

## **WOMEN IN ISLAM: TEXTS AND PRACTICES (INTS 4527)**

**WINTER 2009**

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**Office Hours: Friday, 10:30-12:30pm**  
**(Or by appointment)**

### **Course Description**

This course will examine various roles that a religion can play in shaping its believers' socio-political and religious identities on the basis of their natural/social differences i.e. sex and gender. The main focus of the course will be on Islam and its role in the articulation of Muslim women's identities, the construction of their socio-religious images, and explanation of their roles, rights and responsibilities in the past and present. This course revolves around five major questions:

- What does Islam say about the status, roles, rights and responsibilities of Muslim women in its texts and teachings?
- How have Muslim states and communities applied religious texts and early teachings of Islam in divergent and conflicting ways in past and present?
- Why do many variations exist in the application of the texts and teachings of Islam regarding women's lives and rights across the Muslim world today?
- Why do Muslim women face different challenges despite belonging to the same religion?
- How do Muslim women-scholars re/read and re/explain the Islamic texts in modern contexts?

It is expected that this course will enable students (a) to acquire knowledge of the historical contexts and textual teachings, which have defined and constructed Muslim women's identities, roles and rights since the early years of Islam; (b) to understand diversity of Muslim women's voices i.e. conforming, contending, challenging and rebelling; (c) to compare various scholarly inquiries, feminist discourses and dissident voices of Muslim women emerging in the local, national and global contexts; and (d) to analyze existing contexts and the nature of challenges which Muslim women face in different countries, regions and continents today.

## **Readings**

### **Books**

Following books are available at DU Book Store.

1. Nicholas Awde, *Women in Islam: An Anthology From the Quran and Hadiths* (New York: Martin's Press) 2000
2. Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam* (New Haven: Yale University Press) 1992
3. Fatima Mernissi, *The Veil and the Male Elite: A Feminist Interpretation of Women's Rights in Islam* (New York: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company) 1991
4. Kecia Ali, *Sexual Ethics & Islam: Feminist Reflections on Quran, Hadith, and Jurisprudence* (Oxford: One World) 2006
5. Amina Wadud, *Qura'n and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press) 1999
6. Ghazi-Walid Falah and Caroline Nagel, *Geographies of Muslim Women: Gender, Religion and Space* (New York: The Guilford Press) 2005

### **Reserved Materials**

Articles and chapters from related books are available on ereserve system of the Penrose Library.

#### **Access to Ereserve.**

- 1) Click on the Course Reserves link on the Penrose Library website <http://library.du.edu/FindIt/Reserves/index.cfm>, and search by course number or instructor name
  - 2) Log in to Web Central, select the Resources tab, and click on Electronic Course Reserves
  - 3) The e-reserve password for this course is will be assigned one week before classes begin. You will need this password in order to access e-reserves through the library website. ( Password: women4527 )
- (Note: Ereserve readings are subject to change according to the availability of latest publications)

#### **Access to Traditional Reserve**

Following material has been placed on Traditional Reserve desk for students' use for limited hours. Go to the front desk at Penrose Library and ask for books or DVDs with title/author or course title information.

### **Books**

- Lewis & Churchill, *Islam: The Religion and the People* (New Jersey: Wharton School Publishing) 2009

- Esposito, John L. What Everyone Needs to Know About Islam (New York: Oxford University Press) 2002

### **Videos**

- Islam & feminism
- Women in Islam
- Women and Islam
- The Islamic Wave
- Wearing Hijab

### **Course Requirements and Grading**

#### **• One presentation and general class participation 40%**

Students are expected to read all the assigned readings before coming to class and participate in the discussion related to the weekly topics. General class participation can be in the form of questions, comments and concerns. Besides, every week, one or two students (depending on the size of the class) will be asked to make a short presentation based on the required weekly readings and lead discussion at least for one hour. Class discussion will be based on two or more questions, which should be sent to me one day before this class. Please bring copies of the main points and synthesis of the readings and questions for everyone on the day of your presentation. One presentation and regular participation by each student throughout the course will account for 40% of the grade.

#### **• Thematic Position Paper 60%**

Guidelines for Position Paper will be provided by the 3rd Week of the Quarter. Due Date: Week Ten

#### **Note:**

**(If due to unavoidable circumstances you have to be absent in the class, you need to turn in a summary and critical overview of the assigned reading material for that week. Otherwise, it would affect your attendance and class participation grade percentage)**

**NO LAPTOPS OR CELLPHONES IN THIS CLASS PLEASE !!!!!**

### **WEEKLY READINGS**

#### **Week One (6 January)**

Introduction: What do we know and how do we want to know?

- Understanding Islam: Origin and history
- Identifying Muslim women: Geographies, ethnicities and Class
- Defining gender: Texts, traditions and interpretations

#### **Recommended readings**

Following books have been made available on traditional reserve desk for the Winter Quarter. You can acquire basic knowledge about Islamic history, beliefs and practices from these books.

1. Lewis & Churchill, Islam: The Religion and the People (New Jersey: Wharton School Publishing) 2009
2. Esposito, John L. What Everyone Needs to Know About Islam (New York: Oxford University Press) 2002

### **Week Two (13<sup>th</sup> January)**

What does history tell us about Muslim woman?

#### Required readings

Leila Ahmed, Women and Gender in Islam (New Haven: Yale University Press) 1992  
Chapters 1-6  
Video showing

## **SECTION ONE**

### **Mirroring the Texts and Traditions (The Qura'n, Hadiths and Tafsir)**

### **Week Three (20<sup>th</sup> January)**

How did the texts and early interpretations construct Muslim woman?  
Gender and Sexuality in the Qura'n and Hadith.

#### Required readings

Barbara Stowasser "The Chapter of Eve" **Ereserve**  
Barazangi, N. H. (2004) **Ereserve**  
Kecia Ali, Ch. 4, 5, 6  
Mernissi, F. (1987) pp 27-45 **Ereserve**  
Mernissi, F. (1987) pp 46-64 **Ereserve**  
Awde, N. Ch. 11

### **Week Four (27 January)**

How did the texts define family and marriage?

#### Required readings

Kecia Ali, Ch. 1-3  
Awde, N. Ch. 2, 11, 15, 18  
Barlas, A (2002) pp. 93-128 **Ereserve**  
Khan, M. H. (1972) pp 102-146 **Ereserve**  
Wadud, A. Ch. 4  
Khan, Tahira (2006) Ch. 3 **Ereserve**

### **Week Five (3 February)**

How did the veiling become a crucial issue for Muslim women in the past and present?

#### Required readings

Mernissi, F. (1991) Ch. 1-10  
Ahmed, L. (1992) Ch. 8  
Awde, N. (200) Ch. 7 Video showing

## **SECTION TWO**

### **Understanding Present Issues and Practices**

#### **Week Six (10<sup>th</sup> February)**

Local diversities in regional contexts: Issues of Gender, Development and Religion

##### Required readings

Ahmed, L. Ch. 7

Falah and Ngle, Introduction, Ch-4

Video showing

#### **Week Seven (17<sup>th</sup> February)**

Transnational challenges: Muslim women working across the borders

##### Required readings

Falah and Ngle, Ch. 5, 6, 7, 12

Video showing

#### **Week Eight (24<sup>th</sup> February)**

Feminist discourses and struggle for space

##### Required readings

Falah and Ngle, Ch. 8-11

Ahmed, L. Ch. 9-11

Video showing

#### **Week Nine (3 March)**

Women speaking out and loud: Identifying misogyny and patriarchy

##### Required readings

Karmi, G. (1996) pp. 351-371 **Ereserve**

Mernissi, F. (1996) Virginity and Patriarchy **Ereserve**

Moghissi, H. (1999) pp. 125-159 **Ereserve**

Shaikh, S. (2003) pp. 147-162 **Ereserve**

Bennett, C. (2005) pp. 129-155 **Ereserve**

Aboul Fadl, K. (2001) pp. 209-263

Wadud, Conclusion

#### **Week Ten (10 March)**

Women speaking out and loud: Rebellious and challenging voices  
(readings will be available on ereserve by the end of Week 3)

#### **Position Paper Group Presentations**

**Paper due.**