

Syllabus *Research Seminar – Muslim Lives*
21:510:490, Spring 2020, Rutgers University-Newark
Tuesday 6 p.m. – 9 p.m., Conklin 203

INSTRUCTOR

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 11:30 am -12:30 pm and by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In the first half of this course, we collectively engage with and analyze different sorts of Muslim lives, as told from different perspectives. We focus, in turn, on American Muslims and South Asian Muslims. Both subjects are of contemporary interest in the world broadly and in New Jersey in particular. In addition to learning about specific topics, students will gain familiarity with how to approach different types of sources and be exposed to various methods of historical analysis. Each set of readings is accompanied by a short group of questions, given on this syllabus, that offers some starting points for thinking critically about those materials.

In the second half of the course, students devote themselves to researching and writing a paper of approximately 15 pages on a topic of their choosing. We will begin laying the groundwork for formulating and advancing this project from the first day of class. By conducting archival work and writing an original paper, students will gain in-depth knowledge about their chosen topic and will also develop research methods, critical thinking skills, and writing strategies.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Prompt students to think critically and with empathy about Muslim lives and portrayals thereof in modern times.

Equip students to write about a variety of subjects from a historical perspective.

Further cultivate each student's grasp of historical method.

Facilitate archival research and the writing of an original research paper.

Learn how to make convincing historical arguments and piece together evidence in pursuit of larger points.

Develop writing skills such that students can express complicated ideas in clear, compelling prose.

REQUIRED TEXTS

There are no required books for this course. All readings are available on Blackboard.

GRADING AND ASSIGNMENTS

Your grade is based on four components:

Class Attendance and Participation	25%
Writing Assignments	20%
Research Paper Preparation	25% (see breakdown below)
Final Research Paper	30%

*Extra credit is available

Class Attendance: You are required to attend all classes. Everyone gets one late pass / leave early pass per term (up to 30 minutes late / early), and beyond that your grade will suffer.

Excused Absences: Recognized grounds for absence include illness requiring medical attention, curricular or extracurricular activities approved by the faculty, and recognized religious holidays. You must contact the professor or grader, in advance where possible, or absences will be counted as unexcused.

Extended Absences: Any student who misses eight or more sessions through any combination of excused and unexcused absences will not earn credit in this class. Such students should withdraw to avoid getting an F.

Class Participation: You should come to class having carefully read all listed readings for that day and ready to talk about them.

Writing Assignments: There are three writing assignments (excluding the final paper) and two comment assignments. The writing assignments are:

Feb 2: "I am a Muslim, (S)he is a Muslim"

Feb 14: Online Archive Assignment

Date TBD (after MET Visit): Representation Assignment

All assignments are due at 11:59 pm via Blackboard; comment due dates are specified in the syllabus. Each writing assignment is worth 5% of your final grade; each comment assignment is worth 2.5% of your grade. These assignments develop the skills needed to read and make sense of primary and secondary sources and analyze different peoples and communities in nuanced ways.

Research Paper

Every student will produce a ~15-page final paper on a topic of their choice that is based on archival research. Preferably, the subject of your final paper will relate to one of the overarching themes of the course (e.g., Muslim lives, life narratives, representation). The final paper is preceded by several assignments designed to help everyone with some of the critical steps of archival research and writing a research paper. The grade breakdown by assignments related to the final paper is as follows:

Proposal	5%
Research Plan	10%
Outline	10%
Final Research Paper	30%

Extra Credit: Islam-Related Events on Campus in Spring 2020

Each student can receive extra credit for attending one of the below Islam-related events and writing a 1–2-page (double-spaced) report on it. This is a one-time offer; you cannot repeat it by attending multiple events. *Further events may be added as they are announced.

January 31, 4 pm: Christiane Gruber and Shahzia Sikander, “The Praiseworthy One: Devotional Images of the Prophet Muhammad in Islamic Traditions,” Dana Room, Dana Library

February 13, 2:30 pm: Golbarg Rekabtalaei, film talk on Qaysar, Dana Room, Dana Library

March 12, all day (attend any one session): Global Islamophobia in an Era of Populism, *New Brunswick Campus

April 9, 2:30 pm: Kamran Rastegar, film talk TBA, Dana Room, Dana Library

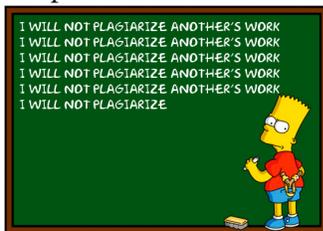
CLASS POLICIES

Absences: If you miss class or arrive late, you are absent. Everyone gets one free late / early pass; you can use this to arrive late or leave early, up to 30 minutes. You cannot use this pass for the guest lecture, archives trip, or MET trip. I recommend saving your late / early pass for a situation when you really need it.

Electronics: Laptops are permitted for note taking, unless they become distracting. As difficult as it is, we will all make a good faith effort to refrain from checking our cell phones.

Late Work: All late work incurs a penalty of one letter grade for every 24 hours late.

Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty: The professor expects full academic honesty from all students. If you plagiarize, cheat, help another student cheat, or are otherwise academically dishonest, you will face disciplinary action. We will go over proper citation procedures in class. If you have any doubts, concerns, or questions about properly citing sources, I urge you to ask the professor rather than risk plagiarism. See: <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/>



Please include the Rutgers honor pledge on all major course assignments submitted for grading: “On my honor, I have neither received nor given any unauthorized assistance on this examination (assignment).”

SUPPORT AND ASSISTANCE

Counseling Center: The Rutgers–Newark Counseling Center provides a number of counseling and consultative services to enrolled and eligible undergraduate and graduate students. For students, if you are seeking individual or group therapy, you can expect to find a safe, supportive space to collaboratively identify and begin to change the thoughts, behaviors, and beliefs that prevent you from being your best self. <http://counseling.newark.rutgers.edu>.

Disabilities: Rutgers 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>.

Food: PantryRUN, the campus food pantry, helps students who have difficulty affording enough healthy food to remain focused on their studies and stay healthy. You can find hours and information here: <https://myrun.newark.rutgers.edu/pantryrun>.

Writing: The Rutgers University-Newark Writing Center provides tutoring for students who want to strengthen their reading, writing, and research skills and offers individual sessions and writing workshops to all undergraduate students currently enrolled in classes on the Rutgers University-Newark campus. More details here: <https://sasn.rutgers.edu/student-support/tutoring-academic-support/writing-center>.

Week 1: January 21 Laying the Groundwork: Archives, Bias, and Who Gets to Speak?

No Readings

*In Class Exercise: Our First Archival Document

*Watch film “A Sinner in Mecca” in class and discuss

*Who narrates the film? Would other Muslims define him differently than he defines himself?
How would further research help you better understand the film?*

Section 1.A: Muslim Lives in America

Week 2: January 28 First-Person Narratives and Third-Person Narratives

*Public lecture by Sadaf Jaffer, Dana Room, Dana Library.

Smith and Watson, “Life Narrative,” 1–19

Abdullah, “A Muslim’s Search for Meaning”

Johnston, “A Convert’s Search for Meaning”

What are some advantages of first-person narratives? What are some limitations? How do we work with first-person narratives as archival sources? Who has the authority to tell the story of an individual or a group of people?

*Feb 2: First-Person and Third-Person Narrative Assignment: “I am a Muslim / (S)he is a Muslim” (due 11:59 p.m. on Blackboard)

Week 3: February 4 Race and Religion in American Muslim Communities Lived Religion and More on College Campuses

*Feb 4: Comment Assignment: Comment on the assignments contributed by two other students (due at noon on Blackboard)

Kambiz GhaneaBassiri, *History of Islam*, 1–8 and chapter 5
Chan-Malik, *Being Muslim*, 1–75
Chan-Malik, “Raising Muslim Girls,” 326–334
Ibrahim Jaaber, “New-Ark” (video of performance)

How do race and religion intersect in the lives of American Muslims in specific times and places? How does that relationship change depending on other identities, such as gender? How does a story change depending on its narrator? Depending on its form and genre?

Week 4: February 11 Archives in the Physical and Digital Worlds

*Meet at Dana Library, hosted by Angela Lawrence, archivist for RU-Newark Archives

Caswell and Mallick, “Collecting the Easily Missed Stories,” 73–86
Tiffert, “Peering Down the Memory Hole,” 550–68

What is an archive? How can we interact with and use archives and archival documents? Who cultivates and maintains different sorts of archives? What are the promises and perils of online archives?

*Feb 14: Online Archive Assignment (due 11:59 p.m. on Blackboard; if you’re a romantic, please feel free to turn in this assignment early)

Week 5: February 18 Representing and Misrepresenting Islam

*Possible Fieldtrip TBD with class input

Rabbat, “New Islamic Art Galleries”
Roxburgh, Review of *New Galleries*, 641–44
Khalil, “Reliving the Distortions of History”
Said, *Orientalism*, introduction, 1–28

What are the venues and ways in which Islam and Muslims are represented in American society? Who controls those representations and why? How can we understand an art gallery through the lens of history? What is at stake in representing and misrepresenting Islam and its followers?

Section 1.B: Muslim Lives in South Asia

Week 6: February 25

NO CLASS

*Date TBD: Representation Assignment

*Date TBD: Comment Assignment

Week 7: March 3 **Mughal Lives: In Words and In Situ**

Longman excerpt on Mughals and from *Baburnama*, 13–21
Jahangirnama, Thackston trans, 3–65 (preface and first regnal year)
Zaman, “Cities, Time, and the Backward Glance,” 699–705

How do these two Mughal kings portray themselves? How do we understand their works in terms of the line between history and literature? What sorts of identities mattered to them? What aspects of these memoirs might matter to us today and why?

*In Class Resources Exercise

Week 8: March 10 **Lives Torn Apart: Research and Writing within Conflict and Trauma**

9-minute video: “The Kashmir conflict, explained” (for historical background)
“India Revokes Kashmir’s Special Status” (for key 2019 developments)

Kanjwal, “Life Narratives of Kashmiri Muslims in Contemporary Kashmir,” 40–60
Fazili, “Police Subjectivity in Occupied Kashmir,” 184–210
Banday, “The unlawful crackdown on the media in Kashmir”
Qazi, “Curfew Diary-Kashmir, 2016”

How can we think about Kashmir as a region in geographic, cultural, and other terms? What role does the state play in Kashmir, and how does that impact the work of scholars? What are some ways that Kashmiris are making sense of their political past and present? Why might the voices of Kashmiris be considered threatening by some in modern-day India?

*In Class Archives to Specific Exercise

*March 13: Research Proposal Assignment (due 11:59 p.m. on Blackboard)

March 17: Spring Break, No Class

Section 2: Research Papers

Week 9: March 24

NO CLASS

*March 24: Research Plan Assignment (due 11:59 p.m. on Blackboard)

Week 10: March 31 **Research Updates**

3-5-minute student presentations in class, details TBA.

*In Class Plagiarism Exercise

Week 11: April 7

NO CLASS

*April 6: Outline Assignment (due 11:59 p.m. on Blackboard)

Week 12: April 14 **Individual Meetings**

Individual Meetings, to be scheduled with the Professor

Week 13: April 21

NO CLASS

You should be writing!

Week 14: April 28 **Final Presentations**

5-7-minute student presentation in class of their final research

*In Class Debrief Exercise

May 5: Final Papers Due (11:59 p.m. on Blackboard)