G46.2810: France and Islam

Professor George R. Trumbull IV

Thurs 9:45-12:15 - 15 Washington Mews

This course investigates the discursive and cultural construction of Islam in the political and intellectual imagination(s) of colonial and post-colonial France. Themes will include the connections between the consolidation of republican government in France and the imperial project, practices of statecraft and anti-Muslim prejudice, and literary and artistic representations of Muslims and the Islamic world in French aesthetics. How do we write and teach an Islamic history of France? That is to say, to what extent is it possible to write a history of France and of French colonialism that demythologizes metropolitan (and especially republican) myths about Islam and instead portrays those myths as part of a particular (political, intellectual) imperial project? What is at stake in re-imagining postcolonial France as part of the dar al-islam?

Week I: Introduction
JAN. 18
Suggested Reading: Montesquieu, Persian Letters

Week II: Framing the Question
JAN. 25
Reading: Edward Said, Orientalism

Week III: Napoleon in Egypt
FEB. 1
Reading: Shaykh Abd al-Rahman al-Jabarti, Chronicles of the French Occupation

Week IV: A Mediterranean World?
FEB. 8
Reading: Nancy Gallagher, Medicine and Power in Tunisia, 1780-1880
Week V: Institutions of Empire
FEB. 15
Reading: Allan Christelow, Muslim Law Courts and the French Colonial State in Algeria

Week VI: Religion, Power, Resistance
FEB. 22
Reading: Julia Clancy-Smith, Rebel and Saint

Week VII: Urban Forms, Colonial Confrontations
MAR. 1
Reading: Zeynep Çelik, Urban Forms and Colonial Confrontations
PAPER DUE

Week VIII: Islam and Empire in Sub-Saharan Africa
MAR. 8
Reading: Christopher Harrison, France and Islam in West Africa

Week IX: Warfare and Dislocation
MAR. 22
Reading: Elizabeth Thompson, Colonial Citizens

Week X: Cultural Politics
APR. 5
Reading: Hamid Irbouh, Art in the Service of Colonialism; Ellen Amster, “The Many Deaths of Emile Mauchamp”

Week XI: Independence and Mythology
MAR. 29
Reading: James McDougall, History and the Culture of Nationalism in Algeria

Week XII: Theoretical Spaces, Theoretical Places
APR. 12
Reading: Janet Afary and Kevin B. Anderson, Foucault and the Iranian Revolution

Week XIII: Contemporary Politics (I)
APR. 19
Reading: Charlotte Nordmann, ed. Le Foulard islamique en questions; Feminism and Antiracism, pp. 295-323; Multiculturalism, Muslims and Citizenship, ch. 4; Dominic McGoldrick, Human Rights and Religion, pp. 34-106
ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

1) CLASS PARTICIPATION AND ATTENDANCE. 25%
a) All students are expected to arrive at discussion section prepared to contribute to our conversation about the readings; attendance is required. EVERY WEEK, BY 9:00 P.M. THE EVENING BEFORE DISCUSSION, every student must post two discussion questions drawn from the readings to the Blackboard site. Questions should aim at provoking discussion, rather than soliciting answers to factual queries.
b) Every student must present one week’s readings. In a short discussion of no more than five minutes, you should outline salient themes and discontinuities in the text(s) and provide rigorous avenues for inquiry in our discussion.

2) BOOK REVIEW: 25%
Each student must offer a critical reading of a relevant, related text of his or her choice. In a book review of no more than three pages, please substantively engage with the text selected. What aspects of the work prove methodologically problematic or analytically inconsistent? Which elements of the argument present compelling avenues for future research or theoretical inquiry?

3) PAPER: 50%
As a final exercise, please prepare a 15-20 pages historiographic essay on a relevant topic in the history of French involvement with the Islamic world. I expect papers to: a) demonstrate a mastery of relevant theoretical material; b) engage in a substantive manner with works from other intellectual traditions or disciplines; c) offer a particular perspective on a fundamental question or theme emerging from our discussions over the course of the semester. PAPER DUE MAY 5.

ADDENDA

1) I STRONGLY ENCOURAGE STUDENTS TO REFER TO THE UNDERGRADUATE SYLLABUS FOR SUPPLEMENTAL READINGS. ALTHOUGH THESE ARE NOT REQUIRED, I WILL REFER TO THEM FROM TIME TO TIME.

2) This course represents neither an introduction to the history of the Middle East, nor to the history of Islam, nor still to the history of France. I encourage you to familiarize yourself with such narratives through reference to substantive textbook(s).