

**Course n°21:920:360:61**  
**Sociology of Contemporary Islam(s)**  
**Fall 2019**  
**Tuesday 6-9pm, Room Conklin 342**

**Zahra Ali**

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**Office hours:** Wednesday 4-6pm in 614 Hill Hall and by appointment

**Course description**

This course explores contemporary Islam(s) and Muslim communities from a sociological perspective and provides a critical understanding and analysis of Muslim intellectual, religious, and cultural productions and traditions. The course looks at social, economic and political realities and experiences related to Islam(s) and Muslims. It analyses the imbrication of Islam and 'Muslimness' with race, ethnicity, class, gender etc. The course provides context and history to the understanding of social, political and intellectual movements and social realities related to Islam(s) and Muslims with a focus on North America. The course encourages students to investigate central questions in sociology in relation to contemporary Islam(s) and Muslims such as the relationship between religion and secularism, postcolonialism and orientalism.

The course consists of lectures, seminars, workshops and students-led discussions using texts, images and videos. We use Blackboard (BB) to access course documents, and the power-point of the course will be accessible after the session. We use BB for occasional online discussions on specific topics as well as to exchange relevant information, resources and links.

**Course goals**

The general aim of this course is to provide context, history and complexity to the understanding of contemporary Islam(s) and Muslim communities. At the end of the term, students should be able to:

- demonstrate essential knowledge and understanding of Muslim intellectual, religious, and cultural productions and traditions, and how experiences of Islam(s) are thought, built and shaped through social, political, economic realities.
- understand essential conceptual ideas and theories related to Islam(s) and Muslims.
- be equipped with a sociological approach of contemporary Islam(s) and Muslim communities that can be used to broaden understanding of the world from everyday interactions to transnational realities.
- be able to identify and explain several main theoretical perspectives about Islam(s) and Muslim communities and their interactions with concepts of race, class, gender, ethnicity, etc.
- discuss different ways to think about Islam(s) and Muslims and formulate theoretical questions.
- begin exploring research horizons and relating research questions to broader sociological concerns.

## Course Requirements

Learning is a collaborative experience of mutual sharing and learning. **It is important to read all assignments before class in order to be able to benefit from course fully. The weekly readings are on Blackboard. No need to buy the books, all the course material is available on Blackboard. You must check it regularly since readings on the syllabus are subject to change.** This course will test students on material presented in lectures, class discussions, texts, images and films. **You are expected to read the weekly assignments carefully and to come to class prepared to discuss the readings.**

### Grading

**20 % class participation:** your active presence and your participation to the class dynamic and discussion.

**20 % oral presentation:** in a group of 2 students you will give a 15 mn max. presentation on the weekly topic preferably based on the weekly readings.

**20% reaction paper:** you will write a short paper of around 500 words reflecting on the weekly topic preferably based on the weekly readings. The deadline is Friday 11.59pm of the same week.

**40% essay:** you will write an essay of around 1000 words answering ONE question in the list of questions that will be made available on BB by the end of the semester. **The Deadline is Saturday December 7<sup>th</sup> 11.59pm.**

### Grading scale

A : 100-90

B+ :89.9 - 84.5

B : 84.49 - 79.5

C+ : 79.49 - 74.5

C : 74.49 - 69.5

D :69.49 - 59.5

F : 59.49 - 0

### Academic integrity

Plagiarism and cheating will not be tolerated. The Rutgers Academic Integrity Policy will apply to all course work. If you have any doubt about what constitutes plagiarism or cheating, ask me and/or consult the Rutgers Academic Integrity Policy:

<http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-policy/>

Take precautions by always referencing the materials you have read by adding a footnote, endnote, or citing your source text in parenthesis. Referencing shows you have done serious research, and that you have acknowledged the work of other scholars and engage critically with their work and ideas. It is important not to rely on one or two sources exclusively, and diversify your sources that can include books, academic articles, newspaper articles, online or printed magazines, internet websites, films etc.

**Policy on late submission of course work**

Papers submitted late will be marked down 3% percent for each day past the deadline, and will not be accepted after ten days past the deadline. Please contact me in advance if you have difficulty meeting a deadline for health or personal reasons.

**Religious Holiday Policy and Accommodations**

Students are advised to provide timely notification to instructors about necessary absences for religious observances and are responsible for making up the work or exams according to an agreed-upon schedule. The Division of Student Affairs is available to verify absences for religious observance, as needed: (973) 353-5063 or [DeanofStudents@newark.rutgers.edu](mailto:DeanofStudents@newark.rutgers.edu).

**Important semester dates**

Please check these important dates (last day to drop a class, last day to add class etc.) to avoid any penalty: <https://registrar.newark.rutgers.edu/office-registrar-academic-calendar>

**Learning resources available**

Rutgers Learning Center (tutoring services) Room 140, Bradley Hall  
973 353 5608

<http://ncas.rutgers.edu/rlc>

Writing Center (tutoring and writing workshop) Room 126, Conklin Hall  
973 353 5847 or [nwc@newark.rutgers.edu](mailto:nwc@newark.rutgers.edu)

<http://ncas.rutgers.edu/writingcenter>

**Disability services**

Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. The Office of Disability Services (ODS) is responsible for the determination of appropriate accommodations for students who encounter barriers due to disability. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact ODS, register, have an initial appointment, and provide documentation. Once a student has completed the ODS process (registration, initial appointment, and documentation submitted) and reasonable accommodations are determined to be necessary and appropriate, a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) will be provided to the student.

**Applying for Services:** <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/applying-for-services>

**Documentation Guidelines:** <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines>

**Letter of Accommodations (LOA) :** <https://webapps.rutgers.edu/student-ods/Forms/LOA>

**Office of Disability services (ODS):** Suite 219, Paul Robeson Campus Center  
973 353 5375 or [odsnewark@rutgers.edu](mailto:odsnewark@rutgers.edu)

**Students with Temporary Conditions/Injuries**

Students experiencing a temporary condition or injury that is adversely affecting their ability to fully participate in their courses should submit a request for assistance at: <https://temporaryconditions.rutgers.edu>.

**Counseling Services**

Counseling Center Room 101, Blumenthal Hall  
(973) 353-5805

<http://counseling.newark.rutgers.edu/>.

### **Students Who are Pregnant**

The Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance is available to assist students with any concerns or potential accommodations related to pregnancy: (973) 353-1906 or [TitleIX@newark.rutgers.edu](mailto:TitleIX@newark.rutgers.edu).

### **Gender or Sex-Based Discrimination or Harassment**

Students experiencing any form of gender or sex-based discrimination or harassment, including sexual assault, sexual harassment, relationship violence, or stalking, should know that help and support are available.

To report an incident, contact the Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance: (973) 353-1906 or [TitleIX@newark.rutgers.edu](mailto:TitleIX@newark.rutgers.edu).

To submit an incident report: [tinyurl.com/RUNReportingForm](http://tinyurl.com/RUNReportingForm).

To speak with a staff member who is confidential and does **NOT** have a reporting responsibility, contact the Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance: (973) 353-1918 or [run.vpva@rutgers.edu](mailto:run.vpva@rutgers.edu).

### **Schedule Fall 2019**

**Important note: Readings are subject to change, please rely mainly on Blackboard postings and not only on the hard copy of syllabus. No need to buy the books, the readings are all available on Blackboard or through the links provided. You are expected to read the weekly assignments carefully and to come to class prepared to discuss the readings.**

#### **WEEK 1: Tuesday September 3**

##### **General introduction to the course**

No readings or preparation required

#### **WEEK 2: Tuesday September 10**

##### **Sociology and Religion**

- "Chapter 15: Religion" Ron McGivern in *Introduction to Sociology* :

<https://opentextbc.ca/introductiontosociology/chapter/chapter-15-religion/>

- "Studying Religion, Making it Sociological" Robert Wuthnow in *Handbook of the Sociology of Religion* edited by Michele Dillon (Cambridge University Press : 2003)

#### **WEEK 3: Tuesday September 17**

##### **Islam(s) and Sociology**

- "Sociology of Islam: Precedents and Perspectives" Salvatore Armando in *Sociology of Islam* (1:2) 2013, pp7-13.

- "The idea of an anthropology of Islam" Talal Asad in *Occasional Paper Series* (Center for Contemporary Arab Studies Georgetown University:1986) pp.1-23.

- "Islam and Its History" Aaron W. Hughes in *Handbook of Contemporary Islam and Muslim Lives* edited by Mark Woodward and Ronald Lukens-Bull (Springer: 2019).

## **WEEK 4: Tuesday September 24**

### **Islam as Faith**

- Excerpts of *No god but God. The Origins and Evolution of Islam*. Reza Aslan (Random House: 2005) pp 1-70.
- “Islam in Global Perspectives” Daniel Brown in *A New Introduction to Islam* (Wiley Blackwell: 2017) pp1-14.
- “What All Muslims Agree Upon” Khaled Abou El Fadl in *The Great Theft. Wrestling Islam from the Extremists* (HarperCollins: 2005) pp113-125.

## **WEEK 5: Tuesday October 1**

### **Islam or Islams?**

- “Fiqh and Adaptation to Social Reality” Mohammad Hashim Kamali, *The Muslim World* (86:1) 1996, pp62-84.
- “Shi‘a Islam in Practice” Edith Szanto in *Handbook of Contemporary Islam and Muslim Lives* edited by Mark Woodward and Ronald Lukens-Bull (Springer: 2019).
- “Between Legalist Exclusivism and Mysticist Universalism: Contested Sufi Muslim Identities in New York” Markus Dressler, *The Muslim World* (100: 4) 2010, pp431-451.

## **WEEK 6: Tuesday October 8**

### **Being a Muslim: the need for Intersectionality**

- “Muslim First, Arab Second: a Strategic Politics of Race and Gender” Nadine Naber, *The Muslim World* (95:4) 2005, pp479-495.
- “How to be Black and Muslim in ‘Post-Racial’ America” John Austin, *BeaconBroadside*, February 2014: <https://www.beaconbroadside.com/broadside/2014/02/how-to-be-black-and-muslim-in-post-racial-america.html>
- “From the Oppressed to the Terrorist: Muslim American Women Caught in the Crosshairs of Intersectionality” Sahar Aziz, *Hastings Race & Poverty Law Journal* (9:1) 2012, pp.

## **WEEK 7: Tuesday October 15**

### **Orientalism**

- “Introduction” & “Conclusion” Cemil Aydin in *The Idea of the Muslim World. A Global Intellectual History* (Harvard University Press: 2017) pp1-13 & pp227-237.
- “Islam through Western Eyes” Edward Said, *The Nation*, 1980: <https://www.thenation.com/article/islam-through-western-eyes/>

## **WEEK 8: Tuesday October 22**

### **Islamophobia**

- “Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: A Political Perspective on Culture and Terrorism.” Mahmood Mamdani, *American Anthropologist* (104: 3) 2002, pp.766-775.
- “Islamophobia in Classrooms, Media, and Politics.” Mayida Zaal, *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy* (55: 6) 2011, pp.555-558.
- “The Myth of Radicalization” Arun Kundnani in *The Muslims are Coming: Islamophobia, Extremism, and the Domestic War on Terror*, 2013.

**Further readings on the topic, check out the #IslamophobiaIsRacism Syllabus project:**

<https://islamophobiaisracism.wordpress.com>

## **WEEK 9: Tuesday October 29**

### **American Islam**

-“American Muslims in the Contemporary World: 1965 to Present” Zain Abdullah in *Cambridge Companion to American Islam* edited by Juliane Hammer and Omid Safi (Cambridge University Press: 2013) pp65-82.

- “Common Cause: On the Black-Immigrant Debate and Constructing the Muslim American”, Sylvia Cha-Malik, *The Journal of Race, Ethnicity, and Religion* (2:8) 2011, pp.1-39.

## **WEEK 10: Tuesday November 5**

### **Black Islam**

-“African Muslim Slaves and Islam in Antebellum America” Richard Brent Turner in *The Cambridge Companion to American Islam* edited by Juliane Hammer and Omid Safi (Cambridge University Press: 2013) pp. 28-44

-“The Black Encounter” Zain Abdullah in *Black Mecca. The African Muslims of Harlem* (Oxford University Press: 2010) pp47-80.

### **Further readings on the topic, check out the #BlackIslamSyllabus:**

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1avhgPrW30AFjgzV9X5aPqkZUA3uGd0-BZr9\\_zhArtQ/mobilebasic](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1avhgPrW30AFjgzV9X5aPqkZUA3uGd0-BZr9_zhArtQ/mobilebasic)

## **WEEK 11: Tuesday November 12**

### **Islam and Gender**

-“Islam Beyond Patriarchy Through Gender Inclusive Qur’anic Analysis” Amina Wadud in *Wanted. Equality and Justice in the Muslim Family* (Musawah: 2009) pp 95-112.

-“Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving? Anthropological Reflections on Cultural Relativism and Its Others” Lila Abu Lughod, *American Anthropologist* (104:3) pp. 783-790.

-“Islamic Feminism: What’s in a name?” Margot Badran, 2002:

<http://www.feministezine.com/feminist/international/Islamic-Feminism-01.html>

## **WEEK 12: Tuesday November 19**

### **Special class “Maqam and Religion” with Hamed al-Saadi and Amir Elsaffar**

Dana Room, John Cotton Dana Library

**Thanksgiving Break: No Class Tuesday November 26 ☺**

## **WEEK 13: Tuesday December 3**

### **Islam and Music**

-“What Islam Gave the Blues” Sylviane A. Diouf, *Renovatio*, June 2019:

<https://renovatio.zaytuna.edu/article/what-islam-gave-the-blues>

-“Rep that Islam: The Rhyme and Reason of American Islamic Hip Hop” Suad Abdul Khabeer *The Muslim World* (97:1) 2007, pp125-141.

## **WEEK 14: Tuesday December 10**

Film, wrap-up and review.