THE GRADUATE CENTER
Ph.D. PROGRAM IN HISTORY

Historicizing Religion
(HIST/MES 78000-01)
Fall 2020

Professor Samira Haj
Email contact: hajsamira48@gmail.com

Course Description:

In this class, religion is approached as a social and historical fact with political, legal and economic attributes and ramifications. As a historical social fact, religion (in general and Islam in particular) is compelled to undergo continuous redefinitions to accommodate change in circumstance and social settings. The objective of this seminar is to explore some of these changes in light of the dramatic changes and concerns engendered by modern structures, institutions and power. These changes are drawn out through familiar oppositional yet problematic categories like the secular vs. the religious, state sovereignty vs. religious authority, modern law vs. divine prescriptions among others. The course is comparative and interdisciplinary; it draws on different areas of study and bodies of knowledge including anthropology, political theory, philosophy and religious studies.

Course Requirement:

1) Weekly responses and presentations: 50% of the grade
   Students will be divided into groups of 2 or more students to lead class discussion each week. Each group is expected to write a short paper explicating the week’s reading and raising questions relating to it. These papers should be sent out to all members of the seminar the evening before the seminar meets. Regardless of the group leading the discussion, all students must be prepared to participate fully in the weekly discussions.

2) Final Paper: 50%
   Students are expected to write a final term paper of approximately 20 pages in length. This will be due at the end of the semester. Students should discuss the topic of their papers in advance with me.

Reading List: (subject to change)

**I keep the option of revising the readings**
Weekly Assignments:

**Week 1**: Introduction to the course: an open conversation over the question of “care” today in the context of the Corona Virus.

**Reading**: -David Napier, “I heard through the Grapevines: On Herd Immunity and Why it is Important”, (http://somatosphere.net/author/david-napier/)

**Week 2**: History between Faith and Reason

**Reading**: -Carl Lowith, Meaning in History, Introduction (1-19), Hegel (chap. 3 (52-59); Progress vs. Providence (chap. 4 (60-103); The Biblical View of History and Conclusion (chap. 11 & conclusion: and Epilogue:182-208).

**Week 3**: Metaphysical/Theological Origins of Modernity


**Week 4**: Rethinking the Secular I


**Recommended**: -Marcia Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane.

**Week 5**: Rethinking the Secular II

**Reading**: -Asad, Formations of the Secular, Part II on Secularism and Part III on Secularization (127-226).


**Week 6**: Is Secularism Christian?

- Asad, Response to Gil Anijdar, Interventions (https://doi.org/10.1080/13698010903255841

**Week 7**: Rethinking Secularism

**Reading**: -Gil Anijdar, Semites: Race, Religion, Literature, Part I, Semites (chapters 1 & 2 (pp. 13-67).
- The Jew, The Arab, chapter 5, “Muslims” (Hegel, Freud, Auschwitz), (pp.113-150).
Week 8: Secularization or Reform?
Reading:
- Samira Haj, Reconfiguring Islamic Tradition. Chapters to be assigned.

Recommended:

Week 9: Modernity’s Moral Predicament
Reading:

Week 10: Sovereignty and Law: Lebanon and Egypt
Reading:
- Saba Mahmood, “To be or Not to Be a Minority?” in Religious Difference in a Secular Age: A Minority Report (118-148).
- Hussein Ali Agrama, “Law’s Suspension” in Questioning Secularism: Islam, Sovereignty and the Rule of Law in Egypt (130-159)
- Max Weiss, In the Shadow of Sectarianism: Law, Shiism and the Making of Modern Lebanon, chapters to be selected.

Week 11: Islamic Revolution and the Enlightenment
Required:
- Behrooz Ghamari-Tabrizi, Foucault in Iran: Islamic Revolution and the Enlightenment. Chapters to be assigned.

Recommended:
- Afsaneh Najmbadi, “(Un)veiling Feminism”, Social Text, 2000
- Khomeini, Jurisprudent Rule

Week 12: Freedom and the Feminine Subject
Reading:
- Saba Mahmood, Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject.

Week 13: Translation and the Modern I
Reading:
- Asad, Secular Translations: Nation State, Modern Self and Calculative reason (Columbia University Press, 2018): Introduction Chapters 1, 2 and Epilogue.

Week 14: Translation and the Modern Subject II
Reading:
- Omnia el-Shakry, Arab Freud, Chapters 1 & 2.

Week 15: Final week