

Islam in America
RELS 331 Fall 2020
ONLINE

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Please include “RELS 331 Islam in America” in the subject line of your emails to me.

Course Description

Islam in America examines the history, communities, and religious and political movements of Muslims in America. Topics covered include early Islam in the Americas, Muslims in the antebellum South, African-American Islam, Muslim immigration to the United States, the Nation of Islam, the Five Percenters, the Moorish Science Temple, Islamophobia, Malcolm X, and Muslim hip-hop and fashion. This course examines Islam as an American religious tradition that is shaped by the experiences of African-Americans, immigrants, and converts.

Welcome

Welcome to class! I am so happy to have you here and look forward to spending the next several months together online. As part of that welcome, I invite you to this learning community, where we will explore the history, lives, and experiences of Muslims in America.

Here are a few important notes about our community:

Last year I was made aware that approximately half of college students experience food insecurity. WKU has a food bank for students and other community members who need food supplies.

https://www.wku.edu/sustainability/food_pantry.php

With the expense of college education in mind, I have kept the cost of texts for this class low. The total cost is around \$100.

Lastly, an important reminder! This syllabus is a critical part of the class. Think of it as a map for a journey you are taking to a new country. You will need to refer to it constantly or get lost. Please read the syllabus before asking questions on assignments, readings, and due dates.

Dr. Arjana (AHR-JA-NAH)

Required Readings and Texts

For Purchase (**four** books):

Ula Yvette Taylor, *The Promise of Patriarchy: Women and the Nation of Islam*

Dave Eggers, *The Monk of Mokha*

Willow G. Wilson and Adrian Alphonso (2014). *Ms. Marvel Vol. 1, No Normal*

Sylvia Chan-Malik, *Being Muslim: A Cultural History of Women of Color in American Islam*

****On Blackboard (Readings may slightly change before Fall classes start!)**

Sylviane Diouf, “The Muslim Community,” in *Servants of Allah: African Muslims Enslaved in the Americas*

Michael Gomez, “Muslims in Early America,” in *A Muslim American Slave: The Life of Omar Ibn Said*

Su’ad Abdul Khabeer, “Policing Music and the Facts of Blackness,” in *Muslim Cool: Race, Religion, and Hip Hop in the United States*

Monica Miller, "Real Recognize Real: Aporetic Flows and the Presence of New Black Godz in Hip Hop," in *Religion and Hip Hop: Mapping the New Terrain in the U.S.*

Susan Nance, "Mystery of the Moorish Science Temples: Southern Blacks and American Alternative Spirituality in 1920s Chicago," *Religion and American Culture* 12, no. 2 (2002): 123-166

Kristian Petersen, "Intersectional Islamophobia: The Case of a Black Ahmadi Muslim Celebrity," *Journal of Africana Religions*

Rose Aslan, "Daily Prayers in Muslim America," in *The Practice of Islam in America: An Introduction*

Colonnade Learning Outcomes/Artifacts and Evidence

During the course of the semester, students will have: (1) An appreciation for the complexity and variety of the world's cultures, (2) A historical perspective and an understanding between past and present, (3) An understanding of human society and behavior, (4) Proficiency in reading, writing, and speaking

During the course of the semester, students will 1) discuss key texts, 2) write three short papers on Islam in America, 3) write a report on a visit to a local mosque, and 4) research and present two presentations on Muslims in America

Grading

Grading is on a 100-point scale.

Forum Discussions	48% (40 points)	
1 Brief Paper	12% (20 points)	
1 Site Visit	10% (10 points)	*This will be a Virtual visit (see below)
Ms Marvel Storyboards	30% (30 points)	

Details on Assignments

Weekly Forum Discussions

Objective: We will have forum discussions most weeks, which are required for all students. I will pose a question for most weeks you will respond to in a reflection. You will also be required to respond to another student's original post (or reflection) as well.

Initial post always due TUESDAY by noon.

Response to another student's post always due THURSDAY by noon.

*Please note that given the number of students I have, I cannot accept late posts. If your post is not up by the day and time, I will not go back later and grade it. *Except for documented cases of illness.

Both reflections (to me, and to another student in this class) must be a minimum of ten sentences long and you MUST refer to the reading(s), lecture(s), and other materials for that week.

Paper Requirements: Your paper must be three pages long, double-spaced, Times New Roman 12-point font, using Chicago Style Footnotes. Your paper will receive a "zero" if you do not use correct footnoting in the Chicago Style. Each paper has an assigned general subject area; within this parameter, you have quite a bit of freedom.

The academic sources for your paper MUST BE books or academic articles. NOTHING from the internet – no websites. You need to have a minimum of three academic sources per paper. No Wikipedia or websites.

You have some choices for the paper.

Option #1: write on the history of the NOI, Malcolm X, Clarence 13X, Five Percenter imagery in hip hop, Muhammad Ali, or another topic in the area of *Black/African-American Islam*. You must utilize at least two academic sources.

Option #2: choose a *Muslim immigrant community* to write about, such as Indonesian, Pakistani-Indian “(Desi), Somali, Moroccan, Turkish, Bosnian, or other distinct group. You must utilize at least two academic sources.

What is an academic source?

Academic sources include books and academic articles. Books, including E-books held by the WKU library, and articles in peer reviewed journals, are two examples.

No Wikipedia. No websites.

Site Visit Assignment: You must “virtually” visit a mosque in North America (*masjid*) and write a one-page report on what you observed, including the following: the building, the organization of space, style/décor, and if possible, the sermon topic (IF you have access to a Friday service, which is when the weekly sermon is typically given). The central question you should address is: What did you learn about Islam in America from your visit?

****Due to the pandemic, you will have to do a VIRTUAL VISIT of a mosque. This is normally something I have you do in person, but it is not advisable for this semester. You can choose any masjid/mosque in the U.S. you would like. You may also choose one in Canada such as the Toronto Unity Mosque, which is a queer-affirming space.**

Ms Marvel Storyboards: You will create your own storyboards using *Ms Marvel* in the narrative. There are several options for doing this. One is to focus on the characters in *Ms Marvel*. Another is to include Ms Marvel the character, as well as historical figures, like Malcolm X, or a scholar, such as Dr. Chan-Malik. How you do this is somewhat up to you, but what I suggest is that you print out blank storyboards and place the images of characters on it with dialogue bubbles. My students did this last year with glue sticks and it worked great.

Your storyboard must tell a story about Ms. Marvel and should be a minimum of five pages.

You will explain and share your storyboards n Blackboard.

Academic Integrity

Regarding *cheating*, the University states, “No student shall receive or give assistance not authorized by the instructor in taking an examination.” In this course, specific examples of unauthorized assistance include sharing reading notes with other students, including those enrolled in subsequent sections of this course.

Students must work independently on papers and writing assignments and avoid *plagiarism*, which the University defines as “any use of another writer’s words, concepts, or sequence of ideas without acknowledging that writer properly.” Violations almost always result in a zero on the paper and an automatic F in the course.

Title IX, Discrimination, Harassment, and Sexual Misconduct Policy Statement

Western Kentucky University (WKU) is committed to supporting faculty, staff and students by upholding WKU's Title IX Sexual Misconduct/Assault Policy (#0.2070) and Discrimination and Harassment Policy (#0.2040). Under these policies, discrimination, harassment and/or sexual misconduct based on sex/gender are prohibited. If you experience an incident of sex/gender-based discrimination, harassment and/or sexual misconduct, you are encouraged to report it to the Title IX Coordinator, Andrea Anderson, 270-745-5398 or Title IX Investigators, Michael Crowe, 270-745-5429 or Joshua Hayes, 270-745-5121. Please note that while you may report an incident of sex/gender based discrimination, harassment and/or sexual misconduct to a faculty member, WKU faculty are "Responsible Employees" of the University and MUST report what you share to WKU's Title IX Coordinator or Title IX Investigator. If you would like to speak with someone who may be able to afford you confidentiality, you may contact WKU's Counseling and Testing Center at 270-745-3159.

Diversity Statement

My courses are designed to serve students from diverse backgrounds and perspectives. The diversity that students bring to class is a wonderful resource and contributes to everyone's learning experience. I strive to present materials that are respectful of people's gender, sexuality, age, socioeconomic status, race, religion, ethnicity, and culture. Please notify me of anything that conflict with religious events, commemorations, or holidays, so that I can make appropriate arrangements for you that allow you to honor your religious commitments.

Accommodations

In compliance with University policy, students with disabilities who require academic and/or auxiliary accommodations for this course must contact the Student Accessibility Resource Center located in Downing Student Union, Room 1074. The SARC can be reached by phone number at 270-745-5004 [270-745-3030 TTY] or via email at sarc.connect@wku.edu. Please do not request accommodations directly from the professor or instructor without a faculty notification letter (FNL) from The Student Accessibility Resource Center.

An Important Reminder on Religious Studies in the Public University

"The school's approach to religion is *academic*, not *devotional*.

The school strives for student *awareness* of religions, but does not press for student *acceptance* of any religion.

The school sponsors *study* about religion, not the *practice* of religion.

The school may *expose* students to a diversity of religious views, but may not *impose* any particular view.

The school *educates* about all religions; it does not *promote* or *denigrate* religion.

The school *informs* students about various beliefs; it does not seek to *conform* students to any particular belief."

A Teachers Guide to Religion in the Public Schools, First Amendment Center, Nashville, 1999, p. 3].

Course Expectations

You are expected to participate every week unless you have an extenuating circumstance such as illness or family emergency (either of which needs to be documented by a physician's note) or a religious exception.

You should have expectations of your professor as well. I am in my 10th year of teaching university and pride myself on being supportive of my students. You can always email me with any questions or to set up a virtual chat at sophia.arjana@wku.edu. However, I do not answer (or even read) email on the weekend.

No late submissions of assignments, including class discussion posts, will be accepted.

Schedule of Classes

Week 1: Islam in Early America

Bean Pie! <https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2018/07/bean-pie-history-shows-why-its-the-only-real-muslim-american-food.html>

Foundations of Islam

Reading: Michael Gomez, "Muslims in Early America," in *A Muslim American Slave: The Life of Omar Ibn Said*

Week 2: Islam and African/African-American Muslim Origins

Discussion of Diouf and Nance

Readings (2): Sylviane Diouf, "The Muslim Community," in *Servants of Allah: African Muslims Enslaved in the Americas*

Susan Nance, "Mystery of the Moorish Science Temples: Southern Blacks and American Alternative Spirituality in 1920s Chicago," *Religion and American Culture*

Week 3: The Nation of Islam and Malcolm X

Images and Words of Malcolm X

Discussion of Taylor

Reading: Ula Yvette Taylor, *The Promise of Patriarchy: Women and the Nation of Islam*, Intro-4

Week 4: The Nation of Islam and Muhammad Ali

The Trials of Muhammad Ali (film) (streaming on numerous platforms)

Discussion of Taylor

Reading: Ula Yvette Taylor, *The Promise of Patriarchy: Women and the Nation of Islam*, 5-7

Week 5: The Nation of Islam and The Five Percenters

Five Percenter Beliefs

Five Percenters and Music

Discussion of Taylor

Reading: Ula Yvette Taylor, *The Promise of Patriarchy: Women and the Nation of Islam*, 8-10

Paper DUE

Week 6: Muslims and Coffee Culture

Reading: Dave Eggers, *The Monk of Mokha*

Week 7: Immigrant Muslims

Reading: Dave Eggers, *The Monk of Mokha*

Discussion of Eggers

Week 8: Muslim Holidays and Businesses

Muslim/Muslim American Holidays

Reading: David Eggers, *The Monk of Mokha*

Discussion of Muslim Businesses and Holidays

Week 9: Muslim Fashion and Muslim Hip-Hop

Hijab and Style, Thinking about Muslim American Fashion Blogs

Muslim Fashion Discussions

Readings (2): Su'ad Abdul Khabeer, "Policing Music and the Facts of Blackness," in *Muslim Cool: Race, Religion, and Hip Hop in the United States*
Monica Miller, "Real Recognize Real: Aporetic Flows and the Presence of New Black Godz in Hip Hop," in *Religion and Hip Hop: Mapping the New Terrain in the U.S.*

Week 10: Islamophobia

Discussion of Islamophobia

Veiling and Islamophobia

Readings: Shabana Mir, "You Can't Really Look Normal and Dress Modestly," in *Muslim American Women on Campus*

Kristian Petersen, "Intersectional Islamophobia: The Case of a Black Ahmadi Muslim Celebrity"

Week 11: Muslim Experiences

Introducing Comics and Ms. Marvel

Readings (2): Willow G. Wilson and Adrian Alphonso (2014). *Ms. Marvel Vol. 1, No Normal*

Sylvia Chan-Malik, *Being Muslim: A Cultural History of Women of Color in American Islam*

Rose Aslan, "Daily Prayers in Muslim America," in *The Practice of Islam in America: An Introduction*

Short Film: *Wudu*

*No Discussion This Week

Week 12: Muslim Experiences

Readings (2): Willow G. Wilson and Adrian Alphonso (2014). *Ms. Marvel Vol. 1, No Normal*

Sylvia Chan-Malik, *Being Muslim: A Cultural History of Women of Color in American Islam*

Mosque Report DUE

Week 13: Post-9/11 Muslim Experiences

Readings (2): Willow G. Wilson and Adrian Alphonso (2014). *Ms. Marvel Vol. 1, No Normal*

Sylvia Chan-Malik, *Being Muslim: A Cultural History of Women of Color in American Islam*

Discussion of *Being Muslim*

Week 14: HOLIDAY: THANKSGIVING BREAK

Week 15: American Muslim Lives

Ms. Marvel Storyboards

THERE IS NO FINAL EXAM IN THIS CLASS