

Islam RELS 306
Summer 2025 ONLINE
June 2-20th, 2025
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Course Description

Islam (RELS 306) examines the history, rituals, and traditions found among the world's 1.8 billion Muslims. This course is interdisciplinary, utilizing the work of religious scholars but also social media, music, and film. Students will learn about the early Muslim community, the formation of rituals like prayer, contemporary practices, and more. This course presents Islam not as a monolith, but as a broad set of identities, practices, and traditions found everywhere from the Indonesia to the United States. *Due to the fact that this is a condensed summer course, some of this material is abbreviated.*

Course Objectives

To understand the origins of Islam
To have a mastery of key Islamic terminology
To understand the role of texts, ritual, and material culture in Muslim-majority societies
Achieve all of the above by conducting research in both written and other (visual, material) forms

Required Texts

Laury Silvers, *The Lover: A Sufi Mystery*
Liz Bucar, *Pious Fashion: How Muslim Women Dress*
Huda Fahmy, *Huda F Are You?*
*Additional readings will be posted on Blackboard under Readings.

Grading

Grading is on a 100-point scale.

Three Weekly Discussions 30% (30 points)

DUE EACH WEEK IN TWO PARTS – WEDNESDAY NOON (first post) AND FRIDAY NOON (second post)

10 points each

Total of 30 points

For each discussion, you will answer a discussion prompt or question with a post (Wednesday) AND respond to at least one other student's post (by Friday noon). Each of the posts is worth 5 points each for a total of 10 points per week.

Each post must be a minimum of 15 sentences and you **must cite the course readings for that week with at least three quotes and accompanying page numbers**. You do not have to use Chicago Style Footnotes but quotes and page numbers from the readings are a requirement. Without these, you will receive a Zero.

Infographic on Islamic Dress/Fashion and Gender

20% (20 points)

DUE JUNE 13

You will keep a record of what the readings and other resources teach you about Islam, fashion, and gender. You will use these to create an infographic. This will be posted online, and like many of the other assignments, will be shared with your colleagues in this course.

You should include key terms, themes, images, shapes, concepts, and colors related to **fashion, dress, gender, and Muslim bodies**. You can focus on a particular theme, like capitalism and Islamic fashion, or a specific Muslim community. You **must use at least five quotes from Liz Bucar's book (with page numbers!)** and other readings from the class on gender in your infographic.

For this infographic, include an annotated bibliography of at least three reading(s) in the class you utilized in the Chicago Manual of Style. An annotated bibliography lists the source followed by a lengthy paragraph on the source describing its content and, in this case, its contribution to your project. A sample annotated Bib will be posted on Blackboard.

What is an infographic?

A word cloud

A diagram

Story board (think of this a Sunday cartoon)

A timeline with images or shapes

A family tree showing relationships between individuals, places, or concepts

Blog Journal 15% (15 points)

DUE JUNE 13

Choose a Muslim blogger to follow and keep a journal of what you are learning about Islam through this form of social media information. You can also follow more than one of these. should be a minimum of two pages long and should demonstrate what the source taught you about Islam and Muslims. You might also follow an Instagram account.

Here are a few resources on Muslim bloggers if you want to go that direction:

<https://www.allure.com/story/muslim-beauty-bloggers>

<https://www.popsugar.com/beauty/Black-Muslim-Beauty-Bloggers-Follow-Instagram-44437385>

<http://www.withloveleena.com>

<https://mvslim.com/6-male-fashion-bloggers-look/>

<https://koonjblog.wordpress.com>

<https://feminismandreligion.com/author/laurylivers/>

<http://www.splitthemoon.com>

Five Paragraph Essay 30% (30 points)

DUE ON JUNE 17

You are required to write one short essay in this class. This is a **FIVE PARAGRAPH SHORT ESSAY**. You can write on **any** topic(s) related to Islam but **must use** the texts assigned in class in your essay. You will also need to use at least one outside source (do NOT use any sources from the Internet—no Wikipedia and no encyclopedia entries and NO web articles). This outside source must be a BOOK or ACADEMIC ARTICLE.

You may write about a Muslim person, place, ritual, cultural practice, or community. The following list includes some suggestions:

Prophet Muhammad

Prophet Isa (Jesus)
Maryam (Mary)
Khadija (Prophet Muhammad's first wife)
Fatima (Prophet Muhammad's daughter)
Aisha
Mecca
Jerusalem
Medina (the city of the Prophet)
Mashhad
Hajj (the pilgrimage to Mecca)
Ziyarat (pilgrimage)
Salat (prayer)
Sema (musical or other performance in honor of God/Allah)
Dhikr (remembrance of God/Allah)
Nikah (marriage contract)
Khutba (sermon)
Calligraphy (any style)
Qawwali (Sufi music from Pakistan)
Ahmadiyya (Muslim community)
Ismailis (also known as "Sevener Shiis")
Five Percenters (NOI-inspired religious movement)

Each essay should be single-spaced, Times New Roman 12-point font, and **must use Chicago Style footnotes. A failure to use footnotes in the Chicago Style format will result in a ZERO.** Use the following book if you are not familiar with the Chicago Style:
Kate Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations: Chicago Style for Students and Researchers* (8th Edition). We can also meet up or you can email me a draft and I will help you with your paper.

Class Reflection 5% (5 Points)

Write a two-page reflection (double-spaced) reflecting on the following question using quotes from the readings and lectures:

How did this class help you understand the role of texts, ritual, and material culture in Muslim-majority societies and communities?

Other Important Stuff

Food Insecurity: Around 50% of college students have difficulty affording groceries. Please contact the WKU Food Pantry (270-745-2508) or email them at sustainability@wku.edu.

Additional Learning Resources

The WKU Center for Literacy is located in Gary A. Ransdell Hall 2066. At the Center for Literacy, students can receive assistance in developing strategies to help with **reading/studying to learn** and **writing for evidence and argument**. The Center for Literacy offers both individual and small group sessions throughout the semester. Please email @ literacy.center@wku.edu to schedule an appointment or ask questions, visit the website at <http://www.wku.edu/literacycenter/>, or stop by GRH 2066 for more information.

The WKU Writing Center is at 123 Cherry Hall and can be reached at writingcenter@eku.edu or 270-745-5719. They have great resources and can offer support for writing — either in person or online (for distance learners). Their website is <https://www.wku.edu/writingcenter/>

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 or an automatic F in the course.

DO NOT USE AI IN THIS CLASS FOR ANY ASSIGNMENTS. If you use AI, you will fail that assignment.

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

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.

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."

Course Expectations

You are expected to complete the assignments on time and follow the instructions/parameters for the assignments as outlined in this syllabus.

Schedule of Classes

Week 1: Islamic Foundations

Lectures: Prophet Muhammad, Qur'an, Sunnah, The Five Pillars, The Ahl al Bayt, Sufism

Text: Laury Silvers, *The Lover: A Sufi Mystery*

Film: *Koran by Heart*

Discussion Question: Silvers provides a portrait of medieval Islam in her book. Describe three specific aspects of Islamic tradition, practice, and devotion you learned about through The Lover. These can include prayer, Islamic sects such as the Shii, Sufism, the student-shaykh relationship, as well as others. Make sure and include and identify specific characters from the book.

Week 2: Global Islam

Lectures: Pilgrimage Part 1, Pilgrimage Part 2, Candace Mixon Lecture, Gender, Sex, and Sexuality, Veiling

Text: Liz Bucar, *Pious Fashion: How Muslim Women Dress*

Blackboard Readings: Khabeer, "Cool Muslim Dandies"

Discussion Question: Bucar examines the choices women make about pious dress and fashion in several distinct locations around the world. What are the factors that influence the choices Muslim women make about dress? How is religion involved in these choices? How are ideas about beauty involved in these fashion styles?

June 13 (Friday): Infographic Due

Week 3: Islam in America

Lectures: Gomez Reading, Malcolm X

Text: *Huda F Are You?*

Blackboard Readings: Gomez, "Muslims in Early America," Diouf, "The Muslim Community"

Film: *The Trials of Muhammad Ali*

Short Video: Bean Pie

Discussion Question: Tell the story of Islam in America through the readings assigned for this week. Who are American Muslims? What are their different experiences? How have Muslim communities changed over the past several hundred years?

June 16 (Monday): Blog or Twitter Journal Due

June 20 (Friday): Five Paragraph Essay Due