or through interlibrary loan, for no cost at all, if you plan ahead. The two plays are available for free, Ali's from the website of its publisher and Akhtar's via a free downloadable Kindle app you can use on several devices. There is also an inexpensive site, Scribd, that streams books in both text and audio formats. The course site will provide specific information about how to access our readings in alternative ways.

The first week, we will get to know our course by exploring introductory material concerning our theme, *Immigration and American Identity*. Activities include:

- Introducing ourselves
- Reading & viewing material that informs and extends our understanding of course subjects.
- Viewing and responding to three online presentations on (1) immigration and citizenship, (2) immigration and American identity, and (3) immigration and Islam by performing a practice discussion, self assessments, and a formal discussion
- Asking and answering questions on the informal Ask and Answer discussion board

Advice about How to Take Our Course

Please observe these words of general advice as we begin our work together:

- Do not fall behind in your reading – try to keep about a week ahead in the reading so that when each upcoming week's class folder opens during the weekend before, you will be fully prepared to engage its activities.
- Perform course activities steadily across the course of each week. The deadline for completing most activities is midnight (11:59 p.m.) but you will not have time to complete them well if you wait to begin them near the deadline. Discussions, and some other work, is interactive, too, requiring engagement with your classmates and the success of that work depends upon steady and timely response. Discussions have two-part deadlines, to allow time for you to read other's postings before you must reply to them.
- If you have questions, ask. Please visit the "**Ask and Answer**" discussion board often, and answer others' questions if you can.

Basic Navigation: Format and Content of the Thematic Unit Folders

- Use our syllabus, the *Schedule of Readings and Viewings*, as your basic course road map. The portion of the syllabus relevant to each unit also appears within that unit, along with detailed instructions and links related to the activities of the unit.
- Determine the work of each class week by consulting its relevant folder. The unit folders are located under the **Course Content** tab. You can work ahead in the course if you want to. You

can see the discussion query and instructions and can begin to prepare your own responses as soon as you have completed the reading and viewing for that unit.

Your work is *asynchronous*, which means you do it independently throughout each week. You can send a message via the course site to any member of the course, including the instructor. If you have an *urgent* message for the instructor, though, send it directly via email to jschaaf@umassd.edu. Please check your **Course Messages** often.

Some work is *interactive* (involving your engagement with classmates) and aspects of interactive work have **two-part deadlines**, to ensure that when each student is ready to respond to classmates' work, there is something posted to respond to. Weekly discussions function in this way, for example. Each requires your own response to a discussion query *no later than the day before the final deadline*; each also requires your replies to classmates' postings, and these replies are due by the final deadline. You will lose points on a two-deadline assignment if you miss the initial posting deadline by more than a brief delay, but *do post the initial response required as soon as you are able to, in order to avoid losing its whole value for your assignment's score*. Posting late is better than not posting at all. Once a final deadline arrives, the assignment will disappear from view (and thus cannot be written to any further). When I read and score an assignment, I will open it again to view in "read only" format, so that all of your work is available for you to review throughout the course.

Course Work and its Value for your Course Grade

As the syllabus indicates, a variety of projects occur in our course. In brief, the projects are:

- Weekly reading discussions: 1 @ 5 pts. & 5 at 10 pts. each = 55 pts.
- Two skills exercises conducted as discussions (Text in Context and Storyboard) @ 5 pts. each = 10 pts.
- Two special topic discussions (Engaged Learning; 3 Questions) @ 5 pts each =10 pts.
- Term Project Essay - 1 @ 20 pts. = @20 pts
- Term Project Storyboard - 1 @ 5 pts. = 5 pts.
- Extra credit exercise - 1 @ 5 pts. = 5 pts.

Total = 100 pts. (work required) and 5 pts. (optional work) = 105 pts. The course grade is determined by adding all the points you accrue. A total score of 100 – 105 is an A+; a score of 95-99 is an A, a score of 90-94 is an A-, a score of 87-89 is a B+, a score of 84-86 is a B, a score of 80-83 is a B-, and so on.

Please consult the syllabus and the unit folders for detailed project descriptions and instructions. For your convenience, the course texts are listed below.

Course Books (other readings - and viewings - are online): Please note: course books are available through the UMD campus store site - you can have them shipped to you or pick them up at the store; the books are also available from other vendors online at cost lower than list price; **K** indicates availability in Kindle edition. Plan ahead to save costs. You can find all these books via interlibrary loan. The plays are available free (see below).

1. David Gerber, *American Immigration: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford 2011) ISBN: 9780195331783 - **K**
2. Jane I. Smith, *Islam in America*, 2nd. edition (Columbia Univ. Press, 2010) ISBN 978-0231147118 - **K**
3. Loukia Sarroub, *All American Yemini Girls: Being Muslim in a Public School* (Univ. of Pennsylvania Press 2005) ISBN 0812218949

4. Paul M. Barrett, *American Islam* (Picador, 2007) ISBN 978-0312427450 – K
5. Moustafa Bayoumi, *This American Muslim Life: Dispatches from the War on Terror* (New York Univ. Press, 2015) ISBN 978-1479835645 – K
Also available for free with a free downloadable Audible app and a free trial subscription to Audible at https://www.amazon.com/This-Muslim-American-Life-Dispatches/dp/B01DE6F3JO/ref=tmm_aud_swatch_o?_encoding=UTF8&qid=1553635542&sr=1-1-catcorr
6. Ayad Akhtar, *The Who and the What* (Back Bay Books 2014) ISBN-10: 0316324493 - K
Note - this play is available to read with a free app (from Amazon) that allows you to download it to your computer, tablet, or phone. https://www.amazon.com/Who-What-Play-Ayad-Akhtar/dp/0316324493/ref=sr_1_1?keywords=the+who+and+the+what&qid=1553635807&s=books&sr=1-1
7. Wajahat Ali, *The Domestic Crusaders*, available @ <https://www.mcsweeneys.net/pages/download-wajahat-alis-the-domestic-crusaders>