



IS 515

Islam & Gender

Spring 2022

*Instructor: Dr. Shabana Mir*  
*Class: 6-8:30pm (U.S. Central)*  
*(preferred method of communication)*

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**Course description** This course explores the construction of normative gender roles in classical Muslim sources as well as gendered practices in diverse Muslim societies. Muslim perspectives, in interaction with the emerging field of Gender Studies and a wide array of feminist approaches, from secular feminists to Muslim feminist authors and activists, will also be considered. Students will learn about normative Islamic values and legal rulings on gender and sexuality and come to understand and appreciate the historical development of Muslim social and cultural practices with regard to gender roles.

**Prerequisite:** Graduate Standing

**Assessment of objectives** Student learning will be reinforced and evaluated by means of weekly reading assignments, classroom discussion, a class presentation, and written work. All work must be completed in a timely fashion. Written assignments must follow the norms of formal research papers with standard academic format, and a bibliography that adheres to MLA style.

### Studying Islam and Gender

There are a dizzying variety of topics, themes, and perspectives that can govern a study of Islam and gender. We could start with Gender Studies and/or Women's Studies. We could examine societal issues: marriage, puberty, marriage age, rape and gendered violence, gender in/equality, gender identity, sexuality, sexual morality, and religious garb. We could also examine case studies of *how* diverse Muslims practice (or do not practice) gendered morality. We could examine how (different versions and articulations of) Islamic law seek to govern gender and sexuality. We could examine how those articulations vary (and why, when, and how). We could investigate the different perspectives that govern the development of such Islamic legal rulings. Or we can take a textual approach, examining primary sources that address issues related to gender and sexuality. But which sources would we examine? Qur'an and Sunnah alone? Juristic works? Qur'anic and Hadith commentaries? Commentaries on *fiqh* works? Which of these would we select, and why? Which contemporary sources would we select, and why?

It is essential to select (and to understand your own) perspective, or what we might call a "bias." We all possess biases. Indeed it is impossible to go through life without collecting and possessing biases. They are what makes it possible for us to filter, process, and make sense of diverse life experiences. There is a

danger when you do not recognize your own bias and how your own sociological, historical, political, and - yes - gendered position shapes your bias.

In this graduate course, we will read texts, while examining the perspectives of the text authors. This is an academic course, not a “how to do gender piously.” *That* I leave to your conscience.

## COURSE POLICIES



### Notes on online education

During the pandemic, we rely on technology more than usual. Please use general good practice, also:

- Please show up on time, participate in class, and prepare for class - for me ☺
- Please turn on your webcam as much as possible so we can feel “normal” and develop a sense of community. At the very least please turn on webcams in the beginning or some other time. It is sad and awkward to talk to black squares.
- Try not to “lurk.” It feels unsafe to share one’s private opinions on gender when others are perpetually silent and invisible.
- If you are late, please turn on your zoom with a note saying “be right back.” Please avoid disruptive late entries. This way you avoid creating a momentum of lateness, and you allow others to build synchronous educational magic.
- In video platforms, it can be difficult to ensure smooth communication. Please raise your hand and wait to be called upon. Never talk over someone else. If you go on too long, I will ask you to conclude and/or will call on someone else.
- This course includes sensitive topics. I have promised that the class will be a safe feminist space for women and marginalized populations. Please help me keep it that way.
- This course includes religiously controversial views. If you are thin-skinned, you may need to rethink your attendance.

### Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- \*Identify articulations of gender in Islamic sources;
- \*Distinguish among diverse readings of gender-related rulings;
- \*Investigate the relationship between religious constructions of gender and their potential for gender justice
- \*Critique various developments in the historical construction of gendered religious law

reading” means skimming it, or reading the important parts and the conclusion. But try not to make a habit of it. Every attendee should know a) the topic b) the issues c) some questions they have about it. If you do the populi response for the week, that will help you prepare.

### Required Texts

The following books are required, in addition to various assigned articles, videos, etc. Please bring reading assignments to class.

Portions of:

Kecia Ali (ed.), *Half of Faith: American Muslim Marriage & Divorce in the 21<sup>st</sup> c.*

Judith Tucker. *Women, Family, & Gender in Islamic Law*

Judith Tucker. *In The House of the Law*

Shahla Haeri, *The Unforgettable Queens of Islam*

- There are a number of auditing students in our course. Welcome! I’m delighted to have you. You don’t have to do homework. But I ask that you do the reading. Yes, in graduate school

sometimes  
“doing the

Grading Scale		
GRADE	DEFINITION	GP
A (93-100)	Excellent	4.0
A- (90-92)		3.5
B+ (87-89)	Good	3.3
B (83-86)		3.0
B- (80-82)	Average	2.7
C+ (77-79)		2.3
C (73-76)		2.0
C- (70-72)	Poor	1.7
D+ (67-69)		1.3
D (60-66)		1.0
F (59-below)		0
P	Pass	0
I	Incomplete	0
W	Withdraw	0
WP	Withdrawn Passing	0
WF	Withdrawn Failing	0

### Attendance and Punctuality

I adhere to AIC attendance policy: college rules and regulations can be found online. In case of absence, please let me know. Unexcused absences that amount to more than 20% of the total number of class contact hours, may cause you to be dropped from the course automatically with a grade of ‘W.’ If such attendance occurs in more than 1 course, a student may be suspended from the College (*Student Handbook*). Please be on time and stay for the duration of class.



## Participation

As a graduate discussion seminar, this course needs students' engagement and active participation. (That includes auditing students please!) Class participation means you must a) be attentive b) make relevant, substantive comments c) be prepared i.e. have read the assigned readings and done all assignments d) be engaged in the tasks at hand. Please be respectful to faculty and fellow students. Discussion must be relevant, substantive, respectful of diverse views, and democratic, and must refer to the assigned readings often. In this academic setting, all claims and opinions must be supported by scholarly evidence and reasoning. You must develop the analytic habit of considering various perspectives, including opposing ones.

1. **Do the reading:** In graduate classes, the bulk of your work is reading, and the remainder is discussion and writing. So reading all required readings is the main portion of your work. If you fail to do the reading, your writing and your classroom discussion will be impacted. Your ability to engage ideas in discussion will lack substance, and these will be graded accordingly.
2. **What if I don't understand it?** Sometimes you *do* the reading and do not understand it well. You've done your job - now show up for class and listen to the discussion. Ask questions. Showing up for class *without* doing the reading means you are giving up the opportunity to follow up and engage with the ideas in another format. Showing up for class without having done the reading is pretty pointless. Many students have done this whose classroom comments end up being digressions, irrelevant commentary on the state of the ummah, and emotional reactions to how much they "hated" the reading when they scanned pages 1-2.
3. **But it's a lot of reading.** Yes, it is because when you're in a graduate course, you want to explore complex ideas.

**Class Presentations:** On several days this semester, each of you will kick off discussion by presenting on the reading and the author as assigned by the instructor.

**Populi Posts:** Posts at Populi Discussions are required. Use your own words to respond to the question/prompt. No direct quotes. Late, brief, and superficial posts get little or no credit.



**Reflection Journal** Your last Populi Post will comprise a reflection journal regarding your learning experience this semester. This reflection journal will be a document that you should add to throughout the semester to record the progress of your learning. In this journal, take note of:

- Areas you found interesting in the readings that you'd like to explore further
- What you learned that was surprising or strange
- Which sources did you learn most from? Least? And why was that?

**Research Paper:** One 10-page research paper that uses a minimum of 5 scholarly sources and 5 others is required. The paper will be the subject of a Class Presentation. Please share the topic with me so I can approve; it *must* be core to Islam-and-Gender. Choose from:

- a) A review of literature
- b) A research study of diverse perspectives related to an issue on Islam and gender.
- c) An in-depth study of an important figure on gender and Islam
- d) A comparative paper on two books written on the same subject.

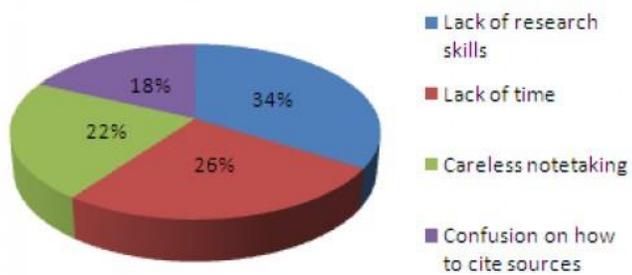
**Grade Components**

Participation	20
Class Presentations	30
Populi Posts	100
Research Paper & Presentation	50
	<hr/>
	200

**Academic Dishonesty, Dismissal, & Appeal**

AIC will not tolerate academic dishonesty. Students have an obligation to maintain a high degree of academic integrity and to behave honestly and fairly with other students, their property, members of the College community, College guests, and College property. Any violation of this policy may result in disciplinary action ranging from warning to expulsion from the College. Please consult the Student

## Why students plagiarize



- 2) Takes another's work and passes it off as his/her own
- 3) Takes exact wording without proper citations
- 4) Paraphrases another's work without proper citations.

Handbook. Plagiarism can result in a failing grade for the paper and/or the course, academic suspension, or even expulsion from the College. Mastering correct citation format is very important for graduate students.

**Collaboration policy:** You are encouraged to study with other students in class and to work together on homework problems. You will learn more by complementing your individual study with peer discussions than you will by just studying by yourself. However, you *must* turn in your own work. If you copy someone else's work, it is plagiarism.

Note that, in order to avoid plagiarism, you must provide *both* types of citations. For details, read on:

Students often get confused about the **two types of citations**.

**The first type are in-text citations (also called parenthetical citations), which appear throughout your paper at the end of sentences that you are citing.** These usually include the authors, date of publication (APA only) and page number being cited. The format will differ for APA and MLA. An example in MLA format:

*Ernest Hemingway wrote all of his novels and stories while standing (Grooms 27).*

**The second type of citation is the works cited (MLA) or reference list (APA).** This is a list of all sources used in your research and appears at the end of your paper.<sup>1</sup>

### AIC Credit Hour Definition

The amount of work accomplished by a student is expressed in semester hours. In general, 1 semester hour represents 1 hour of class. For every credit hour of direct instruction, the student is expected to spend a minimum of 2 additional hours outside of class time (e.g. class assignments, homework, projects, etc.)

### Assignment Requirements

All papers should be typed and follow standard formatting as below.

- Microsoft Word 2007, 12-point font (Times New Roman, Book Antiqua, or similar), 1" margins, double-spaced with page numbers
- Use a cover page with paper title, your name, course title, and date. Assignments should start at the top of page 2.
- Don't use blank lines, size 13+ fonts, repetition, vague statements, and claims without evidence.

<sup>1</sup> Northern Virginia Community College, "Using Sources: Evaluating Sources and Avoiding Plagiarism," <http://libguides.nvcc.edu/c.php?g=361391&p=2440254>

- Submit assignments at Populi, not as hard copies or email attachments

When graded, students must download the graded assignment, and peruse feedback. I do not provide opportunities for make-up. Work in advance of deadlines, and please avoid writing a paper from scratch the night before it is due.

### Course schedule (very tentative)

Date /topic	Assigned reading	Written work
1/19 First day	Introductions: the course and the people	
1/26 Speaking about Muslim Women	<i>Toor, How Not to Talk About Muslim Women</i> <i>Abu Lughod, Do Muslim women need saving</i> <i>Kahf, Hijab Scene</i> TBA	Populi post #1 (please share your research topic)
2/2 Trends in Islam & Gender	Guest speaker: Dr. Shehnaz Haqqani Chapter, Islam and Gender	
2/9 Women in public	<i>Katz, Crones, Slaves, and the Caliph's Daughter</i> <i>Sayed, Early Sunni Discourse on Women's Mosque Attendance</i> <i>Katz, Corruption of the Times</i> <i>Film: Me &amp; the Mosque</i>	Populi post #2 (more research topic details)
2/16 Marriage	<i>Half of Faith</i> , selections <i>Saadia Yacoob, Consent in marriage</i> <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q1KdaW0DdqE">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q1KdaW0DdqE</a>	Populi post #3 (research paper sources)
2/23 Intimate partner violence	Guest speaker: Dr. Laury Silvers <i>Ali, "The Best of You Will Not Strike"</i> <i>Silvers, "In the Book We Have Left Out Nothing"</i> <i>Chaudhry, Does the Koran allow wife-beating?</i> <i>Shaykha Reim Youssef, video</i>	Populi post #4
3/2 Sufi women	Silvers, Early Pious Sufi Women Guest speaker: Dr. Rose Deighton TBA	Research paper abstract
Mar 7-11	Spring break	
3/16 Clothes	Alvi, excerpts <i>The Muslim Veil</i> <i>Mir, Muslim American Women on Campus</i> , Ch. 4	Populi post #5
3/23	Attar on Rabia	Populi post

Masculinity and gender essentialism	The Way of Sufi Chivalry Guest speaker: Prof. Omid Safi	#6
3/30 Parenting	Mir, <i>Sufi Feminist Immigrant Mothering</i> TBA	Research paper sources, and one page.
4/6 Divorce	Tucker [TBA] <i>Half of Faith [selections]</i> Guest speaker: Angelica Lindsey Ali	Populi post #7
4/13 Muslim Queens	Haeri, <i>The Unforgettable Queens of Islam</i>	Populi post #8
4/20 Speaking in God's Name for Women	Abou El Fadl, Speaking in God's Name Kahf, She Who Argues	Populi post #9
4/27 Zulaikha	Merguerian & Najmabadi, <i>Yusuf &amp; Zulaikha</i> Stowasser, <i>Women in the Qur'an</i>	Paper due
5/4 Presentations	<i>Wrap-up Research Presentations &amp; Reflection</i> <i>Journal</i>	Populi post #10

### Disability

Students with disabilities who require accommodations should notify the instructor and Director of Student Services by filing for disability in the first week of the semester. Please consult the Main Office.

### Emergency Evacuation

In the case of an emergency that requires full building evacuation, students must follow the safety procedures outlined in the Student Handbook and the evacuation plan located in each classroom. If a faculty member is present, the students should follow the faculty's lead in exiting the building by using the nearest exit.

### Academic Warnings

A progress report is administered mid-semester. The student must refer to the professor with a progress report form, so that the instructor may relay a student's progress and discuss any issues related to attendance, missing assignments, etc. The progress report may be discussed with the student advisor. This is an opportunity for the student to improve his/her grade.

Resubmission: At times when a paper doesn't meet the primary assignment guidelines and expectations, I *may* return it to the student to resubmit after one additional day, with a grade deduction

up to 15%. This is not an automatic provision but is at my discretion. No one may have more than 1 resubmission. Follow instructions, ask questions, and please do not ask for consideration when it is too late.

Grade discussions: I don't discuss grades on the day that an assignment is returned. When graded work is returned, the student must wait 24 hours before coming to talk with me about his grade. Read my comments and the assignment guidelines, then schedule an appointment to address any remaining issues.

#### **Email Etiquette**

##### **If you have a question, check the syllabus first**

Check email regularly (at least twice/week)

Respond promptly

Assume your email is a public document

Be polite (please, thank you, may I, could I/you)

Use proper address for professors ("Dear Dr. Mir")

Don't ask for instant response, and don't expect a response on the weekend

Don't write about grade changes in email

Don't write about other students in an email

Give proper context

Proof-read, spell-check, and punctuate your email

All papers should be typed and follow standard formatting as below.

- Microsoft Word 2007, 12-point font (Times New Roman, Book Antiqua, or similar), 1" margins, double-spaced with page numbers
- Use a cover page with paper title, your name, course title, and date. Assignments should start at the top of page 2.
- Avoid repetition, vague statements, unsupported claims, informal comments, etc.
- Submit assignments at Populi, not as hard copies or email attachments
- Direct quotes must be kept to a minimum, and all quotes and paraphrasing must be clearly indicated

When graded, students must download the graded assignment, and peruse feedback. Work in advance of deadlines, and please avoid writing a paper from scratch the night before it is due. At times when a paper doesn't meet the primary assignment guidelines and expectations, I may at my discretion return it to the student to resubmit after one additional day, with a grade deduction up to 15%. No one may have more than 1 resubmission.