Islamic Rulership:
The Caliphate in Theory and Practice

HIST 78110; MES 78000
Tuesday 4:15-6:15pm; room 8201.06

Anna Akasoy
(aa739@hunter.cuny.edu; 1321 Hunter West; Office Hours: Tuesday 3-4pm and by appointment; office 6304.22)

Chase Robinson
(crobinson@gc.cuny.edu; office hours by appointment, please contact Alexandra Robinson arobinson@gc.cuny.edu)

Course Description:
This class offers an introductory survey to Islamic political theory and practice. Readings and discussions will address origins and development of principal themes and institutions of the Islamic political tradition, including prophecy, caliphate, imamate, jihad, messianism, sharia, revivalism and modernism. We will be reading a combination of primary and secondary sources, including scripture, history, poetry, political theory, coins, and philosophical literature. Both Sunni and Shiite traditions will be covered. No background in Middle Eastern history required.

Assignments
All written assignments are to be submitted by email.

MA Students

Not individually graded
1) Compile a bibliography on a topic related to the theme of this class consisting of ten items (articles, book chapters, monographs and/or edited volumes). Explain briefly in one sentence the relevance of each item for the topic. 5% of final grade (if the bibliography fulfills these criteria).

2) Class minutes for two meetings. Write a summary of class discussions in 500 words each. The minutes should give an impression of different views (in the publications discussed on that day, as well as voiced among the discussants), how they relate to the general subject and which questions remain open for further discussion. 5% of final grade (if the minutes fulfil these criteria).

3) Preparation of an in-class discussion. Each student will present one article from the reading list (either required or recommended). The preparations should include three main points in the reading as well as one question for discussion in the class. 5% of final grade (if the preparations fulfil these criteria).

Graded

DRAFT syllabus
4) 2 response papers (700 words) in which you discuss a publication from the syllabus or a question related to the topic of the class. 15% of final grade. Deadlines: 13 March (first paper) and 24 April (second paper)

5) Research essay (3000 words including references and bibliography) on a question related to the topic of the class. 30% of final grade.

6) One book review (1000 words) in which you select one book (monograph, collected volume or special issue of a journal) and examine its main features critically. 15% of final grade.

7) Attendance and participation. You are allowed two absences. You will lose 1% from your final grade per additional absence. You are expected to prepare material ahead of time and participate fully in class discussions. 25% of final grade

PhD students

1) Presentation. See above
2) Book review. See above
3) Research essay (5000 words). See above

General bibliography


1) Introduction (29 August)

Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and the modern caliphate

2) Late Antiquity (5 September)

*G.W. Bowersock, *Empires in Collision in Late Antiquity* (Waltham, 2012). @CUNY*


James Howard-Johnston, ‘Heraclius’ Persian Campaigns and the Revival of the East Roman Empire, 622-630’, War in History 6 (1999), 1-44.


Theophilus of Edessa’s Chronicle and the Circulation of Historical Knowledge in Late Antiquity and Early Islam, trans. Robert G. Hoyland (Liverpool 2011).

3) Arabia in Late Antiquity: Muhammad (12 September)

‘Muhammad’s Leadership’ in Tottoli/Salvatore


4) Arabia in Late Antiquity: the Qur’an (26 September)

Wadad Kadi, ‘Caliph’, in Jane Dammen McAuliffe (ed.), Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān (Leiden, 2001-6), I, 276-8. @GC


5) Umayyad caliphate (3 October)


Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych, *The Poetics of Islamic Legitimacy. Myth, Gender, and Ceremony in the Classical Arabic Ode* (Bloomington, 2002), chapter 3 (‘Celebration and Restoration: Praising the Caliph. Al-Akhṭal and the Umayyad Victory Ode’), 80-109. @GC

Garth Fowden, *Quṣayr ’Amra. Art and the Umayyad Elite in Late Antique Syria* (Berkeley, 2004), chapters 5 and 7. @GC


6) Sectarianism, fitna (10 October)


Crone, *Medieval Islamic Political Thought*, ‘The Khārijites’ (54-64), ‘The Shiʿites of the Umayyad Period’ (70-86) and ‘The Imams’ (110-124).


7) Mihna (17 October)


8) Post-mihna commonwealth (24 October)

Paula Sanders, _Ritual, Politics, and the City in Fatimid Cairo_ (Albany, 1994).


9) Buyids and Ghaznavids (31 October)


10) Mongol crisis (7 November)

Peter B. Golden, ‘Imperial Ideology and the Sources of Political Unity amongst the Pre-Činggisid Nomads of Western Eurasia’, _Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi_ 2 (1982), 37-76.


11) Literature (14 November)


‘Andarz’, in Encyclopaedia Iranica

12) Philosophy (28 November)


13) Post-classical (5 December)


14) Conclusions (12 December)
