The University of Oklahoma  
College of Continuing Education  
Advanced Programs – Course Syllabus

Course Title: 
Seminar in Middle Eastern history: Religion and society

Course Number: 
HIST 6600-101

Course Description: 
Critical to understanding the modern Middle East is an appreciation of the rôle that religion has played in the societies of the region since Antiquity. In this course, we will examine the way that religion has functioned in Middle Eastern societies, beginning with ancient Near Eastern cultures, including ancient Israel, the Christian Roman Empire, and the Zoroastrian Sāsānian Empire of Iran. We will study the rise of Islam and its own patchwork of religious traditions, as well as the various Islamic societies that emerged—from the earliest Islamic empires to the Ottoman and Iranian Empires. The class will conclude with a thorough look at religion in the Middle Eastern landscape today, covering topics such as religion in Turkey, Iran, and Israel, minority identities, the challenge of nationalism, the Bahāʾī faith, radical Islam, and collective memory. Throughout the course, we will touch upon several recurring themes, including states’ use and abuse of religion, the nature of religion as a primary marker of identity, and varying patterns of religious expression in the region.

Class Dates, Location and Hours: 
Dates: October 24-30, 2016  
Hours: Monday - Friday 6:00 p.m.-9:30 p.m.; Saturday 8:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m.; Sunday 8:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.  
Last day to enroll or drop without penalty: September 25, 2016

Site Director: 
Email: apwashington@ou.edu. Phone: 703-418-4800; Fax: 703-418-2730.

Professor Contact Information: 
Course Professor: Dr. D. Gershon Lewental 
Mailing Address: Department of International & Area Studies  
University of Oklahoma  
729 Elm Avenue, Room 314  
Norman, Oklahoma 73019 
Email Address: lewental@ou.edu  
Professor availability: The professor will be available via e-mail before and after the class. On-site office hours are half an hour before and after each class session, by appointment.

Textbook(s) and Instructional Materials: 
Student materials are available at the OU Follett Bookstore located at 1185 Asp Avenue; Norman, OK, and can be ordered online, by phone, by email, or by fax. Ordering online at http://www.bkstr.com/oklahomastore/home is strongly recommended – students can track the status of their order within 48 hours. If an order has not been shipped within three days, students can contact the Follett textbook manager by phone (405) 325-3511, (800) 522-0772 (toll-free) or email 0831mgr@fheg.follett.com. Phone orders (ask for the textbook manager and identify yourself as an Advanced Programs student) can be placed 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Thursday; 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
on Friday; 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday (CST). Summer hours: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday (CST). Fax orders can be placed 24 hours a day at (405) 325-7770. Text prices are available online.


4. Materials posted on the OU Desire to Learn (D2L) system: Access D2L at [http://learn.ou.edu](http://learn.ou.edu); enter your OU NetID and password, and select course to access material. Please contact your local Site Director if you require assistance.

Note: Follett is the Advanced Programs contractual textbook provider. Should text changes become necessary after publication of the course syllabus, Advanced Programs will facilitate text returns/refunds only for texts purchased through Follett.

**Course Objectives:**

This course represents a combination of a lecture and seminar approaches and individual participation in class dialogues is critical. Classes will include a discussion period for conversation about required reading. Each student will have the opportunity to present a brief review of a text, after which he/she will lead a discussion. At the end of this course, it is hoped that students will have a better understanding of the Middle East and the central role that religion has played in the determination and reinforcement of socio-political structures, élites, classes, and identities. In addition, students will have developed better research skills, practiced critical thinking and reading, and gained experience collecting and presenting information clearly.

**Course Outline:**

1. Mon 24 Oct | Introduction and religion in the ancient Near East
   a. **Short essay due**
      i. Introduction to the Middle East
      ii. Ancient Near Eastern religions (Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Syria)

2. Tue 25 Oct | The Rise of confessional religions in the Middle East
   a. From ancient Israelite society to Rabbinical Judaism
   b. Hellenism and Eastern Christianity
   c. Zoroastrianism and the Sāsānian Empire

3. Wed 26 Oct | The Birth and expansion of Islam
   a. The Birth of Islam
   b. The Arab-Islamic expansion
   c. The Early Islamic community

4. Thu 27 Oct | The Emergence of sectarian communities
   a. Religion and state in classical Islam
   b. Shīʿī and Sunnī societies

5. Fri 28 Oct | The Mediæval and early modern Islamic world
   a. Minority communities in Islamic societies
   b. Religion and state in the Ottoman Empire
   c. Shīʿī Islam and Ṣafavid society
6. Sat 29 Oct | Challenges of modernity
   a. Final research paper proposal due
   b. Change and dissent in Shi‘ī Iran: Uṣūlīs and Bābīs
   c. Political decline and Islamic response
   d. The Challenge of Arab nationalism
   e. Religion and society in modern Turkey
   f. Religion and society in Twentieth-Century Iran
   g. Roots of the Islamic Revolution in Iran
   h. Imagining and instituting the Islamic Republic
   i. The Future of the Islamic Republic
   j. Presentation of final research paper proposals

7. Sun 30 Oct | The Resurgence of religion in the Middle East
   a. Final exam
   b. Radical Islam
   c. Zionism and the Jewish revival in the Middle East
   d. Religion in the State of Israel
   e. Religion and Middle Eastern society today

A more detailed outline will be made available on the class Desire2Learn website about a month prior to the first day of class.

Assignments, Grading and Due Dates:

Course grades will be assigned on the basis of several elements. This division of factors aims to give all students a fair chance at a good grade by avoiding too much emphasis on one examination method. Nevertheless, since a large share of the grade (25%) derives from participation and the discussion presentation, this means that you must attend and participate in class to get a good grade. The key to good participation is reading the assigned texts, so come prepared. Assignments are due at the start of class.

Pre-class Readings:
Given the brevity of this course, all students are expected to have read all course readings in advance of the first class session (and are encouraged to refresh their memories by looking over the specific readings for each day in advance).

Short Essay (20%):
Essay on an assigned topic, using only the class readings as sources (1500 words).

Discussion Article Presentation (10%):
Brief (five-minute) summary of an assigned reading that highlights the author’s core argument and leading of a class discussion about it.

In-Class Final Exam (15%):
Examination on critical terms covered in the class.

Final Research Paper (30%):
Each student will write a research paper (about 10 pages, excluding bibliography) on a topic of their choice relating to the course and making use of literature (at least 6 sources) not assigned as part of the class reading.
Class Participation (25%):
Attendance (any absence results in loss of entire participation grade; each additional absences drops the overall course grade by a letter-grade) and contribution to in-class/online discussions.

Late Papers:
Late papers will be marked down by one letter grade for each day late (e.g., an ‘A’ paper becomes a ‘B’, if one day late, and an ‘F’, if four days late). Assignments (except the final research paper) must be submitted both in class and electronically through Desire2Learn (as an MS Word document, with your surname in the file name). Extensions for papers or incompletes will not be granted, except in cases of medical emergencies (with a physician’s note); computer issues are not an excuse—always back up your files. Plan ahead so that you do not end up rushing to finish a paper at the last minute. I am always willing to meet with you to clarify terms, explain readings, or work on your papers.

Extra Credit Response Papers:
Each student has the opportunity to submit up to two extra credit response papers to news articles on religion and society in the Middle East. In order to receive credit, you must read and submit an article from a newspaper listed below, along with your thoughts on the article (one page). You are also strongly encouraged to follow Middle East news during (and after) the course. Some mainstream newspaper sources:

- Yediʿot Aḥaronot (Israel; centre): www.ynetnews.com
- Haaretz (Israel; left): www.haaretz.com
- Jerusalem Post (Israel; centre-right): www.jpost.com
- ash-Sharq al-Awsaṭ (London): www.asharq-e.com
- Jordan Times (Jordan): www.jordantimes.com
- al-Ahram Weekly (Egypt): http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/
- Wall Street Journal (US; financial; right): www.wsj.com

Grading:
This is a letter-graded course: A, B, C, D, or F.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Due Date (No Exceptions)</th>
<th>Percent of Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Short Essay</td>
<td>Monday, October 24, 2016</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Paper Proposal</td>
<td>Saturday, October 29, 2016</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>During class sessions</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion Article Presentation</td>
<td>During class sessions</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>Sunday, October 30, 2016</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Paper</td>
<td>Sunday, November 13, 2016</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Notice: Failure to meet assignment due dates could result in a grade of I (Incomplete) and may adversely impact Tuition Assistance and/or Financial Aid.

Office Hours:
Students are strongly encouraged to attend office hours for help understanding course material and readings and with preparing the mid-term and research papers. Students who wish to discuss the final research paper must bring an outline or draft with them. On-site office hours are half an hour before and after each class session, by appointment.
Academic Integrity:
Academic integrity means honesty and responsibility in scholarship. Academic assignments exist to help students learn; grades exist to show how fully this goal is attained. Therefore all work and all grades should result from the student's own understanding and effort.

Academic misconduct is any act which improperly affects the evaluation of a student’s academic performance or achievement. Misconduct occurs when the student either knows or reasonably should know that the act constitutes misconduct. Academic misconduct includes: cheating and using unauthorized materials on examinations and other assignments; improper collaboration, submitting the same assignment for different classes (self-plagiarism); fabrication, forgery, alteration of documents, lying, etc…in order to obtain an academic advantage; assisting others in academic misconduct; attempting to commit academic misconduct; destruction of property, hacking, etc…; intimidation and interference with integrity process; and plagiarism. All students should review the Student’s Guide to Academic Integrity at http://integrity.ou.edu/students_guide.html

Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. All students should review policies regarding student conduct at http://studentconduct.ou.edu/

Class Behaviour:
A few words regarding class behavior: it is important to consider your fellow classmates at all times—do not distract them or take away from their opportunity to learn during class. Proper behaviour includes arriving on time, turning off mobile phones, and refraining from chatting with friends in class. Respect your classmates and your professor by paying attention; do not use electronic devices, take naps, or engage in activities not relating to the class. Participation does not mean ‘showing up’, it means taking an active part in the discussions. During class discussions, listen to and respect your fellow interlocutors. Under no circumstances will ad hominem attacks, swearing, or insults be permitted.

Electronic Devices:
Please note that electronic devices are not allowed in my classroom, unless you have a medically-documented disability. Computers, tablets, and phones actually inhibit students’ learning, serving often as a distraction for them and others sitting nearby. Numerous studies have also demonstrated that information retention is higher when one writes notes by hand. (The only exception to this policy concerns class presentations in which students may use a computer, if so desired.)
POLICIES AND NOTICES

Attendance/Grade Policy

Attendance and participation in interaction, individual assignments, group exercises, simulations, role playing, etc. are valuable aspects of any course because much of the learning comes from discussions in class with other students. It is expected that you attend all classes and be on time except for excused emergencies.

Excused absences are given for professor mandated activities or legally required activities such as emergencies or military assignments. It is the policy of the University to excuse absences of students that result from religious observances and to provide without penalty for the rescheduling of examinations and additional required class work that may fall on religious holidays. Unavoidable personal emergencies, including (but not limited to) serious illness; delays in getting to class because of accidents, etc.; deaths and funerals, and hazardous road conditions will be excused.

If you are obtaining financial assistance (TA, STAP, FA, VA, Scholarship, etc.) to pay all or part of your tuition cost, you must follow your funding agency/institution’s policy regarding “I” (Incomplete) grades unless the timeline is longer than what the University policy allows then you must adhere to the University policy. Students who receive Financial Aid must resolve/complete any “I” (Incomplete) grades by the end of the term or he/she may be placed on “financial aid probation.” If the “I” grade is not resolved/completed by the end of the following term, the student’s Financial Aid may be suspended make the student ineligible for further Financial Aid.

Students are responsible for meeting the guidelines of Tuition Assistance and Veterans Assistance. See the education counselor at your local education center for a complete description of your TA or VA requirements.

Academic Integrity and Student Conduct

Academic integrity means honesty and responsibility in scholarship. Academic assignments exist to help students learn; grades exist to show how fully this goal is attained. Therefore all work and all grades should result from the student's own understanding and effort.

Academic misconduct is any act which improperly affects the evaluation of a student’s academic performance or achievement. Misconduct occurs when the student either knows or reasonably should know that the act constitutes misconduct. Academic misconduct includes: cheating and using unauthorized materials on examinations and other assignments; improper collaboration, submitting the same assignment for different classes (self-plagiarism); fabrication, forgery, alteration of documents, lying, etc…in order to obtain an academic advantage; assisting others in academic misconduct; attempting to commit academic misconduct; destruction of property, hacking, etc…; intimidation and interference with integrity process; and plagiarism. All students should review the Student’s Guide to Academic Integrity at http://integrity.ou.edu/students_guide.html

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Accommodation Statement

The University of Oklahoma is committed to making its activities as accessible as possible. For accommodations on the basis of disability, please contact your local OU Site Director.

Course Policies

Advanced Programs policy is to order books in paperback if available. Courses, dates, and professors are subject to change. Please check with your OU Site Director. Students should retain a copy of any assignments that are mailed to the professor for the course. Advanced Programs does not provide duplicating services or office supplies.

Any and all course materials, syllabus, lessons, lectures, etc. are the property of professor teaching the course and the Board of Regents of the University of Oklahoma and are protected under applicable copyright.

For more information about Advanced Programs, visit our website at: http://www.goou.ou.edu/
INSTRUCTOR VITA
D. Gershon Lewental, Ph.D.

Education

- 2011: Brandeis University, PhD in Islamic and Middle Eastern history.
- 2003: Cornell University, AB magna cum laude in Near Eastern Studies and Economics, with a minor in International Relations.

Current Positions

- Schusterman visiting assistant professor, Departments of History and International & Area Studies, University of Oklahoma, 2012–present.

Frequently Taught Advanced Programs Courses
HIST 6600: Seminar in Middle Eastern history—Religion and Society

Major Areas of Teaching and Research Interest

- Islamic history and historiography
- Iranian history
- Israeli society; history and memory
- Nationalism studies
- The Baha’i faith

Representative Publications and Presentations

- Encyclopaedia Iranica (2013): peer-reviewed entries on ‘The Battle of Qādesīya’ and ‘Rostam Farrokhzād’.
- Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World (Brill, 2010): over 70 peer-reviewed entries on Jewish press, rabbis, and diplomats, and long entries on Ottoman Jewry (1650–1835), diplomacy, and Bulgarian Jewry.

Representative Honors and Awards Received

- 2012: Foundation of Iranian Studies Best PhD Dissertation Award
- 2012: Brandeis University Nahum & Anne Glatzer Endowed Dissertation Prize
- 2010: Brandeis University Redstone Dissertation Year Fellowship
- 2009: US Dept of State Critical Language Scholarship for Intensive Persian Study (Dushanbe, Tajikistan)
- 2009: Mellon Dissertation Research Grant
- 2005: Brandeis University Graduate School Outstanding Teaching Prize

Major Professional Affiliations

- International Society for Iranian Studies (ISIS)
- American Oriental Society (AOS)
- Middle East Studies Association (MESA)
- Association for the Study of Persianate Societies (ASPS)
- Association for the Study of the Middle East and Africa (ASMEA)
- Association for Jewish Studies (AJS)