History 2607
Introduction to Islamic History and Civilization
Summer 2025
Online June 16-July 25

Instructor: **Professor Maya Shatzmiller**

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Office: **Department of History, Lawson Hall**

Office Hours: By appointment

This is a **draft** outline. Please see the course site on OWL Brightspace for a final version.

Course Description

Islamic civilization is one of the great world civilizations and it is challenging to render its achievements in a limited timeframe, still students will learn a great deal about the medieval foundations of Islamic civilization in the Middle East. Students will also become able to pursue individual interest with a research essay and enhance their knowledge in this way. The course aims to provide the large scholarly environment of the topic and outline directions for each theme taught for future investigation. We begin by tracing chronologically the emergence of Islam in the Arabian Peninsula and follow the Arabs as they conquer and settle in the Middle East in the 7th century. We follow the process of Arabization and Islamization in the Middle East, as well as the formation first of an Islamic Empire centered in Baghdad and then the emergence of successor states across the Middle East Central Asia North Africa and Spain. Once the political background is provided the following subjects are thematically approached and covered: The work, biography and life achievements of Prophet Muhammad, the Qur'an, Islamic Law, Arabic literature and the translation movement, Islamic philosophy, Islamic theology, Islamic art and architecture, Arabic medicine and science. Lectures will also cover political, economic, legal, social institutions, the Islamic city, the court system, the reasons for economic growth and some new theories concerning the rise of Islam and the economic performance of the medieval Islamic world.

Course Syllabus

The course is structured to achieve two goals, the first is to provide the knowledge of the subject through lectures prepared by the instructor and readings from scholarly works by specialists in the field of Islamic studies. The second is to train students in constructing knowledge through research and essay writing. The lectures provide detailed analysis of the significant themes in the study of the Middle East and the foundations of Islamic civilization. With additional readings students will enhance and create a layered background knowledge which will lead them to ask further questions and engage in individual research pursuit. As part of this course students will be asked to write a research essay with the full support of the instructor. Beginning with the first lecture I will provide guidance to essay writing including historical research

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methodologies, the structure of the paper, and will suggest a list of essay topics to choose from, although students can choose their own topic. The purpose of writing a research essay is to encourage students to pursue their interest in a scholarly manner, enlarge the spectrum of research skills and learn how to use the empirical evidence and analysis provided in the lectures to develop their own perspectives on the aspects that are interesting to them.

For that reason, the course grade evaluation is split between a student's grade achieved in the research essay (65%) and the grade given to the exam (35%). Most importantly, students who were not previously knowledgeable about research methodology, will now be able to engage in research while students who previously gained research skills will gain new ones and embark on the discovery of new disciplines, use new historical methodologies and enhance their research and essay writing skills.

Methods of Evaluation and schedule of assignment delivery

1. **First assignment**: An essay topic selection and essay proposal with annotated bibliography (15%) **due before July 4.**
2. **Second assignment:** written research essay (50%) **due July 12.**
3. **Final exam** (35%) **July 28.**

Late Assignments:

Essays may be submitted **up to three days late** (by 11:55pm) with a 10% deduction. Thereafter, essays will not be accepted without a formal consideration *Social Science Academic Counselling on Absence & Academic Consideration, the university's policies on Academic Consideration for Medical Illness, and the Department of History's own Undergraduate Policies and Statements*

Students must complete all course assignments in order to pass the course. Make-up tests, midterms, and exams can only be approved by Academic Counselling. Please see https://history.uwo.ca/undergraduate/program_module_information/policies.html for department procedures and requirements involving make-up tests and exams.

Course Materials

Lectures:
The main course platform is online and asynchronous. Lectures for the course will be posted on the course site on - *OWL Brightspace* site.

Readings:

Readings from two textbooks will accompany each lecture and will be posted in OWL or accessed online through Weldon Library.

Assignments:

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Assignments will be posted in *OWL Brightspace* site

Additional Statements

Communication policies:

The best ways to get in touch with the instructor is through e-mail. I can meet students in-person on campus or by zoom, if preferred. Currently, no office hours are scheduled.

Use of generative artificial intelligence (AI):

You may not make any use of generative AI tools, such as ChatGPT, for any assignments in this course.

The use of generative AI tools, such as ChatGPT, is permitted in this course for activities such as brainstorming and refining your ideas, drafting an outline to organize your thoughts, or checking grammar and style. Any use of such tools should be clearly acknowledged and explained. If in doubt, please ask me for clarification.

Please review the Department of History's shared policies and statements for all undergraduate courses at: https://history.uwo.ca/undergraduate/program_module_information/policies.html for important information regarding accessibility options, make-up exams, medical accommodations, health and wellness, academic integrity, plagiarism, and more.