Course Description:

In this class, we will explore social, political, economic, legal, and cultural aspects of slavery in premodern Islamic history. Starting in the late antique Mediterranean, we will consider the emergence of a variety of forms of slavery in the Islamic Middle East, including military slavery and agricultural slavery, but focus especially on the enslavement of women. We will end with the complex relationship between Islam and transatlantic slavery and various ethical and political implications of the history of religiously validated enslavement. We will consider a range of sources, including legal material and popular literature. Prior knowledge of Middle Eastern or Islamic history is not required.

Course website (not public): https://commons.gc.cuny.edu/

Please register for an account and send me the details of your account. You will then receive an invitation to join the group.

Assignments

Contributions to course website - not individually graded

1) Class minutes for two meetings. Write a summary of class discussions in 300-500 words each and post it on the course website. 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. 10% of final grade (if the minutes fulfil these criteria) at 95%. The format can be bullet points. Dates for meetings will be assigned.

2) Preparation of one required article. Each student will assemble notes on one required article and post them at least two days before the respective meeting. The notes should include the main points in the reading as well as one question for discussion in the class. 10% of final grade (if the preparations fulfil these criteria) at 95%. Articles will be assigned in class.

3) Introductions. Each student will review previous posts on the day or two before the meeting and present notes in class – what have we covered so far, which questions remain open for discussion, what have others posted, how does that relate to other discussions in the class, what might be relevant for today. An informal presentation of select notes is sufficient for this purpose. Dates for presentation of notes will be assigned in class. 10% of final grade at 95%.

4) Contribution to a collective book review. On March 7, we will discuss an edited volume. Each contribution to the volume will have at least one student who will be primarily responsible for
assembling notes on that chapter. The intended outcome of this meeting is a collective book review. (Details to be discussed in class.) Post any notes you have compiled beforehand by March 4. 10% of final grade at 95%.

Graded – please submit assignments 6, 7 and 8 as word documents attached to an email to me. You are welcome to post these on the course website as well.

5) 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. 15% of final grade

6) Response paper (500 words) in which you discuss a publication from the syllabus or a question related to the topic of the class. (Overlap with notes submitted to course blog acceptable.) 10% of final grade. Deadline: 26 September

7) Book review (700 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. Deadline: 14 November

8) Research essay (3000 words including references and bibliography) on a question related to the topic of the class. 20% of final grade. Deadline: 14 December

SCHEDULE

* = required readings
@GC = available electronically through the GC library
@ac = available electronically through the course website

1) Introduction (January 31)

General readings
Craig Perry, ‘Historicizing Slavery in the Medieval Islamic World’, International Journal of Middle East Studies 49 (2017), 133-8. @GC
Orlando Patterson, Slavery and Social Death. A Comparative Study (Cambridge, 1982).

2) Late Antiquity and the Qur’an (February 7)

The aim of this meeting is to gain a general impression of slavery in premodern Islamic history and some of the theoretical and conceptual problems involved in the study of this phenomenon, especially any difficulties involved in treating slavery as a universal category in historical research. We will also focus on slavery in the late antique environment in which Islam emerged, especially the legacy of Roman slavery and slavery in Byzantium.
One of the main problems discussed in this class is the definition of slavery across different historical contexts as well as alternatives to the term ‘slavery’, e.g. ‘unfreedom’. Definitions and debates in premodern Islamic law constitute critical sources for a definition of slavery in contexts of Islamic history. The aim of this meeting is to survey fundamental notions of slavery in premodern Islamic law and to gain an impression of the regulations for enslaving people, for the treatment of enslaved people and for manumission. We will also explore comparisons made in legal literature between enslaved people and other groups of people, especially married women. Time permitting and depending on interest, we will also look into contemporary cases of the application of Islamic law in order to validate the enslavement especially of women.

* Bernard K. Freamon, ‘Definitions and Conceptions of Slave Ownership in Islamic Law’, in Jean Allain (ed.), *The Legal Understanding of Slavery. From the Historical to the Contemporary* (Oxford, 2012), 40-60. @ac
* Clarence-Smith, *Islam and the Abolition of Slavery*, chapter two (‘A Fragile Sunni Consensus’, 22-48). @ac
* Kecia Ali, *Marriage and Slavery in Early Islam* (Cambridge, MA, 2010), introduction (1-28) and chapter five (‘Marriage and Dominion’, 164-86). @ac
* Irene Schneider, ‘Freedom and Slavery in Early Islamic Times’, *Al-Qanṭara* 28 (2007), 353-82. @ac
NB: The dissertation was published as *Early Mālikī Law. Ibn ʿAbd al-ḥakam and his Major Compendium of Jurisprudence* (Leiden, 2000). We will be reading the earlier version for reasons of availability and in order to discuss strategies in composing a longer piece of research literature.


Donald P. Little, ‘Two Fourteenth-Century Court Records from Jerusalem Concerning the Disposition of Slaves by Minors’, *Arabica* 29 (1982), 16-49. @GC


4) Agricultural and military slavery in the ninth century (February 21)

Extensive evidence of slavery in the Islamic world is available from the ninth century and the early Abbasid empire. The aim of this meeting is to explore two forms of slavery prominent at the time, their historical repercussions and their implications for the Abbasid empire as a ‘slave society’. We will be discussing the rebellion of the Zanj, East African slaves, as well as the rise of military slavery in Islamic history with a particular focus on Central Asians. Time permitting and in case of interest, we can draw lines from ninth-century military slavery to the Mamluks. The meeting will also offer an opportunity to survey where slaves in Abbasid Iraq came from and what their enslavement may suggest concerning any connections between geography, race, ethnicity and social status.

*Alexandre Popović,* *The Revolt of African Slaves in Iraq in the 3rd/9th Century* (Princeton, 1999), excerpts. @ac


*Abdul Sheriff,* ‘The Zanj Rebellion and the Transition from Plantation to Military Slavery’, *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 38 (2018), 246-60. @GC


*Matthew S. Gordon,* *The Breaking of a Thousand Swords. A History of the Turkish Military of Samarra (A.H. 200-275/815-889 C.E.)* (Albany, 2001), introduction (1-14) and chapter four (‘The Exercise of Authority’, 105-40). @ac


*Jere L. Bacharach,* ‘African Military Slaves in the Medieval Middle East. The Cases of Iraq (869-955) and Egypt (868-1171)’, *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 13/4 (1981), 471-95. @GC

*Noel Lenski,* ‘Framing the Question: What Is a Slave Society?’, in Noel Lenski and Catherine M. Cameron (eds), *What is a Slave Society? The Practice of Slavery in Global Perspective* (Cambridge, 2018), 15-57. @ac

Matthew S. Gordon, ‘The Turkish Officers of Samarra. Revenue and the Exercise of Authority’, in *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 42/2 (1999), 466-93. @GC


5) Enslaved women in Islamic history I (February 28)

This and the next meeting will focus on enslaved women, mostly in Abbasid elite institutions. Case studies will mostly be concerned with concubinage. Depending on time and interest, parallels in contemporary practices can be explored.


*Fuad Matthew Caswell, *The Slave Girls of Baghdad. The Qiyān in the Early Abbasid Era* (London, 2011), chapters one (‘The Social Scene’, 10-36) and chapter three, the section about ‘Inān (56-81). @ac


David Ayalon, ‘On the Term Khādim in the Sense of ‘Eunuch’ in the Early Muslim Sources’, *Arabica* 32 (1985), 289-308. @GC


Nadia Maria El Cheikh, ‘Revisiting the Abbasid Harems’, *Journal of Middle East Women’s Studies* 1 (2005), 1-19. @ac

Nadia Maria El Cheikh, ‘Servants at the Gate, Eunuchs at the Court of al-Muqtadir’, *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 48/2 (2005), 234-52. @GC


Kristina Richardson, ‘Singing Slave Girls (qiyan) of the ‘Abbasid Court in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries’, in Gwyn Campbell et al (eds), *Children in Slavery through the Ages* (Athens, 2009), 105-18. @GC
6) Enslaved women in Islamic history II (March 7)

During this meeting, we will be continuing discussions from the previous meeting and focus on a collection of articles. In addition to gaining further insights into enslaved women in elite institutions in Islamic history, the aim of this meeting is to explore how academic debates unfold and how individual contributions relate to each other. The product of this meeting is going to be a collective review of the edited volume.


7) Al-Andalus and the Mediterranean (March 14)

The aim of this meeting is to shift the geographical focus from the main lands of the Arabic-speaking world to the Iberian Peninsula, to identify and account for any differences in notions and practices surrounding slavery in this part of the Islamic world. Particular attention will be paid to the enslavement of European Christians. Depending on interest, we will also discuss early modern cases of Muslim enslavement of Europeans in North Africa.

*Olivia Remie Constable, 'Muslim Spain and Mediterranean Slavery: the Medieval Slave Trade as an Aspect of Muslim-Christian Relations', in Scott L. Waugh and Peter D. Diehl (eds), *Christendom and its Discontents. Exclusion, Persecution and Rebellion, 1000-1500* (Cambridge, 1996), 264-84. @ac


*Marek Jankowiak, 'What Does the Slave Trade in the Saqaliba Tell Us about Early Islamic Slavery', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 49 (2017), 169-72. @GC

*William D. Phillips, Jr., *Slavery in Medieval and Early Modern Iberia* (Philadelphia, 2014), introduction (1-9) and chapter one ('The History of Slavery in Iberia', 10-27). @GC

*Cristina de la Puente, 'Slaves in al-Andalus through Mālikī wathāʾiq Works (4th-6th Centuries H./10th-12th Centuries CE): Marriage and Slavery as Factors of Social Categorisation', *Annales Islamologiques* 42 (2008), 187-212. @ac

*Cristina de la Puente, 'Free Fathers, Slave Mothers and Their Children. A Contribution to the Study of Family Structures in al-Andalus', *Imago Temporis, Medium Aevum* 7 (2013), 27-44. @GC

*Robert C. Davis, *White Slaves, Muslim Masters. White Slavery in the Mediterranean, the Barbary Coast, and Italy, 1500-1800* (Basingstoke, 2003), part one ('White Slavery', 3-65). @ac


Cristina de la Puente, 'Esclavitud y matrimonio en al-Mudawwana al-Kubrā de Saḥnūn', *Al-Qanṭara* 16 (1995), 309-34. @open access

Cristina de la Puente, 'Entre la esclavitud y la libertad. Consecuencias legales de la manumisión según el derecho mālikī', *Al-Qanṭara* 21 (2000), 339-60. @open access


Cristina de la Puente, 'The Ethnic Origins of Female Slaves in al-Andalus', in Gordon and Hain (eds), *Concubines and Courtesans*. @GC


Craig Perry, 'Conversion as an Aspect of Master-Slave Relationships in the Medieval Egyptian Jewish Community', in Yaniv Fox and Yosi Yisraeli (eds), *Contesting Inter-Religious Conversion in the Medieval World* (London, 2017), 135-59. @ac
8) Ottomans (March 21)

In this meeting, we will explore particularities of slavery in the Ottoman Empire. In addition to surveying general developments we will again focus on domestic slavery and the harem. This meeting will serve as a preparation for the meetings on abolition and on slavery in the Western imagination.


*Ehud R. Toledano, 'Ottoman Concepts of Slavery in the Period of Reform (1830s-1880s)', in Martin A. Klein (ed.), *Breaking the Chains. Slavery, Bondage and Emancipation in Modern Africa and Asia* (Madison, 1993), 37-63. @ac

*Charles L. Wilkins, 'Slavery and Household Formation in Ottoman Aleppo, 1640-1700', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 56 (2013), 345-91. @GC

*Suraiya Faroqui, 'Black Slaves and Freedmen Celebrating (Aydin, 1576)', *Turcica* 21-22 (1991), 205-15. @ac


*Gulay Yilmaz, 'Becoming a Devşirme. The Training of Conscripted Children in the Ottoman Empire', in Gwyn Campbell et al (eds), *Children in Slavery through the Ages* (Athens, 2009), 119-34. @GC

Géza Dávid and Pál Fodor (eds), *Ransom Slavery along the Ottoman Frontiers (Early Fifteenth–Early Eighteenth Centuries)* (Leiden, 2007). @GC


Mary Ann Fay, *Unveiling the Harem: Elite Women and the Paradox of Seclusion in Eighteenth Century Cairo* (Syracuse, 2012). @GC

Eve Troutt Powell, *Tell it in My Memory: Stories of Enslavement from Egypt, Sudan and the Ottoman Empire* (Palo Alto, 2012). @GC


Maria Pia Pedani, *Venetian Slaves in the Ottoman Empire in the Early Modern Period*, in Stefan Hanß and Juliane Schiel (eds), *Mediterranean Slavery Revisited (500-1800)* (Zurich, 2014), 309-23. @ac

Ehud R. Toledano, 'The Concept of Slavery in Ottoman and Other Muslim Societies. Dichotomy or Continuum', in Miura Toru and John Edward Philips (eds), *Slave Elites in the Middle East and Africa. A Comparative Study* (London, 2000), 159-75. @ac

Terence Walz and Kenneth M. Cuno (eds), *Race and Slavery in the Middle East. Histories of Trans-Saharan Africans in the Nineteenth-Century Egypt, Sudan, and the Ottoman Mediterranean* (Cairo, 2010).

9) Islam and Slavery in West Africa I (March 28)

This is the first of a two-part meeting in which we will discuss the enslavement of people, both Muslim and non-Muslim, mostly in West Africa, with the occasional focus on East Africa. One of the aims of these meetings is to explore the significance of race and religion in these contexts. While the first meeting is meant to focus on Muslim enslavers and representations of sub-Saharan Africa and Africans in premodern Arabic literature, the second meeting will focus on transatlantic slavery and the dual role of Muslims as both enslavers and enslaved.


*E. Ann McDougall, ‘Visions of the Sahara. Negotiating the History and Historiography of Premodern Saharan Slavery’, *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 38 (2018), 211-29. @GC

*Timothy Cleveland, ‘Ahmad Baba al-Timbukti and his Islamic Critique of Racial Slavery in the Maghrib’, *The Journal of North African Studies* 20/1 (2015), 42-64. @GC


NB: This article deals primarily with East Africa, but begins with a short broader survey.


Shaun Marmon, ‘Black Slaves in Mamlûk Narratives. Representations of Transgression’, *Al-Qanṭara* 28 (2007), 435-64. @open access


10) Islam and Slavery in West Africa II: transatlantic slavery (April 4)

See above.


J. Alexander, 'Islam, Archaeology and Slavery in Africa', *World Archaeology* 33/1 (2001), 44-60. @GC

11) Abolitionism (April 11)

In this meeting, we will discuss developments around the abolition of slavery in the Islamic world in more recent history.

*William Gervase Clarence-Smith, *Islam and the Abolition of Slavery* (Oxford, 2006), part II (98-232). [Chapters will be divided among students.] @ac
*Ismael Musah Montana, *The Abolition of Slavery in Ottoman Tunisia* (Gainesville, 2013). [Chapters will be divided among students.] @GC
*Ehud R. Toledano, ‘Abolition and Anti-slavery in the Ottoman Empire. A Case to Answer?’, in William Mulligan and Maurice J. Bric (eds), *Global History of Anti-slavery Politics in the Nineteenth Century* (Basingstoke, 2013), 117-36. @ac


12) Orientalism and slavery (April 18)

Slavery features prominently in the Orientalist imagination. The enslavement of European women and the presence of eunuchs in harems have long attracted the attention of Western authors and artists. Likewise, the high profile of slaves as characters in the Arabian Nights may account for some of the popularity of this collection of stories. The purpose of this meeting is to explore Orientalist representations of slavery in the Islamic world, focusing on the examples of the harem and the Arabian Nights.

*The Arabian Nights. Tales of 1001 Nights*, translated by Malcolm C. Lyons, Robert Irwin and Ursula Lyons, 3 vols (London, 2010), excerpts. @ac
13) Slavery in Islamic history: ethical challenges for historians (May 2)

The purpose of this meeting is to survey some of the ethical challenges for historians involved in the study of slavery in Islamic history, including methods of recovering voices of slaves, including biography and historical fiction, and the political implications for contemporary cases of religiously validated enslavement. In addition to identifying problems addressed in the literature selected for this class we will discuss any issues of interest to participants in the class.

*Julia Bray, 'Toward an Abbasid History of Emotions. The Case of Slavery', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 49 (2017), 143-7. @GC


*Nadia Murad, *The Last Girl. My Story of Captivity, and My Fight against the Islamic State* (New York, 2017), excerpts. @ac

*Ehud R. Toledano, *As If Silent and Absent. Bonds of Enslavement in the Islamic Middle East* (New Haven, 2007). [Chapters will be divided among students.] @GC


14) Conclusions (May 9)

Mohammed Ennaji, *Slavery, the State, and Islam* (New York, 2013).


Ehud R. Toledano, ‘Ottoman and Islamic Societies. Were They “Slave Societies”?’, in Noel Lenski and Catherine M. Cameron (eds), *What is a Slave Society? The Practice of Slavery in Global Perspective* (Cambridge, 2018), 360-82. @ac

This syllabus is subject to changes.