

Re-Understanding Islam
Spring 2008

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Asma Barlas is the author of *Islam, Muslims, and the U.S.: Essays on Religion and Politics* (2004), "Believing Women" in *Islam: Unreading Patriarchal Interpretations of the Qur'an* (2002), and *Democracy, Nationalism, and Communalism* (1995), in addition to several articles on Qur'anic hermeneutics, Muslim sexual politics, and Islam and women.

Time: Wednesdays, 15-17.45
Place: BG 5, Room 213
Credits: 10 credits

Course description

To be able to speak about Islam in the West it is also necessary to look at the ideological encounters between Islam and the West. Indeed, the very framing of their relationship in such oppositional terms is a legacy of their ongoing interface. That is why engaging Islam requires non-Muslim Europeans to also engage their own communal identities (collective sense of self). This course is thus as much about Islam as it is about the West and it aims to explore some borders and boundaries but also points of contact between both. It does this through a thematic focus on two key issues that are at the heart of public debates on Islam in Europe these days: the relationship between Islam and secularism and Islam and sexual violence. Course materials have been selected with a view to opening up more theoretically sophisticated, politically nuanced, and ethically scrupulous ways of examining these issues than the current debates sometimes permit, thereby also enabling a critique of prevailing ideas about both Islam and the West.

A note on pedagogy

My teaching is influenced by Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, in particular, his theory that the traditional ("banking") style of education impedes the development of a critical social consciousness. Among other things, this means that I avoid lecturing to the extent feasible in favor of a collective dialogue that builds (no matter how slowly or unevenly) towards a common understanding. What this also means is that you must be willing to treat the classroom as shared space and to help shape its intellectual direction.

Course materials

Books

- Asad, Talal: Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity. Stanford University Press, 2003.
- Barlas, Asma: "Believing Women" in Islam. University of Texas, 2002.
- Rodinson, Maxime: Europe and the Mystique of Islam, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1991.
- Yegenoglu, Meyda: Colonial Fantasies, Cambridge University Press, 1988.

Articles (Available in the Library)

- Gole, Nilufer: "Islam Resetting the European Agenda?" Public Culture, 18:1, 2006
- Mahmood, Saba: "Secularism, Hermeneutics, and Empire" Public Culture, 18:2, 2006.

Recommended translations of the Qur'an

- Ali, Abdullah Yusuf. The Qur'an: Text, Translation, Commentary. NY: Tehrike Tarsile Qur'an, 1988.
- Asad, Muhammad. The Message of the Qur'an. Gibraltar, n.d.

Requirements

Attendance/readings/ discussions	15%
Presentation	15%
Reaction essays (April 9, 23; May 14)	15%
Final paper	55%

Class attendance/discussions: Since this is a discussion-based class, it is important that you do your readings and come to classes regularly. If you are going to be absent, please let me know ahead of time.

Class presentation: 5 page written report to me and oral presentation to the class.

Reaction Essays: 3-5 pages, on any aspect of our readings or class and/ or your own learning process. Informal, journal-type, entry or essay. No letter grades; if you write a good journal/ essay, you will get the full points for it.

Final Paper: 10-15 pages. You may write on any topic we have studied and please concentrate on its analytical aspects. I am particularly interested in seeing how well

you can make a sustained theoretical argument by analyzing, critiquing, and synthesizing different concepts. You may use the first person (I) in your paper.

All written work should be typed (double-spaced), spell-checked, and paginated.

Supplementary Literature

- Ahmed, Leila. *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992.
- al-Hibri, Azizah. "A Study of Islamic Herstory: Or, How Did We Ever Get into This Mess?" *Women's Studies International Forum*. Vol. 5, no. 2 (1982).
- An-Naim, Abdullahi. *Toward an Islamic Reformation: Civil Liberties, Human Rights, and International Law*, Syracuse: University Press, 1990.
- Arkoun, Mohammed. *Rethinking Islam: Common Questions, Uncommon Answers*. Trans by Robert D. Lee. Boulder, CO.: Westview Press, 1994.
- Asad, Talal. *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reason of Power in Christianity and Islam*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993.
- _____. *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter*, London: Ithaca Press, 1973.
- Badran, Margot. "Between Secular and Islamic Feminisms," *Journal of Middle Eastern Women's Studies*, Vol. 1, no. 1, Winter 2005.
- Bulbeck, Chilla. *Reorienting Western Feminisms*. Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- Davies, Meryll Wyn. *Knowing One Another: Shaping an Islamic Anthropology*. London: Mansell Publishing Ltd., 1988.
- Izutsu, Toshihiko. *The Structure of the Ethical Terms in the Koran*. Vol. II, Japan: Keio Institute of Philological Studies, 1959.
- Jackson, Sherman. *On the Boundaries of Theological Tolerance in Islam*. Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Kabbani, Rana. *Imperial Fictions: Europe's Myths of Orient*. Pandora, 1994.
- Majid, Anouar. *Freedom and Orthodoxy: Islam and Difference in the Post-Andalusian Age*. Stanford University Press, 2004.
- Marlow, Louise. *Hierarchy and Egalitarianism in Islamic Thought*. Cambridge: University Press, 1997.
- Mastnak, Tomaz. *Crusading Peace: Christendom, the Muslim World, and Western Political Order*. Berkley: University of California Press, 2002.
- Mernissi, Fatima. *The Veil and the Male Elite: A Feminist Interpretation of Women's Rights in Islam*. New York: Addison-Wesley, 1991.
- Murata, Sachiko. *The Tao of Islam: A Sourcebook on Gender Relationships in Islamic Thought*. Albany: SUNY, 1992.
- Netton, Ian Richard. *Allah Transcendent: Studies in the Structure and Semiotics of Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Cosmology*. New York: Routledge, 1989.
- Rahman, Fazlur. *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition*. Chicago: University Press, 1982.

- _____. Major Themes of the Quran. Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1980.
- _____. Islamic Methodology in History. Karachi, Pakistan: Central Institute of Islamic Research, 1965.
- Robinson, Francis (editor). Cambridge Illustrated History of the Islamic World. Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Said, Edward. Orientalism. New York: Vintage, 1979.
- Southern, R. W. Western Views of Islam in the Middle Ages. Harvard University Press, 1978.
- Spellberg, D.A. Politics, Gender and the Islamic Past. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994.
- Stowasser, Barbara F. Women in the Quran: Traditions and Interpretations. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994.
- Wadud, Amina. Quran and Woman. Oxford: University Press, 1999.

CLASS SCHEDULE

1. Engaging Islam in Europe

March 19: Introduction by Dr. Karen Vintges.

Between March 19- April 2, please read Maxime Rodinson.

2. Europe, Islam: religion, secularism

April 2: Rodinson
 April 9: Gole, Mahmood (1st essay due)
 April 16: Asad, Introduction and Chapter 1
 April 23: Asad, Chapters 4, 5, 6 (2nd essay due)

3. Islam, Europe: women

May 7: Yegenoglu, Introduction, Chapters 1, 2
 May 14: Yegenoglu, Chapters 4, 5 (3rd essay due)
 May 21: Barlas, Chapters 1 and 2
 May 28: Barlas, Chapters 4, 5, 6, and Postscript

Date for final paper to be determined.