



RUTGERS

COURSE SYLLABUS

Spring 2021



"Untitled" Spiritual Phenomenon by Malick Welli, 2019.

ISLAM IN THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

21:014:390

Classes begin **Jan. 19, 2021** and end on **May 12, 2021** The last day to drop this course without a “W” grade is **Jan. 26, 2021**.

Academic Calendar Directory: <https://academicaffairs.rutgers.edu/academic-calendar-directory>

You are advised to retain a copy of this syllabus in your personal files for use when applying for future degrees, certifications, or transfer of credit.

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Instructor: Wendell Marsh, Ph.D.
Email: wm276@rutgers.edu
Office Hours: Virtual Office Hours Upon Request
Communication:

Throughout the semester, I will communicate with you via either **Canvas Announcements** or your **Rutgers email account**. Please review the following link for [Accessing Rutgers Email](#):

<https://canvas.rutgers.edu/documentation/general/accessing-rutgers-email/>

GENERAL COURSE DESCRIPTION

Course Description:

Muslims have been present in the Americas since the earliest days of European exploration. In particular, enslaved Africans, sometimes as individuals and other times as communities established Islam on American soils since the fifteenth century, thereby connecting Islam and Blackness in North and South American memory and imagination. However, these experiences have often been overshadowed with the racialization of Muslims as foreign outsiders since the beginning of the Global War on Terror in the twenty-first century. Taking a broadly African-diasporic view of the Americas and an interdisciplinary approach, this course explores the history of Islam as both a community of faith for Muslims and as a horizon of Black consciousness more broadly.

Prerequisites: None

Course Modality:

This course is delivered **fully online**. To access the companion Canvas course site, please visit [Rutgers Canvas](#) at <https://canvas.rutgers.edu/> and log in using your NetID. For more information about course access and support contact [Canvas Help](#) at <https://canvas.rutgers.edu/canvas-help/>, via email at help@canvas.rutgers.edu, or call 877-361-1134.

Purpose of the Course:

This course satisfies the liberal arts elective for the Core Curriculum. Through deep reading, reflective writing, and creative projects, students will sharpen their thinking about fundamental questions of the human experience. In particular, students can expect to develop a religious literacy for African Diasporic traditions of Islam.

MATERIALS

Required Texts:

1. Laila Lalami, *The Moor's Account: A Novel* (New York: Vintage), 2014. ISBN: 9780804170628.
2. Richard Brent Turner, *Islam in the African-American experience* (Indiana University Press), 2003.
3. Sylviane A. Diouf, *Servants of Allah: African Muslims Enslaved in the Americas* (New York: NYU Press), 2013. ISBN: 9781479847112
4. Su'ad Abdul Khabeer, *Muslim Cool: Race, Religion, and Hip Hop in the United States* (New York: NYU Press), 2016. ISBN: 9781479894505

Additional Course Resources:

A variety of digital content will be provided during the course. Digital content will be found within the **Canvas course site**. There may be additional reading assignments as student interests dictate.

Technology Requirements:

This course may require that you access online resources in the University's Canvas site. Please review the following link for [Canvas Student Resources](https://canvas.rutgers.edu/students/) for assistance on getting started in Canvas:

<https://canvas.rutgers.edu/students/>

Additional Technical Requirements:

Review Rutgers' [Tech Guides](https://it.rutgers.edu/technology-guide/) at: <https://it.rutgers.edu/technology-guide/>

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By fully participating in this course, you should be able to:

1. Discern accurate and credible knowledge about African Diasporic expressions of Islam
2. Demonstrate a familiarity with the key texts and notable cultural artifacts that have resulted from African Diasporic engagements with Islam
3. Recognize the internal diversity among African Diasporic Muslims
4. Explain how Islam has shaped—and is shaped by—the historical intersections of race, class, and gender throughout the African Diaspora of the Americas
5. Distinguish confessional or prescriptive statements about Islam from descriptive or analytical statements
6. Employ informed analysis and moral reasoning to identify and address contemporary anti-Black racism and Islamophobia.

TEACHING PROCEDURES

Student engagement is a vital part of this course. It will be run as a deeply interactive and collaborative seminar. Accordingly, students should come to class having thoroughly read, viewed, and/or listened to all required material. Furthermore, they should have formulated some initial thoughts and/or questions about the material that they post on the discussion board. This engagement by students will define seminar. There will be little by way of lecture.

Teaching Philosophy:

In my classrooms, we approach the teaching and learning process by starting where we stand, suspending what we think we know, and carefully interrogating the meaning of our language to highlight its use in constructing our world. This teaching philosophy requires that the classroom become a dynamic space of pedagogical encounter, which not only enables the acquisition of information and the cultivation of critical thinking, but also produces unexpected insights that emerge from interacting with others. By encouraging collaboration and a sense of community whenever possible, I maintain a space in which students can develop interpersonal skills and learn how to use difference as a resource for thought and action. I view the pedagogical encounter and the spaces and moments it produces as charged with possibility. It is a space of suspension in which we pause to interrogate and question in the spirit of community and process. It necessarily starts where the student is, but facilitates a deeply interactive and inclusive process from which something new can emerge to take us where we need to go.

Instructor Responsibilities:

Students can expect that I am fully prepared for class, that I have read their weekly discussion board posts comments, that I give them feedback on assignments, and that I respond to their emails within three business days.

COURSE COMPLETION REQUIREMENTS

Your success in this course depends on the following:

Attendance and Participation

As a seminar, student attendance and participation are mandatory. Please show up prepared to participate. I will take roll and keep track of participation every session. Please note that activity on the blog and class lexicon constitute participation.

Discussion posts

Students are expected to respond to the week's course material or bring in online material relating to the course on the course [blog](#). They are also expected to comment on posts by their peers. Students should make their post no later than 24 hours before the class meets. By the end of the course, all students should have a minimum of ten (10) posts and ten (10) comments.

Playlist or Media Essay

By midsemester, students will submit either a playlist or a media essay relating to a theme or themes discussed in the course. Each submission should have a short one-page description/explanation.

Presentations

Students are required to present on at least one module. In a ten-minute presentation, they should summarize the reading and pose critical questions for the class. Ideally, they would have also consulted the suggested readings for that module.

Final Paper

Students will submit a final paper of 8-12 pages. They will be working on this paper throughout the semester. The blog posts will allow them to explore initial ideas and brainstorm. Presentations will allow the student to focus on a specific topic. The playlist or media essay will allow students to engage religious cultural expressions directly. In that way, the essay might be a written expansion of a given module or a synthesis of themes from throughout the course.

GRADING

Final Course Grade:

Grades in this course are weighted according to the table below.

Activity or Major Assignment	Due Date	Points or Grade %
Participation (In-class, Class Lexicon, Course Blog)	--	40
Playlist or Media Essay	March 5, 2021	20
Presentations	--	10
Final Paper (Including Outline, Drafts, and Final Submission)	May 6, 2021	30
Total		100%

Grading Scale:

Grade	Range
A	100 - 95
B+	87 - 89
B	84 - 86
B-	80 - 83
C+	77 - 79
C	74 - 76
C-	70 - 73
D+	67 - 69
D	65 - 66
D-	61 - 64
F	60 and Below

ACADEMIC POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Attendance Policy:

You are responsible for material covered in any class that you do not attend. If you miss a class, you must contact a classmate or me for the missed information. If you have a situation that might cause you to miss an entire week of class, discuss it with me *as soon as possible*.

Submission Policy:

Submit all work through Canvas.

Late Work:

Work should be submitted on time as they are a necessary part of the course experience. A grace period of two days will be allowed for assignments. After that, a penalty will be applied to the assignment.

Coursework Difficulties:

Please discuss any issues that you are having in completing the coursework on time with me. I am available to talk this over with you by appointment.

Incomplete Policy:

If you are unable to complete the coursework during the semester due to some catastrophic issue, you must contact me immediately to discuss your alternatives.

Academic Honesty and Plagiarism:

Our purpose in the classroom is to seek the truth; this work requires trust and honesty between teacher and student. If we are not honest about what we know and do not know, our learning will always be impaired. Because our teaching and learning depends on this honest communication, we expect all students to understand what plagiarism is and why it is unacceptable.

Any student considering plagiarism should recognize the consequences and consider alternatives. Students uncertain about what constitutes plagiarism may request help from faculty or from appropriate University services. For information on using sources in writing, see the Identifying and Avoiding Academic Dishonesty section of the [Rutgers Academic Integrity](http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu) web site:

<http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/resources-for-students/>

STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT

Students are required to adhere to the [University Student Code of Conduct](#) delineated in the Rutgers Student Affairs website [Student Conduct](#) page:

<http://studentconduct.rutgers.edu/student-conduct-processes/university-code-of-student-conduct/#1495568095620-2f5ce77d-17dd>

ACCOMMODATIONS

Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines>. If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus's disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete the [Registration form](https://webapps.rutgers.edu/student-ods/forms/registration) (<https://webapps.rutgers.edu/student-ods/forms/registration>).

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

Academic Services:

- For academic support visit Rutgers Academics Student Support at <https://www.rutgers.edu/academics/student-support>
- Any student can obtain tutoring and other help at the [Learning Centers](#) on each campus. Check the website at <https://rlc.rutgers.edu/>
- For coaching help with writing skills and assignments visit the [Writing Coaching](#) webpage at <https://rlc.rutgers.edu/student-services/writing-coaching>
- Many library resources are available online. Assistance is available through phone, email, and chat. For information, check the [Rutgers Libraries](#) website at <https://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/>

Rutgers Student Health Services:

Rutgers Student Health Services is dedicated to health for the whole student body, mind and spirit. It accomplishes this through a staff of qualified clinicians and support staff. Services are available at several locations throughout the New Brunswick-Piscataway area. For more information visit: <http://health.rutgers.edu/>

Veteran Services:

Rutgers is proud to support veterans. If you are a veteran of the armed forces, please visit the Office of Veteran and Military Programs and Services website for more information: <https://veterans.rutgers.edu/>

TOPICS SCHEDULE

Week 1: Jan. 19, 2021

Category	Description
Meeting	Zoom
Core Topic(s)	Orientations
Learning Objectives	<p>At the end of this week you will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distinguish insider and outsider perspectives on Religion • Describe at least one topic they will learn about in this course, in their own words. • Post on the course blog and respond to others. • Define key terms • Recall the major periods of Islamic History • Identify the pitfalls of Islamophobic approaches to Islamic history
Readings/Media	<p>Studying Religion: An Introduction Through Cases: "Thinking about being a student of religion" and "On Defining and Studying Religion"</p> <p>Ayanna Sharif, "Wudu"</p> <p>Richard Eaton, "Islamic history as global history"</p>
Assignments Due	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-course survey • Discussion post

Week 2: Jan. 26, 2021

Category	Description
Meeting	Zoom
Core Topic(s)	The Muslim Discovery of America
Learning Objectives	<p>At the end of this week you will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recall information about Muslim participation in the Exploration of the Americas • Perform close reading
Readings/Media	Laila Lalami's <i>The Moor's Account</i> , 1-164.

Category	Description
	Sam Haselby, " Muslims of Early America " <i>Aeon</i> , May 20 2019.
Assignments Due	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion post

Week 3: Feb. 1, 2021

Category	Description
Meeting	Zoom
Core Topic(s)	A Permanent State of War: The Slave Trade in West Africa
Learning Objectives	At the end of this week you will be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distinguish primary and secondary texts •
Readings/Media	<p>Sylviane Diouf, "African Muslims, Christian Europeans, and the Transatlantic Slave Trade" <i>Servants of Allah</i></p> <p>Episode 1 of <i>Roots</i> (2016)</p> <p>The Autobiography of Nicholas Said</p>
Assignments Due	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion post

Week 4: Feb. 8, 2021

Category	Description
Meeting	Zoom
Core Topic(s)	Islam as Religion in the community of the enslaved
Learning Objectives	At the end of this week you will be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recall notable enslaved Muslims in America • Identify Islamic practices of enslaved communities • Interpret narratives of enslaved Muslims
Readings/Media	<p>Diouf, "Upholding the five pillars of Islam in a Hostile World" <i>Servants of Allah</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • African Burial Ground Tour
Assignments Due	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion post

Week 5: Feb. 15, 2021

Category	Description
Meeting	Zoom
Core Topic(s)	Islam as Culture in the community of the enslaved
Learning Objectives	At the end of this week you will be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe cultural retentions of enslaved Muslims in the Americas
Readings/Media	Diouf, "The Muslim Community" <i>Servants of Allah</i> Baghdadi, <i>The Amusement of the Foreigner</i>
Assignments Due	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion post

Week 6: Feb. 22

Category	Description
Meeting	Zoom
Core Topic(s)	Arabic Literacies in the Americas
Learning Objectives	At the end of this week you will be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe the risks and rewards of literacy for enslaved Muslims
Readings/Media	Diouf, "Literacy: A Distinction and a Danger" <i>Servants of Allah</i> Judy, Ronald. "African Muslims in Antebellum America: A Sourcebook." In <i>Black American Literature Forum</i> , vol. 22, no. 4, pp. 828-840. St. Louis University, 1988. Omar Ibn Said. <i>Autobiography of Omar ibn Said, Slave in North Carolina</i> , 1831. Ed. John Franklin Jameson. Podcast: " The Long Journey of Omar Ibn Said " <i>African-American Passages: Black Lives in the 19th Century</i>
Assignments Due	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion post

Week 7: March 1, 2021

Category	Description
Meeting	Zoom

Category	Description
Core Topic(s)	Muslim Insurgency and Fugitivity
Learning Objectives	At the end of this week you will be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe enslaved Muslim resistance to slavery
Readings/Media	Diouf, "Resistance, Revolts, and Returns to Africa" <i>Servants of Allah</i> <i>Prince Among Slaves</i> The Book of Negroes/ Somebody Knows my Name
Assignments Due	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion post

Week 8: March 8, 2021

Category	Description
Meeting	Zoom
Core Topic(s)	Islam and the Beginnings of Black Thought
Learning Objectives	At the end of this week you will be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
Readings/Media	Edward Blyden, "Mohammedanism and the Negro Race" Yasmeen Arif, " <u>Dusé Mohamed Ali: The Black Muslim editor whose paper covered the world</u> " Richard Brent Turner, "Pan-africanism and the New American Islam: Edward Wilmot Blyden and Mohammed Alexander Russel Webb" <i>Islam in the African American Experience</i>
Assignments Due	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion post

Week 9: March 22, 2021

Category	Description
Meeting	Zoom
Core Topic(s)	Racial Islam
Learning Objectives	At the end of this week you will be able to:

Category	Description
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contextualize the Moorish Science Temple, Nation of Islam, and the Ahmadiyya in the wake of reconstruction and migration Recall the significance of names and naming
Readings/Media	Richard Brent Turner, <i>Islam in the African American Experience</i> , 71-173.
Assignments Due	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussion post

Week 10: March 29, 2021

Category	Description
Meeting	Zoom
Core Topic(s)	The Muslim Sound of Black Music
Learning Objectives	At the end of this week you will be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trace the Muslim contributions to Black music across the Blues, Jazz, and Hip Hop
Readings/Media	<p>Hisham Aidi, "The Jazz Caliphate" <i>Rebel Music</i></p> <p>Su'ad Abdul Khabeer, "The Loop of Muslim Cool" <i>Muslim Cool: Race, Religion, and Hip Hop in the United States</i> (New York: NYU Press), 2016.</p> <p>http://www.returnofthemecca.com</p>
Assignments Due	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussion post

Week 11: April 5, 2021

Category	Description
Meeting	Zoom
Core Topic(s)	Malcolm X
Learning Objectives	At the end of this week you will be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">
Readings/Media	Richard Brent Turner, "Malcolm X and his Successors" <i>Islam in the African American Experience</i>

Category	Description
	Sohail Daulatzai, <i>Black star, crescent moon: The Muslim international and black freedom beyond America</i> . U of Minnesota Press, 2012. 169-196. <i>Malcolm X</i> , Spike Lee, 1992.
Assignments Due	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion post

Week 12: April 12, 2021

Category	Description
Meeting	Zoom
Core Topic(s)	Engaged Surrender
Learning Objectives	At the end of this week you will be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply an intersectional lens to the experiences of Muslim women of color
Readings/Media	Carolyn Rouse, “Engaged Surrender” and “Searching for Islamic Purity in and Out of Secular Los Angeles County”, <i>Engaged Surrender: African American Women and Islam</i> . Univ of California Press, 2004. Identity Politics Podcast
Assignments Due	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion Post

Week 13: April 19, 2021

Category	Description
Meeting	Zoom
Core Topic(s)	African Muslims Return
Learning Objectives	At the end of this week you will be able to:
Readings/Media	Zain Abdullah, “The Black Encounter”, <i>Black Mecca: The African Muslims of Harlem</i> . Oxford University Press, 2010.
Assignments Due	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion Post

Week 14: April 26, 2021

Category	Description
Meeting	Zoom
Core Topic(s)	Islam and the Problem of Black Suffering
Learning Objectives	At the end of this week you will be able to:
Readings/Media	Sherman Jackson, <i>Islam and the Problem of Black Suffering</i> EP 23: Ask a Shaykh (ft. Shaykh Muhammad Mendes) <i>Identity Politics Podcast</i> , Oct. 30, 2017
Assignments Due	• Discussion Post

Week 15: May 3, 2021

Category	Description
Meeting	Zoom
Core Topic(s)	Conclusion
Learning Objectives	At the end of this week you will be able to: • Summarize the course
Readings/Media	• Review notes from course
Assignments Due	• Discussion Post