



M.A.(DLB)0484 – Islam in Postcolonial Societies: State, Identity & Gender

Spring Semester, 2026

Course Information

Course Duration: 15 weeks

Credit Hours: 4 credits

Meetings: Weekly

Location: CR No. **T3-T72**

Prerequisites: Students interested in the subject of Islam and Muslim societies.

Equivalent Courses: N.A.

Exclusive Courses: N.A.

Instructor Information

Instructor: Ambreen Agha

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Phone: N.A.

Office: 1B, Third Floor

Office Hours: Thursday 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

1. Course Description

This course will introduce students to the evolution of Islam as a political and social force in Muslim and non-Muslim societies with a central question – what role does Islam play in shaping identities and how it interacts with forces within and without the mosaic of the faith. A history of Islam and pre-Islamic societies shows that interaction between religion and politics produced myriad forms of ‘being’ and belonging with the formation of majority and minority groups as well as ‘legitimate’ systems of hierarchy and power. The Christian theological justifications of slavery in 1840’s that viewed slavery not only as a divine sanction but as necessary part of Christianity (Elizabeth L. Jemison) established relationship of control and power where the small slave-owning class was supported by the injunctions of the majority of churches and ministers. Similarly, such alliances between the clerical class and the state were established in Muslim societies with an intent to ensure consolidation of power by each in their respective domains. This interweaving of ecclesiastical and state authority was criticized by anticlerical

forces as such a collusion compromised the secular character of the state. However, it demonstrated the existence of diverse – often intersecting and diverging – traditions emerging from within religions, thus emphasising on how religion (here Islam) and politics converged, interacted, and clashed to shape public and private life where anxieties over androcentric construction of gender further explores the underlying tension in the practice of Islam or an ‘Islamic’ way of life that goes beyond the dominant narratives of exploitation and racialized eroticism.

The course will focus on the rise of Islam, expansion beyond the Arabian peninsula and its ramifications on the existing religious traditions, political structures and social formations: caste, class and race. Through the history of expansion and consolidation of Muslim rule, the course will further cover the colonial and postcolonial period in South Asia to understand the politics of identity formation – homogenisation and consolidation – with a focus on Islamic revivalism, the majority-minority complex and gender and the idea of an Islamic State. Given that community formation has taken place over the bodies of women, what has been its impact on gender and the emergence of a sexual ethics in Islam? How and where can Islamic modernism be situated in the course of identity formation, assertion and inter-faith interactions in colonial and post-colonial India and Pakistan?

2. Course Intended Learning Objectives(Aim)

Course Intended Learning Outcomes	Teaching and Learning Activities	Assessments/ Activities
The aim of the course is to highlight the importance of religious thought in shaping political and social identities and spaces. The course will equip students with nuanced perspectives on the subject of Islam that generally evokes curiosity and will help broaden their understanding on the above mentioned concepts as well as historical background to religious articulations and assertions. This course will enable students with critical and conceptual analysis of politics, religion and the institutionalization of religion in postcolonial Muslim societies. With an emphasis on historical sources in the study of Islam and its various social and political manifestations, the students undertaking this course will learn about how the ‘reformists’, revivalists – across Hindu and Muslims communities - responded to the changes and challenges of colonial and postcolonial South Asia, and its	Research papers Debates/presentations Weekly Book Discussion	70 Internal 30 External

<p>implications on the question of gender, gender relations and inter-communal relations.</p> <p>The issues of identity, assertion, authority and authenticity are central to this course, opening the larger questions of belonging and unbelonging; and the continuing quest for ‘purity’ – a concept or ideal that is as elusive as the pursuit of peace.</p>		
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3. Scheme of Evaluation and Grading

Evaluation breakup

Internal breakup: 70

Components – Attendance and Participation (10); Book Discussion (10); Response paper (10); Research essay (30) and Presentations (10).

External breakup – End term exam (30 Marks)

Grade Definition

COURSE LETTER GRADES AND THEIR INTERPRETATION			
Letter Grade	Percentage of Marks	Grade Points	
O	80 and above	8	Outstanding: Exceptional knowledge of the subject matter, thorough understanding of issues; ability to synthesize ideas, rules and principles and extraordinary critical and analytical ability.
A+	75 - 79	7.5	Excellent: Sound knowledge of the subject matter, thorough understanding of issues; ability to synthesize ideas, rules and principles and critical and analytical ability.
A	70 - 74	7	Very Good: Sound knowledge of the subject matter, excellent organizational capacity, ability to synthesize ideas, rules and principles, critically analyse existing material and originality in thinking and presentation.
A-	65 -69	6	Good: Good understanding of the subject matter, ability to identify issues and provide balanced solutions to problems and good critical and analytical skills.

B+	60 - 64	5	Fair: Average understanding of the subject matter, limited ability to identify issues and provide solutions to problems and reasonable critical and analytical skills.
B	55 - 59	4	Acceptable: Adequate knowledge of the subject matter to go to the next level of the study and reasonable critical and analytical skills.
B-	50 - 54	3	Marginal: Limited knowledge of the subject matter and irrelevant use of materials, and poor critical and analytical skills.
P ₁	45 - 49	2	Pass 1: Pass with Basic understanding of the subject matter.
P ₂	40 - 44	1	Pass 2: Pass with Rudimentary understanding of the subject matter.
F	Below 40	0	Fail: Poor comprehension of the subject matter; poor critical and analytical skills and marginal use of the relevant materials. Will require repeating the course.

4. Academic Integrity

Academic Integrity - Do not take credit for somebody else's ideas.

Participation is encouraged and attendance is equally important as the former doesn't exist without the latter.

No use of phones or laptops in the class.

Ground rules: Students have the freedom to express their viewpoints/opinion in class.

5. Keyword Syllabus

Islam, gender, Islamic feminism, Hindu-Muslim relations, blasphemy, Pasmanda, Islamic revivalism, Jama'at-e-Islami.

6. Course Material [Chapters will be shared on weekly basis via email]

Book for discussion: Neeti Nair. 2023. *Hurt Sentiment: Secularism & Belonging in South Asia*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

- Marshall Hodgson: Venture of Islam Volume I & II, 1975.
- Montgomery Watt: Mohammad – Prophet and Statesman, 1961.
- Lesley Hazleton, After the Prophet: The Epic History of Shia-Sunni Split, 2010.
- Mohammad Habib, Introduction to Elliot & Dowson's History of India, Volume 2, 1952.
- Mohammad Habib, Studies in Medieval Indian Polity and Culture: The Delhi sultanate and its Times, 2015 [Introduction].
- Richard Eaton, Temple Desecration in Pre-modern India, EPW, 2000.

- Sunil Kumar, Politics, The Muslim Community and Hindu-Muslim Relations Reconsidered: North India in Early 13th Century in Rajat Dutta (ed.) *Rethinking of Millennium: Perspectives on Indian History: From the 8th to the 18th century: Essays for Harbans Mukhia*, 2008.
- Francis Robinson, *Islam, South Asia and the West*, 2007 [Chapters 23,&4]
- Manan Ahmed Asif, *The Loss of Hindustan – The Invention of India*, Harvard University Press, New York, 2021) [Introduction]
- Carl W. Ernst, *Eternal Garden: Mysticism, History and Politics at a South Asian Sufi Centre*, 1992 [Chapter 8: The Indian Environment and the Question of Conversion]
- Samita Sen, Towards a Feminist Politics: The Indian Women's Movement in Historical Perspective in Karin Kapadia, *The Violence of Development: The Politics of Identity, Gender and Social Inequalities in India*, 2000
- Charu Gupta, Hindu Women, Muslim Men: Cleavages in Shared Spaces of Everyday Life, United Provinces Circa 1890-1930, *IESHR*, 2000
- Tanika Sarkar & Sumit Sarkar, *Women and Social Reform Movement in Modern India*, 2008
- Geraldine Forbes, *The New Cambridge History of India, Women in Modern India*, Volume 2, Part IV, 2004 [Chapter 2 & 8]
- Tanika Sarkar, *Hindu Wife, Hindu Nation: Community, Religion and Cultural Nationalism*, [Chapter 1], 2001
- Urvashi Butalia, Community, State and Gender: On Women's Agency During Partition, *EPW*, 1993.
- Ritu Menon & Kamla Bhasin, Recovery, Rupture, Resistance: Indian State and abduction of women during Partition, *EPW*, 1993.
- Rashida Patel, *Men versus Women: Gender Inequality in Pakistan*, 2004.
- Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *Islam in Pakistan: A History*, (Princeton University Press: Princeton, 2018) Select Chapters.
- Aneela Zeb Babar, *We are all Revolutionaries Here: Militarism, Political Islam and Gender in Pakistan*, 2017.
- Shenila Khoja-Moolji, Forging the Ideal Educated Girl: The Production of Desirable Subjects in Muslim South Asia, 2018.
- Lila Abu-Lughod, *Remaking Women: Feminism and Modernity in the Middle East* (Princeton University Press: Princeton, 1998).
- Maleeha Aslam, 'Islamism & Masculinity: Case Study Pakistan', *Historical Social Research*, Vol. 39, No.3, 2014.
- Katherine Allison, Feminism and 10 Years of the War on Terror, *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, 2013, 6 (2): pp. 320–322
- Asma Barlas, *Believing Women in Islam: Unreading Patriarchal Interpretations of the Qur'an*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002. [Select chapters]
- Masooda Bano, *The Rational Believer: Choices and Decisions in the Madrasa of Pakistan*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012. [Part II, Chapter 6]
- Hamid Dabashi, *Brown Skin, White Masks*, Pluto Press, 2011.
- Omar Kasmani, *Queer Companions: Religion, Public Intimacy, and Saintly Affects in Pakistan*, Duke University Press, 2022.
- Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im, *Islam and the Secular State: Negotiating the Future of Shari'a*, Harvard University Press, 2008 [Select Chapters].

- Shireen Azam, Scheduled Caste Status for Dalit Muslims and Christians, *Economic & Political Weekly*, Vol. 28, Issue 27, July 8, 2023.
- SherAli Tareen, *Perilous Intimacies: Debating Hindu-Muslim Friendship After Empire*, Columbia University Press, 2023.
- Lezley Hazleton, *The First Muslim: The story of Muhammad*, Atlantic Books, 2013.
- Irfan Ahmad, *Islamism and Democracy in India: The Transformation of Jamaat-e-Islami*, Princeton University Press, 2009. [Introduction page 1-28].
- Amar Sohal, *The Muslim Secular: Parity & the Politics of India's Partition*, Oxford University Press, 2023.[Introduction].
- Christopher Jaffrelot & Laurent Gayer, *Muslims In Indian Cities: Trajectories Of Marginalisation*, 2011. [Introduction]
- Adeel Hussain, *Revenge, Politics & Blasphemy in Pakistan*, UK: C Hurst & Co Publishers Ltd, 2022.

7. Session Plan

Session (with Date)	General Topic	Readings	Approach/Pedagogy
Islam: Origins, Rise & Expansion			
February 5	Introductory class. Pre-Islamic history of Empires (Achaemenid, Parthians and Sassanians)	1. Introduction: Middle Eastern societies before the advent of Islam in Ira M. Lapidus, 2002. 2. Mohammad-Mehdi Rowshanfekr, A Review on Muslim Victory Over the Sassanid Empire with a Social and Cultural Approach. 3. Chapter 2 , 'The Issue of Succession to the Prophet', Asma Afsaruddin, <i>The First Muslim</i> , 2007. 4. Text: Amar Farooqui, Early Social Formations.	
February 12	Fall of Sassanid, Muhammad, and the Rise of Islam.		
February 19 & 26	Muhammad's demise, Crisis of Caliphate and Expansion of Islam.		The classes will be structured as per the following: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Dialogue & Interaction: Start with Discussion Question. 2. Enhance cognitive abilities: Reflective exercises. 3. Readings-based Lecture. 4. Teamwork and collaborative learning: Book discussion.
Varieties of Islam: Continuities & Change, Adaptations & Transformations, Ideas and Practices			
March 5	Scholars, Merchants & Institutions	1. Introduction , Ahmet T. Kuru, Islam, Authoritarianism & Underdevelopment, 2019. 2. Chapter 3 , The Ulama & the State, Muhammad Qasim Zaman, Islam in Pakistan.	
March 12	The concept of	1. Islam & the State: A	

	Islamic State and the Shariah	<p>Short History, Khaled Abou El Fadl.</p> <p>2. Conceptualising Sharia in the Modern State, Khaled Abou El Fadl.</p> <p>3. 'Why should Muslims abandon Jihad? Human rights and the future of international law', Abdullahi Ahmed An- N'aim, <i>Third World Quarterly</i>, Vol.27, No. 5, 2006.</p> <p>4. The Tanzimat: Secular Reforms in the Ottoman Empire.</p> <p>5. Ayesha Jalal, The Convenience of Subservience: Women and the State of Pakistan in Deniz Kandiyoti (ed.), <i>Women, Islam and the State</i>, 1991.</p>	
March 19	Gender, Islamic Feminism; Queer Companions	<p>1. Magrot Badran, Competing Agenda: Feminists, Islam, and the State in 19th & 20th Century Egypt in Kandiyoti, 1991.</p> <p>2. Leila Ahmed, <i>A Quiet Revolution: The Veil's Resurgence</i>, 2011. Chapter 1.</p> <p>3. Amina Wadud, <i>Inside the Gender Jihad: Women's Reform in Islam</i>, 2006 (Introduction).</p> <p>4. Wadud, <i>Qur'an & Woman</i>, 1992.</p> <p>5. Chapter 5, Seeking Sisters, Daniel Joseph Majchrowicz, <i>The World in Words, Travel Writing and the Global Imagination in Muslim South Asia</i>, 2023.</p> <p>6. Chapter 11, Assessment of Islamist, and</p>	

		<p>Modernist Views (Status of Women), Asma Afsaruddin, The First Muslim, 2007.</p> <p>7. Lila Abu Lughod, The Active Social Life of 'Muslim Women's Rights': A Plea for Ethnography, Not Polemic, with Cases from Egypt and Palestine," <i>Journal of Middle Eastern Women's Studies</i>, 2010.</p> <p>8. Text: A History of Islam in 21 Women, Hossein Kamaly.</p> <p>9. Omar Kasmani, <i>Queer Companions: Religion, Public Intimacy, and Sainly Affects in Pakistan</i>, 2022.</p>	
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Colonialism, Modernism & Reform

March 26 & April 2, and April 9	Islam in South Asia: Colonial Encounter, Islamic Modernism, Revivalism, cow protection movement, Blasphemy, Hindu-Muslim relations, Temple Desecration.	<p>1. Introduction & Chapter One, Muslim expansion: Trade, Military, and the quest for Political Authority, in Jamal Malik, <i>Islam in South Asia</i>, Brill 2008.</p> <p>2. Introduction, Irfan Ahmad, <i>Islamism and Democracy in India: The Transformation of Jamaat-e-Islami</i>, 2009.</p> <p>3. Muhammad Qasim Zaman, Islam in Pakistan, 2018.</p> <p>4. Richard Eaton, Temple Desecration & Indo-Muslim State.</p> <p>5. Ashutosh Varshney, The Idea of Pakistan, <i>Indian International Centre Quarterly</i>, Winter 2009.</p>	
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Midterm: April 8: Submission of Research Paper

April 16 & April 23	Muslims in India: Caste, Class &	<p>1. Introduction, Laurent Gayer and Christopher Jaffrelot,</p>	
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	Marginalisation. Minorities in Pakistan and the Ahmadiyya Question.	<p>Muslims in Indian Cities: Trajectories Of Marginalisation, 2011.</p> <p>2. Shireen Azam, 'Scheduled Caste Status for Dalit Muslims and Christians', <i>Economic & Political Weekly</i>, Vol. 28, Issue 27, July 8, 2023.</p> <p>3. Christopher Jaffrelot & Kalaiyarasan A. BJP's Pasmanda Muslim outreach: It's not as divided as you think, <i>The Indian Express</i>, August 25, 23.</p> <p>4. Chapter 5, Religious Minorities & the Anxieties of an Islamic Identity, in Zaman 2018.</p> <p>5. Text: Caste and Social Stratification among Muslims in India, Imtiaz Ahmed.</p>	
April 30	Is there a Muslim World?	<p>Introduction, Cemil Aydin, The Idea of the Muslim World, 2017. Discussion and Reflection.</p>	
May 7	Presentations.		