LAR 401. Capstone Seminar - Theme: Muslim Diaspora (Summer 2020)/Prof. Schaaf

Course Description

Welcome to our course! This capstone seminar in your program of major explores issues of identity and agency in our diversifying world by examining a particular “global community,” the Muslim ummah, in the context of contemporary diasporic experience. We undertake, in human and sociographic terms, to understand aspects of the phenomenon called “globalization.” Our studies engage the perspectives of many disciplines, among them history, sociology, psychology, literature and the arts. Whatever its opportunities, immigration inevitably involves alienation, separation from the sense of who one "is" (identity) and what one can "do" (agency). Immigrants experience alienation both in respect to leaving the places and cultures of their origins, and in respect to their reception in new places and cultures which often do not embrace or try to understand them. Their new lives engage projects of assimilation, adjustment, transformation, and adaptation. Our readings will raise many particular themes that present this overarching philosophical one and they will also demonstrate the protean resiliency of human nature in crisis.

The syllabus begins with a brief introduction to the course; it then divides into four units. Unit I presents an introduction to Islam and to the phenomenon of the "Muslim diaspora." The three units that follow (Units II, II, and IV) break our study into broad geographical regions. Each unit extracts a few exemplary phenomena or themes (such as the uneasy relationship that Islam has to capitalism, in Unit II; xenophobia and nationalism as responses to migration, in Unit III; and American Muslims’ changing practices of domestic life, in Unit IV) by which to illustrate the nature of Muslim experience. Unit II: Muslims in Place looks at Muslims in their “home cultures” - that is, in cultures historically Muslim. The next two units look at Muslims in cultures to which Muslims newly belong as a result of modern diasporic experience. Unit III focuses on Muslims in Western Europe, looking at the ongoing “migrant crisis” there and some of its causes and consequences both for immigrants and for the countries that absorb (or reject) them. Unit IV crosses the Atlantic to our own shores, and Canada’s, so we will end by bringing these matters home to our own experience. The course closes with a Conclusions unit in which you focus on your term project and (optional) extra credit work.

Each of the four major units (I - IV) is prefaced by an introduction which informs you of basic principles of Islam, practices of Muslims, and experiences of Muslims in home or immigrant cultures, so that you understand what unites the ummah, globally, but - more importantly - so that you see how the idea of “being Muslim” is vast and complicated and - for our study, it is vital to keep this in mind - so that you see that it is culturally determined as well as determined by ancient practices, principles and texts. Muslim identity is also determined – especially in the contexts of the Muslim diaspora – by the continual creation of new ways of being that respond to the “globalization” of diasporic experience itself. To put it more simply, one might say that there is no such thing as a typical or prototypical Muslim. Although we haven’t time or intention to go into that deeply or comprehensively, the examples we will observe in our readings will lead you to understand it readily yourself and to continue to understand it after our course is over as you attend with more open awareness to world news concerning Muslims and to their presence and impacts upon our own country and its established cultures and even upon your own experiences.

Get ready for a short journey but a deep dive. As we begin, please examine thoughtfully the materials in Unit I and begin to understand Islam’s principles and practices from them – and from any additional explorations (doing casual research online) that you want to make in response to the readings and viewings there. Each unit on the course site will contain a Resources folder with additional supportive materials for you to explore on your own to deepen your learning – these are your virtual library for our course. There will also be a link in the course menu (upper left column of the course site) to recent and breaking news that relates to the subjects of our study. As you explore these materials, consider where you are yourself beginning our study by framing a short self-introduction that focuses on what you know (or do not know) about Muslims and Islam and that also answers this question: how are Muslims today viewed, in global contexts, by “the West”? – that is, by people from countries and cultures that have not historically included significant communities of Muslims.
Cost for course materials will be minimal. The course site will link you to most course materials free of charge, though there will be some you will have to purchase or otherwise acquire off-site, as for example through a library. The draft syllabus below will be finalized before the course begins and you receive it via email when it is ready, but you can get a head start, if you wish to, on your studies by using the syllabus below. The final syllabus will be substantially the same as this one.

**Summary of Assignments (105 pts. Available)** - full assignment descriptions and instructions, and examples are posted on the course site

Total points available = 105. **The course grade is determined by adding all the points you accrue.** A total of 100 to 105 is an A+; 95 - 99 is an A; 90 – 94 is an A; 87-89 is a B+; 84-86 is a B; 80-83 is a B-; 77-79 is a C+; 74-76 is a C; 70-73 is a C; 67-69 is a D+; 64-66 is a D; 60 – 63 is a D; below 60 is an F.

- 4 unit Discussions @ 10 points each = 40 points
- 1 Engaged Learning exercise @ 10 points = 10 points
- 1 Poster Presentation @ 10 points = 10 points
- 1 Storyboard @ 10 points = 10 points
- Term project in two parts:
  - Self assessment (5 points)
  - and essay (25 points) = 30 points
- Extra credit project (optional) @ 5 points = 5 points

TOTAL 105 points

Please note that online classes run continuously through the week and weekend. Some assignments are, thus, due on weekend days. If you do not want to work on a weekend, you can do your work in advance, as all assignments are open and visible to you throughout the course and close only when their deadlines occur.

**Some Key Terms for Understanding Islam**

**The Five Pillars of Islam (arkan)** – there are five principles shared by all Muslims (the Umman)

1. The profession of faith (Shahada) – spoken in Arabic, it means “There is no God but God and Muhammad is his prophet.”
2. Daily prayer (Salat) – recited five times daily, while facing in the direction of Mecca
3. Charity (Zakat) – Muslims have many customs for sharing with those less fortunate than they
4. Fasting during Ramadan (Saum) – during this holy month, Muslims refrain from eating and drinking during daylight hours
5. Pilgrimage to Mecca (Hajj) – those who are able are expected to make this pilgrimage at least once in their lives

**The Qu’ran, Hadith, Sharia and Sunnah**

1. The Qu’ran is the holy book of Islam; Muslims believe it to be God’s revelation to the prophet Muhammad through the archangel Gabriel, across the course of about 23 years. Written in Arabic, it comprises 114 units, called surahs, varying in length and arranged from longest to briefest.
2. Hadith are the record of the words, actions, and intentions (as silently indicated) of the prophet Muhammad. Together with the Qu’ran, they are the basis of Muslim religious law and moral guidance, and thus of Islamic practice.
3. The preponderance of Sharia (Islamic law) arises from Hadith and is expressed in

**Halal and Haram**

1. Halal means “permissible” in Arabic; most commonly applied in references to food and drink, the term also is used in other and more abstract contexts
2. Haram means “impermissible” in Arabic; this term also is applied in both literal and abstract ways

In the Qu’ran, the root form h-l-l denotes lawfulness and the form h-r-m unlawfulness. The Hebrew terms mutar (allowed) and asur (forbidden) are parallel to halal and haram.

*Please continue to the next pages to see the draft syllabus.*
Schedule of Readings, Viewings, and Assignments

This schedule indicates reading and assignments in abbreviated form. For details see the Unit folders on the course site. All course readings except the novel occur online, as noted below, and the course site links you to them. Please note that the Overview document in each Unit folder is required reading. It is your illustrated “lecture” for the course unit and provides framework for understanding the materials of the unit and the ways in which they relate to the course theme.

Please note – discussion assignments (one in each unit) have two-part deadlines; you will lose value from your score if you miss the initial posting deadline, which occurs 48 hours before the final deadline. Post by the initial deadline but remember that you have until the final deadline to revise/edit your posting.

Advice about how to complete your work successfully:
• Complete the readings and viewings for each unit early in the period in which the unit takes place.
• Begin to draft your response to each discussion query as soon as you have absorbed the unit’s materials. Keep your work in a file on your device, where you can develop and edit it before the deadlines.
• Keep careful track, using the syllabus, of assignments and their due dates. Each unit a discussion assignment (with a 2-part deadline); in each of the next units (II, II, and IV), there is an additional exercise to help you envision and shape a response for the final project of the course.
• If you have questions, ask them. Use the Ask and Answer forum for basic questions but if you have a more complicated or private question, email the instructor: jschaaf@umassd.edu

You will find links to all materials (except the novel) and to all activities on our course site in the units in which they are assigned. The opening page for our course offers important links, too - to all "handouts," to tools for communicating with your colleagues, and the instructor, to access to your grades and feedback, and so on.

Introduction to the course
(June 15 - 16)

Activities (required but unscored)
• Practice Assessments on Islam, etc. due June 15 – unscored but required
• Introductory discussion, due by midnight June 16 – Who Knows What?

Please note that by “midnight,” MyCourses means 11:59 p.m., and not a second later!

All assignment deadlines are by “midnight” in this sense.

Britannica’s Islam Quiz at https://www.britannica.com/quiz/islam
The BBC’s Islam quiz for Kids @ http://news.bbc.co.uk/cbbcnews/hi/newsid_4190000/newsid_4191500/4191599.stm
CNN's World Religions Quiz @ https://www.cnn.com/2017/03/14/world/worlds-religions-quiz-trnd/index.html
Pew Research Centers Muslim and Islam Knowledge Quiz @ https://www.pewresearch.org/quiz/muslims-and-islam-quiz/
Pew Research Center's U. S. Religious Knowledge Quiz @ http://www.pewforum.org/quiz/u-s-religious-knowledge/

Charles Kurzman's "Teaching the Middle East in 10 Quiz Questions" @ https://kurzman.unc.edu/teaching/teaching-the-middle-east/
Oxfam's Refugee Quiz @ https://www.oxfam.org.uk/education/resources/refugees-quiz
Council on Foreign Relations quiz "See How Much You know about Refugees" @ https://www.cfr.org/quiz/see-how-much-you-know-about-refugees
The Guardian's "Migration Crisis Quiz" @ https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2015/aug/10/europes-migration-crisis-the-facts-and-figures-quiz
Unit I: Islam, Muslims, and the Muslim Diaspora  
(June 17 - 26)  

June 17 is the deadline to Add/Drop the course. 
June 22 is the deadline to drop with a grade of "W."

Our focus in Unit I is upon establishing a basic understanding of Islam’s principles and practices and of the concept of diaspora as applied to Muslims in the contemporary world.

Activities:
• Discussion - Due June 24/26  
Post your response to the discussion query by midnight June 24. Revise your response to the discussion query (as needed) and post replies to colleagues by midnight June 26.  
Note: The score is deducted for missing the initial posting deadline for an assignment.

Readings and Viewings:
Introductory Overview

An introduction to our course’s theme and caveats about how to understand it:  
S. Silvestri (2016). Misperceptions of the ‘Muslim Diaspora’ @ openaccess.city.ac.uk › eprint  
"Islam Explained by a non Muslim" at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eKBs0GYMQqg

“Basic Facts about Islam” @ https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/teach/terror/background/6.html

The Five Pillars of Islam @ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q-SqRzdxPQ

“Hadith” in the Oxford Dictionary of Islam  
@http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t125/e758

Jonathan Brown, “What are the Hadith?” @ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wq_l8QlDLjQ

Paul Barrett, "What are the Roots of Islamic Fundamentalism?" @ http://bigthink.com/videos/what-are-the-roots-of-islamic-fundamentalism

Unit II: Islam in Place – Tradition and Modernity  
(June 27 - July 6)  

June 30 is the deadline to register for the Pass/Fail option. 
July 2 is the deadline to register for Independent/Directed Study.

Our focus in this unit is on traditionally Islamic cultures in contemporary context and on observing ways in which Muslim traditions are adapting to changes resulting from globalization. We also establish a context for Unit III’s focus on crisis migration to the West by looking at examples of persecution in the East.

Activities:
• Poster Presentation - June 30  
• Discussion - Due July 3/6 - note that the initial deadline for this assignment occurs 3 days before the final deadline because of the July 4 holiday.
Post your response to the discussion query by midnight July 3. Revise your response to the discussion query (as needed) and post replies to colleagues by midnight July 6.

Note: The score is deducted for missing the initial posting deadline for an assignment.

Readings and viewings:
Unit II Overview

Wajahat Ali on the question of the "modern Muslim" @ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NYvMm4Qrirk

A. Globalization’s impacts on Islamic Traditions: the examples of (1) capitalism and (2) the politics of sexuality.

(1) Capitalism and its Discontents

“Get Rich for Allah – Neoliberalism and Muslim Diaspora” @ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lAZwNdQzyQ


(2) Sexual politics


B. Persecution and Migration: (1) Hindus & Muslims & (2) the Sunni/Shi’a divide

(1) Muslims and Hindus in East Asia: culture combat
“Persecution of Muslims in India” @ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pZYoWVsHuuU


Shoba Rao, “Kavitha and Mustafa” @ https://nimrod.utulsa.edu/archive/awards_36/Rao.pdf

(2) Sunni vs. Shi'a: wars within Islam

Unit III: The “Migrant Crisis” and the Diaspora in Europe
(July 7 - 16)

*July 16 is the Course Withdrawal deadline.*

Our focus in this unit is on European cultures and their crises of accommodation of migrants fleeing civil war and persecution in their countries of origin. We look first at migration itself and then at immigrant experience in the West.

**Activities:**

- **Engaged Learning Project** - Due by midnight July 10
- **Discussion** – Due July 14/16
  
  Post your response to the discussion query by midnight Nov. 20. Revise your response to the discussion query (as needed) and post replies to colleagues by midnight Nov. 22.
  
  Note: The score is deducted for missing the initial posting deadline for an assignment

**Readings and Viewings:**

*Unit II Overview*

**A. Migration – In transit and in crisis**

Callan Wink, “A Refugee Crisis” @
https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2018/08/20/a-refugee-crisis

“The European Refugee Crisis and Syria Explained,” by the U.N. Refugee Agency (2015) @
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RvOnXh3NN9w

Mohsin Hamid, *Exit West* – please note – this is a novel and not available via a link on our course site: you can get a hard copy from a vendor or bookstore or library or access it for free via a Kindle app (see instructions in the course Handouts folder)

**B. Muslim immigrants in Europe: the new (ab)normal**

"Europe's Islamophobia and the Refugee Crisis" (Middle East Institute, 2017) @
http://www.mei.edu/content/article/europe-s-islamophobia-and-refugee-crisis

"Negative Views of Minorities, Refugees Common in EU" (Pew Research Center, 2016) at

“Competing Visions of Islam will Shape Europe in the 21st Century,” Interview with Akbar Ahmed (2018) in The Atlantic @
https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2018/05/akbar-ahmed-islam-europe/559391/

"Young, Working Class, and Muslim" photo-essay by Mahab Houssein for Buzz Feed News *May 2017) at
https://www.buzzfeed.com/louiseridley/this-is-how-it-really-feels-to-be-young-working-class-and

“How Berlin’s LGBT-friendly Mosque Deradicalizes Muslim Youth” @
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u3XlmKYIXOY
Unit IV: New World Diaspora – Muslims in North America
(July 17 - 26)

Our focus in this unit is on North American cultures and attitudes towards Muslim immigrants. We first consider Muslims in Canada, and then look at Muslims in the United States.

Activities:
- **Storyboard exercise**
  Due by midnight July 20
- **Discussion** – Due July 24/26
  Post your response to the discussion query by midnight July 24. Revise your response to the discussion query (as needed) and post replies to colleagues by midnight July 26.
  Note: The score is deducted for missing the initial posting deadline for an assignment.

Readings and viewings:
Unit III Overview

A. Canada

Dina Nayeri, “The Pinch” @ [https://yalereview.yale.edu/pinch](https://yalereview.yale.edu/pinch)


B. The United States


“Amidst the Muslim Ban: A Love Story” @ [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DE7VNfD8thE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DE7VNfD8thE)

“Not Your Parents’ Parent Trap,” podcast (26 min.) for “This American Life” (NPR) @ [https://www.thisamericanlife.org/291/reunited-and-it-feels-so-good/act-one](https://www.thisamericanlife.org/291/reunited-and-it-feels-so-good/act-one)


“From Aleppo To LA: Coming Of Age As A Muslim Girl In America,” a New York Times Op-Doc @ [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YR3SRYA7r8g](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YR3SRYA7r8g)
**Conclusions: Term Project and Extra Credit Project**

(27 - 31)

- Online conference forum (optional) available through July 30.
- Extra credit (optional) due by midnight July 28.
- Term project essay due by July 30.
- Self-Assessment due by midnight July 31

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TOTAL 105 points

**Course book (all other readings are online):**


Please note that you may read this novel for free on your phone or other Mac or Windows device by downloading a free Kindle app. Alternatively, purchase the book from an online vendor or bookstore or get it from a library.

**Special note about our online readings:** some websites, like that of the New Yorker, allow only a limited number of accesses free per month. To avoid losing free access, observe this advice:

- Don’t waste your allowance by clicking on an assigned reading more than once – enter it when you have time to complete your review of it; if you cannot finish in one go or want to preserve it for future reference, create a document and paste the content into it or use an alternative way to preserve it, if available (such as a print or download option).
- If you do exceed the free allowance, you can get to the resource by using a different device, as each site tallies your attempts via a particular device. Thus if your computer access is depleted, use your smartphone or iPad or a university or friend’s computer, etc.
- As a last resort, since your costs for materials for our course are none or negligible, you can, of course, subscribe to the journal - most allow an initial month’s subscription for only $1.00. If you do this and do not want to keep the subscription, however, remember to cancel it before the trial period is over.