

History 261

# The Middle East in the Islamic Era

Summer Quarter 2012

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## General

**History 261** is a general survey of Middle Eastern history from the dawn of Islam to the present. The course will focus primarily on the Arab, Persian, and Turkish nations and will explore the culture and folkways of these peoples. We will look at such issues as:

1. *In what environment did Islam take shape? What are its central teachings?*
2. *After the incredible series of conquests that took them from India to Spain, how did the early Muslims adapt from simple Arabian political arrangements to the vast needs of world empire?*
3. *What elements made up the intellectual flowering of the "Classical Age of Islam"?*

In addition, we will follow the political development of the Middle East into modern times and current events. We will look at the impact of the West and of modernization, and at responses such as nationalism, Palestine, and Islamic fundamentalism. We will assess political change as it reflects cultural and social factors. We will study such matters as:

1. *What factors led to the rise of Islamic so-called "Gunpowder Empires"? What led to their decline?*
2. *How did Muslims try to cope with intrusions by Western military and economic power? To what degree could they adapt Western ways to build national power?*
3. *What has the era of nation-state, international rivalries, and global communication meant for Muslim peoples?*
4. *What do issues such as Palestine, Islamic fundamentalism, secularism, and feminism mean for Muslims today?*

One suggestion for the student is to think strategically. The many specific details in the course material will mean little unless they are integrated into overall interpretations of Middle Eastern civilization and history.

# Course Features

## Books--

- \* Sydney Fisher and William Ochsenswald, [The Middle East: A History](#) (McGraw-Hill; 9780073385624)  
This book will take us up to modern times as it traces the rise of Islamic civilization.
- \* William L. Cleveland, [A History of the Modern Middle East](#) (2009; Westview Press; ISBN: 9780813343747) This is a good study of the modern era of nationalism and national development.

## COURSEWORK--

Be sure to look at the "**Lectures & Discussions**" link on the Home Page, and at the "**Reading Schedule**," located on the "**Assignments**" page (accessible from the Home Page). Readings and lectures are grouped by weeks.

During the term you will do **four** Discussion essays of 250-400 words each. You must post **two essays in each half of the course** (Discussions #1-#5, Discussions #6-#10), by the deadline for each. A Discussion essay should be 250-400 words. Each essay assignment is available in the "**Lectures & Discussions**" link for each Discussion, and so is a **Posts** icon for submitting your essay. Essays are usually due on Mondays or Thursdays, except on holidays. (See the schedule of due dates, below.)

During the term you will write and post a total of four brief essays in answer to four Discussion assignments by the deadline given for each. **You don't have to write an essay every week**, just two out of the first five (Discussions #1-#5) and two from the second five (Discussions #6-#10)

I like an essay that comes to grips with the student's chosen question--that tries to answer it logically with details and facts. It is especially desirable to use facts and details from the online readings and lectures. The two textbooks are helpful for these essays, but don't write a mere summary of what the text says. Don't base your essay on an encyclopedia article (especially that unreliable Wikipedia), though feel free to consult a decent encyclopedia [for background](#). Use paraphrases and quotes from the sources to back your points, not to make them, and avoid both long quotes (more than 40 words) and overly brief ones (less than 10 words). Avoid typo's and misspellings.

### Note what the assignment says about a purpose statement.

On most occasions when you don't post an essay, you will do the week's reading anyway and post a **response** to the essay of another student. Like the essays, this is usually due on Monday or Thursday. Find other students' essays through each Discussion Assignment's Post icon. Each response should be at least 75 words long and should express agreement, disagreement, and reasons for your view. You will do a total of two responses in Discussions #1-#5 and two in Discussions #6-#10.

This means that during the term you must post four bulletin essays of your own and four responses to others' essays. Essays are graded on a 25-point scale; responses on a 5-point scale.

Unfortunately, when you get a grade for your response, it'll read something like 4 or 5 "out of 25." Don't come unglued. It's really out of 5. Vista won't let me pool essays and responses with different "out of \_\_" numbers. Instead, even response grades say, "Out of 25." Please bear with me.

Also, **there is no credit for posting a response on a Discussion for which you have already submitted an essay.**

The following is this term's schedule of due dates for essays and responses for each Discussion:

Assignment	Due Date	Assignment	Due Date
Discussion #1 Essay	Friday June 29	Discussion #6 Essay	Friday July 20
Discussion #1 Response	Tuesday July 3	Discussion #6 Response	Tuesday July 24

Discussion #2 Essay	Tuesday July 3	Discussion #7 Essay	Tuesday July 24
Discussion #2 Response	Friday July 6	Discussion #7 Response	Friday July 27
Discussion #3 Essay	Friday July 6	Discussion #8 Essay	Friday July 27
Discussion #3 Response	Tuesday July 10	Discussion #8 Response	Tuesday July 31
Discussion #4 Essay	Tuesday July 10	Discussion #9 Essay	Tuesday July 31
Discussion #4 Response	Friday July 13	Discussion #9 Response	Friday August 3
Discussion #5 Essay	Friday July 13	Discussion #10 Essay	Friday August 3
Discussion #5 Response	Tuesday July 17	Discuss. #10 Response	Tuesday August 7

In addition to the brief essays and responses, you will compose a six-page paper (due August 4), following a sheet provided under "Assignments."

There will be two exams, each about two hours, on these dates: July 18 and August 9. You will take them online. (You are responsible for having access to a functioning computer on test days, so plan ahead.) The tests will have multiple-choice and essay questions and will be based on the text and the lectures. There will be preparation sheets for each listing possible questions.

NOTE: Copying material in print or on the Internet is forbidden. A zero grade will be assigned to paper or test in which plagiarized material appears, or if on a Discussion essay, the entire Discussions grade (25% of the total term grade).

Normally, late discussion essays are accepted but with a penalty of **.5/25** per day (up to a total of 3.5/25). If they are more than three days late, they must be sent to me by Vista email. Late responses are not accepted.

Late papers are assessed 2.5% per day (up to a total of 10%). This can be avoided if you obtain permission for an extension in advance of the due date.

If you miss the midterm or final exam for some legitimate reason, all is not lost. However, if you don't contact me and take the test right away, you will lose 10% right away and another 10% after a week.

GRADING--

The following is a breakdown of the final grade:

Discussions:	25%
Paper	25%
First exam	25%
Second exam	25%

All items will be assigned percentage grades, whose average will be translated into a letter grade according to the following:

93-plus	A	77-79%	C+
90-92%	A-	73-76%	C
87-89%	B+	70-72%	C-
83-86%	B	67-69%	D+
80-82%	B-	60-66%	D

OUTCOMES--

*At the conclusion of this course, successful students will be able to:*

1. Explain the significance of key people, facts, and events of the period under study, and develop standards to judge them from a historical-cultural perspective
2. Demonstrate the importance of traditions of thought and ethical values in the process of historical change
3. Expand their vocabulary
4. Evaluate historical arguments, judging the appropriateness of both logic and content
5. Adapt scholarly processes of analysis, interpretation, and synthesis to articulate their own points of view, demonstrating a command of relevant facts and a framework of logical deduction,
  - *Drawing inferences from data*
  - *Differentiating between facts, value judgments, and generalizations*
  - *Differentiating between description and explanation*
  - *Recognizing the role of cause and effect in historical analysis*

Let me know If you have any questions at all. I hope that the course will help you develop a basis for understanding a very relevant region. Not only to interpret current events, but also to enjoy a fascinating culture.