

History 261

The Middle East in the Islamic Era

Summer Quarter 2010

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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 Ochsenwald, [The Middle East: A History](#), Vol. I. (McGraw-Hill, 6th ed., 2004, ISBN: 0-07-244233-6) This book will take us up to modern times and traces the rise of Islamic civilization.
- * William L. Cleveland, [A History of the Modern Middle East](#) (Westview Press, 3rd ed., 2004, ISBN: 0-8133-4048-9) This is a good study of the modern era of nationalism and national development.
- * Hammond Atlas of the Middle East (ISBN: #0-8437-1830-7)
- * Extra readings on line.

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 all the assigned readings, and **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, except on holidays.

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. Responses are due three days after the Discussion's essays. You will post four Discussion responses in all, two in Weeks #1-#5, two in #6-#10. You must write responses for Discussions in which you did NOT submit an essay, which means that essays and responses must be submitted for **eight different Discussions**, total. **Note: there is no credit for posting a response on a Discussion for which you have already submitted an essay.**

Each response should be at least 75 words long and should express agreement, disagreement, and reasons for your view, up to a total of two responses in Discussions #1-#5 and two in the rest.

Essays are graded on a 25-point scale; responses on a 5-point scale. If you post extra essays, you will get the highest grades; in other words, a higher grade will be substituted for a lower.

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

Assignment	Due Date	Assignment	Due Date
Essay Discussion #1	Monday September 28	Essay Discussion #6	Monday November 2
Response Discussion #1	Thursday October 1	Response Discussion #6	Thursday November 5
Essay Discussion #2	Monday October 5	Essay Discussion #7	Monday November 9
Response Discussion #2	Thursday October 8	Response Discussion #7	Thursday November 12
Essay Discussion #3	Monday October 12	Essay Discussion #8	Monday November 16
Response Discussion #3	Thursday October 15	Response Discussion #8	Thursday November 19
Essay Discussion #4	Monday October 19	Essay Discussion #9	Monday November 23
Response Discussion #4	Thursday October 22	Response Discussion #9	Monday November 30
Essay Discussion #5	Monday October 26	Essay Discussion #10	Thursday December 3
Response Discussion #5	Thursday October 29	Response Discussion #10	Monday December 7

In addition to the brief essays and responses, you will compose a seven- or eight-page research paper (due December 2), following a sheet provided under "Assignments."

There will be two exams, each about two hours, on these dates: October 30 and December 8. You will take them online, and you may choose the times to take them on those dates. They 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 without attribution on essays and tests is plagiarism and is forbidden. A zero grade will be assigned to any paper or exam in which plagiarized material appears, or if on a Discussion essay, the entire Discussions grade (25% of the total term grade).

A note on late work--

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 essay 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.

GRADING--

The following is a breakdown of the final grade:

<i>On-line discussions:</i>	25%
<i>Midterm exam</i>	25%
<i>Paper</i>	25%
<i>Final Exam</i>	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.