This course is primarily intended for majors and any other students who wish to deepen their knowledge of the Middle East and learn ways to analyze historical, literary and ethnographic materials from the region. We will explore such themes as the relationship between literature, religion and the formation of communal identities, the development and relationship between “center” and “periphery” in Middle Eastern thought, the development of the “East-West” dichotomy and discourse, Nationalism, and Modernism. Pre-requisite: MES 100 or the consent of the instructor.


Grading: Grading will be based on short writing assignments (30%), attendance and class participation (20%), and an end-of-term research paper (50%).

January 15   Introduction to the course
January 20   Perspectives on Middle East and world History: Hodgson 1: 3-99
January 22   The world Before Islam: Hodgson 1: 103-145

First Writing Assignment due

January 27   History in Ancient Israel: “M. Burrows, “Ancient Israel” 101-131; Genesis, chaps 1-5, 10-11, 37-50
January 29   The Hellenistic World View: *C. Bradford Welles “Hellenistic Orient” 135-167
February 3   The Christian World View: “Erich Dinkler, Roland Bainton “Christianity”
February 5   Modern Uses of the Past: “Paul Schubert “Twentieth Century and the Ancient Near East”

Second Writing Assignment due

February 10  The Rise of Islam: Hodgson 1: 146-230
February 12  Problems in Islamic Historiography: "M. Cook & P. Crone “Hagarism”
February 17  The Caliphate: Hodgson 1: 231-409
February 19  The International Social Order: Hodgson 2: 3-151
February 24  Intellectual Traditions of the Caliphate: Hodgson 2: 152-200
February 26  Intellectual Traditions: “Walzer “Greek into Arabic” 1-37; Peters “Islamic Theology” 358-412
March 3     Sufism: Hodgson 2: 201-292

Paper proposals due

March 5     The Persico-Islamic Tradition: Hodgson 2: 293-368
March 10-12 Spring Break
March 17    Crusades
March 19    Mongols
March 24    Non-Muslims Humphreys 255-283
March 26    Peasants Humphreys 284-308
March 31
April 2
April 7

First draft of papers due

April 9
April 14
April 16
April 21
April 23
May 1

Final papers due by 12:00 PM