



I am worried about the garden, no one is thinking of the flowers, no one is thinking about the fishes, the heart of the garden is beating... (Shirin Neshat, an artist)

REL 400

Anthropology of Islam: Everyday lives of Muslim women and men in different contemporary communities

Instructor: Svetlana Peshkova

Class meets: MW 12:45 – 2:05 pm

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This course introduces students to Islam as lived religion by focusing on everyday lives of Muslims in different parts of contemporary world. Both words “Islam” and “Muslim” are highly contested. They mean different things to different people. Overwhelmingly Islam has been produced by the academic writings as a coherent and homogeneous religious experience. The everyday reality of Muslim communities in different parts of the world renders such conceptualization of Islam highly problematic. In order to be able to approach Islam in a more nuanced manner this course offers glimpses of everyday lives of Muslims as a way of critical understanding of complexity and diversity of religious experience. The readings for the course include ethnographic analyses centering on some important contemporary issues in Muslim communities, such as identity formations, power, gender, and politics on social and familial levels. The course’s readings discuss Muslim communities residing in Central Asia (post-Soviet independent countries, China, and Afghanistan); the United States and some parts of Europe; and the Middle East. The reading and writing assignments will be modified for graduate students desiring to take the course. This class requires the use of blackboard.

Learning outcomes

This course will help the students

1. To learn more about Islam as lived religion by the way of adopting anthropological lenses, i.e. by looking at the everyday lives of Muslims in different parts of the world
2. To understand the nature and diversity of religious expression in contemporary world and history
3. To understand the role religious experience plays in peoples lives as an important element in identity formation and power relations at different levels
4. To think critically about interpretation and representation of religious experiences
5. To become aware of the diversity of perspectives within the study of religious experience
6. To become critical and reflexive readers, writers and speakers. By critical I mean that the students will not take for granted the opinions of the authors, speakers, journalists, friends, etc. They will be able to evaluate their opinions and truth claims. By reflexive I mean that the students will be able to understand the role that their socio-cultural context and experiences play in the formulation of their opinion about the world.
7. To be able to get a grasp of some critical issues in Muslim communities and thus challenge their opinions and expand their knowledge about Muslim and other faith-based communities.
8. To develop their own, well-informed voice on some of these issues, while remaining flexible enough to critically incorporate new knowledge for further studies.

Integrity Statement

The Syracuse University Academic Integrity Policy holds students accountable for the integrity of the work they submit. Students should be familiar with the Policy and know that it is their responsibility to learn about instructor and general academic expectations with regard to proper citation of sources in written work. The policy also governs the integrity of work submitted in exams and assignments as well as the veracity of signatures on attendance sheets and other verifications of participation in class activities. Serious sanctions can result from academic dishonesty of any sort.

For more information and the complete policy, see <http://academicintegrity.syr.edu>

Disability Statement

In order to receive disability-related academic accommodations, students must first be registered with the Office of Disability Services (ODS), 804 University Avenue, Room

309, 315-443-4498. Students who require disability-related accommodations must have a current Accommodation Authorization Letter from ODS to provide to the instructor. The accommodations that are authorized in the letter should be discussed and agreed upon with the instructor. Accommodations, such as exam administration, are not provided retroactively; therefore, planning for accommodations at the beginning of the semester is necessary.

For more information see Office of Disability Services

A note on the Qur'an: As the sacred scripture, the Qur'an has primary authority in the way Muslims understand their faith. The students are encouraged to get their own copies of the Qur'an or consult the library's copies on certain verses encountered in the readings, particularly if they plan to continue learning about Islam as lived by Muslims.

A note on the readings: Please be aware of some unhelpful markings in the texts (some people feel necessary to make their opinions visible to others in the library books). Do not accept them without questioning.

A note on US: We are a small community. As a community we will have our differences. As a community we ought to learn how to live together and agree to disagree. Hence, we should feel comfortable and compelled to learn from each other and to challenge each other. We are to develop our own **voices** and make them heard by others as well as allow others to express their positions. Let me know if you think that your voice has been absent or not heard by others. In our community we will learn how not only to assert our voices but more importantly be able to make **academic arguments substantiated by evidences**. **We hope to learn how to convince each other and to persuade each other and not to talk over each other.**

A note on toys: On the take off please turn off all your **i-devices: mobile telephones, iPods, etc. till the end of each class.**

A note on absences: This is an advanced undergraduate seminar. We are expected to discuss the readings – this is a primary activity of our meetings. Hence to be able to participate in this activity you ought to be physically present in the class. I will be taking attendance each and every meeting. Please notify and substantiate each qualified absence, e.g. illness.

A note on the readings: A careful and critical reading and taking notes is crucial to your ability to participate in the discussions and writing assignments. You are solely responsible for all the readings to be completed on time. You are expected to raise questions stimulated by the readings and express your assessments of the readings during our meetings.

A note on the writing: Your writing assignments will give you an opportunity (additionally to the discussion) to express your opinions about the read material and to

present yourself more accurately that would be possible in class. These assignments are aimed to enhance your ability to read and write critically and thoroughly.

A note on the syllabus: This syllabus is tentative. I reserve a right to adjust it if there is a need to incorporate new readings, presentations, guest speakers, scheduled talks in the departments of Religion, MES program, Political Science, Sociology and Anthropology. Check the updated versions of the syllabus on the blackboard when notified.

Special Events:

18 – 20 April Music Moves Religion Conference
31st of March Asma Afsaruddin’s lecture

Grading: The course grading will be based on the in-class and outside of class activities via a use of blackboard. Total is 100 points

Team presentation (summary and leading a discussion)	15
Blackboard response papers (5)	20
Midterm	20
Attendance and participation	10
Presentation of the final	10
Final paper (research paper)	25
Total	100

GRADING SCALE

A	93- 100
A-	90 – 92
B+	87 – 89
B	83 – 86
B-	80 – 82
C+	77 – 79
C	73 – 76
C-	70 – 72
D+	67 – 69
D	63 – 65
D-	60 – 62
F	Below 60

Midterm and Final: Your midterm will be either literature review/annotated bibliography for your final project or a synthesis paper for your final project. Your final is a comprehensive research and analysis of a question/community/geographic area/critical issue you are the most interested in. The length and logistics of doing either of the exams will be provided later.

Teamwork presentation: Each team’s task is

1. To lead the discussion,
2. To relate the readings to ongoing themes of the course, and

3. To create the notes on the readings.

You should aim to answer four questions in your presentation

1. What is the author's main point (**thesis**)?
2. How does s/he presents and supports her/his **argument**?
3. Is there an **evidence** for his/her argument?
4. **What do we learn** from this reading? What can we discuss/disagree/talk about in class?

This is a team work. We need to hear/see the work of everyone in the team.

In terms of reading notes, please use the above format – answer 4 questions – for each article. Each member will present her/his version of the articles – if you copy each other work you will get 0 points. I also would like to remind you that plagiarism – not crediting the authors of the writings or freely borrowing someone else's words – is a very serious offence. Do not commit it!

Finally, you might be given an additional reading to present on from the list of recommended readings. For example there is a great topic on performance of sexualities in different Muslim communities and well as religious debates about otherness and sexual difference. We may not have time to cover it in class but I will ask some of the presenters to read and share with the rest of the class some of the information about this fascinating subject.

Blackboard response papers: For these papers the students are expected to present in a written form their intellectual reactions to three sources read/discussed in the class prior to writing the paper. Much like a book review, response paper provides a very brief overall view of the readings/ideas/events and then responds in detail to more specific parts. There are five response papers that you are to write this semester and post them on the blackboard. Each paper is worth 4 points. Remember the paper is suppose to create some sort of argument, be coherent, proof-read, and engage with the readings. You are welcome to incorporate your experiences in the paper. But remember whatever argument you are advancing it has to be substantiated, i.e. have evidences not opinions. Your citation format should include the name of the author, the year, and the page number (e.g. Smith, 2000:23).

Late work: Unless there is a serious reason for missing a deadline the late work will be downgraded. If you miss a deadline and you have a serious reason notify me. Do not post late papers on the blackboard without talking to me, please.

Required Readings:

These books can be purchased at Follett's Orange Book store

Ruthven, Malise

1997 *Islam: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press.

Varisco, D.M.

2005 *Islam Obscured*. Palgrave.

Rouse, Carolyn Moxley

2004. *Engaged Surrender: African American women and Islam*. Berkley: University of California Press.
- Makris, G.P.
2007 *Islam in the Middle East: A Living Tradition*. Blackwell Publishers

Required articles and chapters from the books (accessed via Blackboard):

- Afsaruddin, Asma
2006 The "Islamic state": genealogy, facts, and myths. In *Journal of Church and State*. 48(1):153-174
- Asad, Talal
1986 *The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam*. Center for Contemporary Arab Studies. Georgetown University. Washington DC
- Bahrami, Beebe
1998 A Door to Paradise: Converts, the New Age, Islam, and the Past in Granada, Spain. *City and Society*. 10 (1):121-132
- Barazangi, Nimat Hafez
2005 Silent Revolution of A Muslim American Scholar-Activist. In *Muslim Women Activists in North America: Speaking for Ourselves*. Edited by Katherine Bullock. Austin: University of Texas Press. Pp. 1-17
- Boddy, Janice
1998 Spirits and Selves in Northern Sudan: The Cultural Therapeutics of Possession and Trance. *American Ethnologist*. 15(1): 4-27
- Bowen, John R.
2005 *Religions in Practice: An Approach to the Anthropology of Religion*. Third Edition. Washington University in St. Louis. Pp. 1-24, 59-75, 170-174, 195-203, 230-234, 241-246
- _____2004 Does French Islam Have Borders? Dilemmas of Domestication in a Global Religious Field. *American Anthropologist* 106(1):43-55
- Davis, Susan S.
2007 Morocco: Adolescents in a Small Town. In *Discovering Anthropology: Researchers at Work – Cultural Anthropology*. Upper Saddle River, NY: Pearson Prentice Hall. Pp. 167-178
- DeAngelis, Angelical Maria
2003. Moi aussi, je suis musulman: Rai, Islam, and masculinity in Maghrebi transnational identity. In *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics* 23:276- 308
- Eickelman, Dale
1981 A Search for the Anthropology of Islam: Abdul Hamid el-Zein. *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. 13 (3):361-365
- _____2001 *The Middle East and Central Asia: An Anthropological Approach* (4th Edition), Prentice Hall. Pp. WAITING FOR THE LIBRARY COPY
- El-Zein, Abdul Hamid
1977 Beyond Ideology and Theology: The Search for the Anthropology of Islam. *Annual Review of Anthropology*. 6:227-54
- Geertz, Clifford

- 1971 *Islam Observed: Religious Development in Morocco and Indonesia*. The University of Chicago Press. Pp. 1-22
- Gillette, Maris
2000 *Between Mecca and Beijing: Modernization and Consumption Among Urban Chinese Muslims*. Stanford University Press. Pp. WAITING FOR THE LIBRARY COPY
- Hajj, Smadar Lavie and Forest Rouse
1993 Notes on the Fantastic Journey of the Hajj, His Anthropologist, and Her American Passport. *American Ethnologist*. 20(2):363-384
- Hellyer, H.A.
2007 Visions and Visualizations: Negotiating Space for European Muslims. *Contemporary Islam*. 1:23-35
- Jingjun, Shui
2001 In Search of Sacred Women's Organizations. In *Chinese Women Organizing: Cadres, Feminists, Muslims, Queers*. Edited by Ping-Chun Hsiung, Naria Jaschok and Cicilia Milwertz with Red Chan. Oxford and New York: Berg Publishers. Pp. 101-117
- Knight, Mary
2005 Egypt's Young and Restless, Article 36. In *Anthropology Annual Editions*. Edited by Elvio Angeloni. Dubuque, Iowa: McGraw-Hill/Dushin. Pp.208-210
- Leonard, Karen
2003. *Muslims in the United States: the state of research*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation. Pp. 3-15
- Mahmood, Saba
2001 Rehearsed Spontaneity and the Conventionality of Ritual: Disciplines of *Salat*. *American Ethnologist* 28(4):827-853
2003 Anthropology in *Encyclopedia of Women and Islamic Cultures (EWIC)*, Volume 1. Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers. Pp. 307-313
- Özyürek, Esra
2005 The politics of cultural unification, secularism, and the place of Islam in Ramadan, Tariq
2004 Islam in Europe
http://www.tariqramadan.com/article.php3?id_article=73&lang=en (accessed 12/28/07)
- Sahadeo, Jeff and Russell Zanca (eds)
2007 *Everyday life in Central Asia: past and present*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. Pp. 1-11, 34-36, 45-65, 66-83, 85-102, 125-140, 301-318, 355-370
- Said, Edward
<http://www.english.emory.edu/Bahri/Orientalism.html>;
[http://www.thenation.com/doc/19960812/said](http://www.thenation.com/doc/19960812/said;);
<http://www.thenation.com/doc/20011022/said>;
- Sargent, Carolyn F.
2006 Reproductive Strategies and Islamic Discourse: Malian Migrants Negotiate Everyday life in Paris, France. *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*, V. 20, 1:31-49

Shalinsky, Audrey C

Gender issues in the Afghanistan Diaspora: Nadia's story.

http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3687/is_199601/ai_n8736145/print

(accessed 12/31/07)

Shannon, Johathan H.

2003 Sultans of Spin: Syrian Sacred Music on the World Stage. *American Anthropologist*. 105 (2):266-277

Werbner, Pnina

1996 Stamping the Earth with the Name of Allah: Zikr and the Sacralizing of Space among British Muslims. *Cultural Anthropology*, 11(3):309-338

1996 The Making of Muslim Dissent: Hybridized Discourses, Lay Preachers, and Radical Rhetoric among British Pakistanis. *American Ethnologist*, 23 (1):102-122

Williams, Brain Glyn

2007-12-31 Writing the Dustumname: Field Research with an Uzbek Warlord in Afghan Turkistan. *Central Asian Studies Review*. 6(1/2):2-8

Recommended

Arik. Kagan

1999 A Native Taxonomy of Healing Among the Xinjiang Kazaks. *Anthropology of Consciousness* 10(4):8-23

Edwards, David B.

1998 Learning from the Swat Pathans: Political Leadership in Afghanistan, 1978-97. *American Ethnologist*. 25 (4):712-728

Early, Evelyn A.

1993 *Baladi Women of Cairo: Playing with an Egg and a Stone*. Boulder and London: Lynne Reinner Publishers. Pp. 85-131

Gilsenan, Michael

2000 *Recognizing Islam: Religion and Society in the Modern Middle East*. London: I. B. Tauris. Pp 9 -26

Keshavjii, Salmaan

2006 Bleeding Babied in Badakhshan: Symbolism, Materialism, and the Political Economy of Traditional Medicine in Post-Soviet Tajikistan. *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*. 20 (10):72-93

Khalid, Adeeb

2007 *Islam after Communism: Religion and Politics in Central Asia*. Berkeley: University of California Press. Introduction

Mahmood, Saba

2005. Feminist Theory, Agency, and the Liberatory Subject. In *On Shifting Ground: Muslim Women in Global Era*. Edited by Fereshteh Nouraiie-Simone. New York: The Feminist Press. Pp. 111-153

Ouzgane, Lanoucine (ed.)

2006. *Islamic Masculinities*. London and New York: Zed Books (selections)

Schmidt, Garbi

- 2004 *Islam in Urban America: Sunni Muslims in Chicago*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press. Pp. 1-29
- Shalinsky, Audrey C.
1980 Learning Sexual Identity: Parents and Children in Northern Afghanistan
Anthropology & Education Quarterly, 11 (4):254-265.
- Snajdr, Edward
2005 Gender, power, and the performance of justice: Muslim women's responses to domestic violence in Kazakhstan. *American Ethnologist*. 32(2):294-311
- Tapper, Richard
1995 "Islamic Anthropology" and the "Anthropology of Islam."
Anthropological Quarterly, 68 (3):185-193.

Syllabus

Date	Themes and the Readings	Activities/Assignments/Papers/Questions
Jan 14	A very brief intro to Islam Ruthven (Chapters 1,2,3)	Review the syllabus. Intro among the class and the instructor. A brief intro to Islam: What do we know about Islam? And what did we learn from Ruthven?
Jan 16	A very brief intro to Islam: Is there such thing as anthropology of Islam? Ruthven (Chapters 4,5,6), el-Zein, Eickelman	Intro continued: How do we study Islam? What are the ways of approaching religious experience? Assign the teams.
Jan 23	Anthropology of Islam? Why do we need it? Use and Misuse of Anthropology Said, Asad, Bowen (selections),	Response paper 1: By Friday midnight please submit the first response paper (3 of the readings covered till today): A guiding question is Why do we need to look at Muslims' everyday lives?
Jan 28	Islam represented and obscured Geertz (selections), Varisco (intro and chapter 1)	What are different ways of representing everyday lives of Muslims in ethnographic accounts?
Jan 30	An anthropologist observes Muslims observing Islam Varisco (chapter 4 and epilogue)	Please bring a paragraph tentatively describing your final research project to the meeting.
Feb 4 Tanya Jessica	Observing Muslims in America Leonard, Rouse (chapter 1, 2,)	Islam outside of the Middle East: History of Islam in the US. What are some of the critical issues Muslim communities deal with in the US?
Feb 6	Rouse (chapter 3), Barazangi	Gender negotiations in a Muslim community
Feb 11 Kelly Alex	Rouse (chapters 6, 7)	Conversion Doing Gender Work
Feb 13	Rouse (chapters 8, 9, and epilogue)	Response paper 2: By Friday midnight please submit the second response paper (3 of the readings covered till today).
Feb 18 Ami Dhaval	Observing Muslims in Europe Ramadan, Bowen (French Islam), Sargent, Werbner,	What are some of the critical issues Muslim communities deal with in different parts of Europe?

Feb 20 Josh Sal	Bahrani, Werbner 2, ÖzyÜrek, Hellyer	Identity and Global politics
Feb 25	Observing Muslims in the Middle East Makris (pp. 1-58),	What is the Middle East? (Presentation by Professor Elouafi.) What are some the critical issues Muslim communities deal with in different parts of the Middle East?
Feb 27 Namita Gina	Makris (pp. 59-94), Hajj/Lavie/Rouse	Knowledge, social status, power and politics
March 3	Makris (pp. 95-141)	Midterm
March 5 Magan Lily	Makris (pp.142-173), Boddy	What are some of the intersections of spiritual and physical? What does social control have to do with power and esoteric practices?
March 17	Makris (pp.174-223)	What constituted ideology and politics in some Muslim communities?
March 19 Anthony James	Markis (pp. 224-254) , Knight, Davis	How does Islamism look like on the local level? What are some of the contemporary needs of young Muslims as defined by young Egyptians? How does one become a Moroccan? Response paper 3: By Friday midnight please submit the third response paper (3 of the readings covered till today).
March 24	Mahmood (salat)	What are some of the unexpected discoveries of anthropology in regard to agency and embodiment of certain norms and values?
March 26 Grant Mike	Shannon, DeAngelis	Music, Power, Politics, and Transnationalism
March 31	Asma Afsaruddin (readings and lecture instead of the class)	What are the myths and realities in the conceptualization of Islamic State?
Apr 2	Observing Muslims in Central Asia Eickelman (selections from the book) Movie (either or) “Osama” “ View from the Grain of Sand”	What is Central Asia? Why it is important? What are some the critical issues Muslim communities deal with in different parts of Central Asia?
Apr 7 Nicole	Observing Muslims in China Gillete (selections), Jingjun	What are some of the connections between consumption and religious experience in

Imon		China? How do some wo/men in China express their religiosity?
Apr 9 Bobby	Observing Muslims in post-Soviet Central Asia Sahadeo/Zanca (selections)	Central Asia and everyday life: Communities, Post-Soviet cityscape, and gender work in post-Soviet CA
Apr 14	Sahadeo/Zanca (selections)	Religion and everyday life: Diversity, Politics, Identity and Gender
Apr 16	Observing Muslims in Afghanistan: Where is Afghanistan -- the Middle East, Central Asia, the US, or... Sahadeo/Zanca (pp. 45-65), Williams, Shalinsky	Where do we position Afghanistan?: A problem of regional definitions in Anthropology Response paper 4: By Friday midnight please submit the forth response paper (3 of the readings covered till today).
Apr 21	Saba Mahmood Presentations	Problems with Anthropology of Muslim Communities
Apr 23	Presentations	Response paper 5: By Friday midnight please submit the fifth response paper (3 of the readings covered till today). The theme of this response paper is “Anthropology of Muslims communities: Projects and Problems”
Apr 28	Presentations	

Final paper is due

Films:

“**View From a Grain of Sand**” is a journey through the last 30 years of Afghanistan's history as lived by three Afghan women. Shot over the last three years in Pakistan and Afghanistan, a doctor, teacher and social activist tell how their lives were violently affected by wars of international making and three different regimes in Afghanistan. Yet through all their loss, and the destruction of their homes and country, these women have endured. With courage, conviction and hope they continue to work on improving the lives of the people around them, against all odds, in this brutalized and divided nation. <http://www.viewgrainofsand.com/> (accessed 1/16/08)