

University of Florida Department of Religion and Center for African Studies

Summer Semester 2020

REL3938-16818 SPECIAL TOPICS IN RELIGION (ISLAM, MEDIA & POPULAR CULTURE)

AFS 4935 16823 AFRICAN ST INTRDS SEM (ISLAM, MEDIA & POPULAR CULTURE)

Meeting & Location: Online

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Office hours: Wednesday, 2 pm—4 pm & by appointment

Course Description

Islam, media, and popular culture explores media and popular culture as important windows on contemporary developments in the Muslim world. It focuses on new trends and developments that merge (new) media, popular arts, and Muslim practices. By approaching media and popular arts as sites where many important and controversial issues are explored, expressed, contested, resisted, and negotiated, the course will offer insight into the religious discourses, pious ethics, and cultural politics of states and social movements as manifested through global flows of media and popular culture in the Muslim world. During the semester, students will engage in in-depth discussions on a range of topics, including popular music, movies, television drama, visual culture, lifestyle, dress, and dance through case studies from Asia, Africa, Europe, North America, and the Middle East.

Course Objectives: By the end of this course students should:

- develop an understanding of new trends and developments that merge popular media and Islam
- understand different paths of inquiry into Islam, media, and popular culture
- become familiar with some of the heterogeneity of Muslim cultures and societies in the world
- acquire critical skills for analyzing popular culture in Muslim contexts and learn how to apply them
- learn how various uses of media have an impact on religious identities, experiences, and authority in Muslim societies
- gain experience in presenting oral and written arguments about popular culture in Muslim societies

Course materials: We will use the following books in this class

Van Nieuwkerk, K., LeVine, M., & Stokes, M. (Eds.). (2016). *Islam and Popular Culture*. University of Texas Press.

Daniels, T. (Ed.). (2013). *Performance, popular culture, and piety in Muslim Southeast Asia*. Springer.

Van Nieuwkerk, K. (2011). *Muslim rap, halal soaps, and revolutionary theater: Artistic developments in the Muslim world*. University of Texas Press.

Pennington, R., & Kahn, H. E. (Eds.). (2018). *On Islam: Muslims and the Media*. Indiana University Press.

In addition, several required articles and chapters are available to students on the course website at [REL3938](#) and [AFS4935](#)

Requirements, Assignments, and Grading Criteria (N.B.: additional requirements for graduate students follow)

This class fulfills the Gordon Rule writing requirement (GR4) for undergraduates. You must complete at least 4,000 words of writing during the semester. Please ensure that each written assignment fulfills the minimum word requirement.

Format of Class, Requirements, and Grades:

The final grade for undergraduates will be determined by:

- Attendance (10%)
- Participation and presentations (15%)
- 3 Response papers (75%)

Attendance: attendance carries 10%. Students are expected to attend all classes. All students are allowed two unexcused absences. Each unexcused absence after the second will result in a one-point deduction (out of ten) from the overall attendance. Absences will be considered excused only if a written request is submitted and accepted in advance or if written explanations are submitted and accepted with valid documentation. If you miss class for any reason, it is your responsibility to find out from your classmates what you have missed.

Participation and Presentations: Because this course is structured primarily as a seminar, its success depends on active and informed participation in discussion. Students are asked to engage with the subject matter and contribute to discussions in class. This requires, among other things, doing the readings in advance, thinking critically about them, and being prepared to discuss them. Each student will make brief presentations (7 to 10 minutes) on selected topics/readings (from the supplementary readings or additional assigned readings) and help to facilitate discussion. Participation and presentation carry 15% distributed as follows; 1 informed individual presentation (5%), aggregate group presentations (10%). Each missed group presentation will result in a one-point deduction (out of five).

Response papers

In addition to class readings, we will be watching films, music, TV shows, and documentaries. Students will be required to write 3 Response Papers (1,500 words each, inclusive of notes and citations) on any 3 of the following themes that would be discussed in class:

First response paper due July 20

Tenants of Islam (5 pillars),

Discourses on Islam and popular culture

Media and representation of Islam and Muslims (stereotypes and corrections),

Second response paper due August 3

Trends and developments that merge popular media and Islam
Islam and popular music/sound
Islam and (halal) soaps

Third response paper due August 17

Islam, media, popular culture, and gender
Islam and popular culture in America
Islam and popular culture in Africa
Muslims and Standup comedy

Paper Guidelines

Each response paper will address key issues and methodological and theoretical questions raised in the readings, videos, lectures, and class discussions. In each response paper, students should discuss how they viewed and understood the material. What stood out? What were the problems? How would they solve the problem? The objective of these papers is to encourage students to read the materials closely and articulate their own informed and analytically nuanced positions.

The format for papers is double spaced with font size 12. Papers should have a title and include the course name, date, page numbers, and a bibliography. All papers must be submitted via e-learning. Any unexcused late assignment will be lowered 1 point each day the assignment is late. Any assignment turned in over a week late will be lowered 10 points.

Grading scale

94% or higher	= A
90%-93%	= A
88%-89%	= B+
84%-87%	= B
80%-83%	= B
78%-79%	= C+
74%-77%	= C
70%-73%	= C
65%-69%	= D

Procedure and University policies

Student Honor Code

As a UF student, you have agreed to adhere to the UF Student Honor Code and the UF Student Conduct Code: <https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/>. It is your responsibility to acquaint yourselves with these and to adhere to them.

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the disability Resource Center by visiting <https://disability.ufl.edu/students/get-started/>. It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester.

Online Course Evaluations

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluer.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

Virtual class meeting: This course will be delivered online via synchronous zoom meeting which will be scheduled and announced through both ufl.zoom.us and through Canvas course in e-Learning.

Schedule of Topics and Readings: N.B.: This document is subject to change according to class needs; students are responsible for all announced changes.

Week 1 (July 6—10, 2020) Introduction of some Key Concepts

Monday, July 6, Islam

Introduction to the course "Islam, media, and popular culture."

Tuesday, July 7

Pennington Rosemary_ (2018) "Crash Course in Islam," in *On Islam: Muslims and the Media* edited by Pennington, R., & Kahn, H. E. 2018: 147—161. Indiana University Press.

Wednesday, July 8

Michael Cooperson "Culture" in Jamal J. Elias, ed., *Key Themes for the Study of Islam*, Oxford: Oneworld, 2014, pp. 105-122.

Thursday, July 9

Brown, Jonathan, "A Map of the Islamic Interpretive Tradition," in *Misquoting Muhammad*, Oxford: Oneworld, 2014, pp. 15-68.

Friday, July 10

A movie *Muhammad: Legacy of a Prophet* (2002) – tells the story of the 7th century prophet who changed world history in 23 years, and continues to shapes the lives of more than 1.2 billion people. The film takes viewers not only to ancient Middle Eastern sites where Muhammad's story unfolds, but into the homes, mosques and workplaces of some of America's estimated seven million Muslim to discover the many ways in which they follow Muhammad's example.

Week 2 (July 13—17, 2020) Islam and Media (concepts and theories)

Monday, July 13

Webb, K. (2008). On the materiality of religion. *Material Religion*, 4(2), 230-232.

Barber, K. (2013). Foreword. In *Popular Culture in Africa: The Episteme of the Everyday*. Jaji, T., Newell, S., & Okome, O. (ed.), pp xv- xxii. Routledge, 2013.

Tuesday, July 14

Nieuwkerk, K. V. (2011). Artistic Developments in the Muslim Cultural Sphere: Ethics, Aesthetics, and the Performing Arts. *Nieuwkerk, K. van (ed.), Muslim Rap, Halal Soaps, and Revolutionary Theater. Artistic Developments in the Muslim World*, 1-24.

Wednesday, July 15

A movie [The Mosque Next Door](#)

Thursday, July, 16

Pennington Rosemary (2018) "Reflecting on Muslim Voices," in *On Islam: Muslims and the Media* Edited by Pennington, R., & Kahn, H. E. 2018:9-17. Indiana University Press.

TV show: *How Muslims are misrepresented in film and TV*. Riz Ahmed a Muslim actor and rapper. <https://theconversation.com/the-riz-test-how-muslims-are-misrepresented-in-film-and-tv-110213> Documentary: Culture - How Muslims became the good guys on TV - BBC

By Mohammad Zaheer (June 21, 2019) <http://www.bbc.com/culture/story/20190620-how-muslims-became-the-good-guys-on-tv>

"Telling Our Own Stories: Changing Representations of Islam in Popular Culture" by Faiza Hirji McMaster University-
http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/Public/focus/essay1018_islam_in_popular_culture.html

Friday, July 17

A movie [Shahada](#) (2010) - The fates of three German-born Muslims in Berlin collide as they struggle to find their place between faith and modern life in contemporary western society, caught at a crossroads where alluring liberated lifestyles conflict with deeply-rooted traditions.

First Response paper due Monday, July 20 at 5 pm

New trends and developments that merge Media, popular culture, and Islam

In this section, we will draw from music, dance, art, film, video game, fiction, fashion, etc. to analyze how Islam is present and represented in a variety of popular mediated cultures in different parts of the world.

Week 3 (July 20-24, 2020) Muslims and Popular Music/sound

Monday, July 20 Muslims Discourse on Music

Shiloah, A. (1997). Music and religion in Islam. *Acta Musicologica*, 69(Fasc. 2), 143-155.

Tuesday, July 21

Otterbeck, Jonas. (2016) "The Sunni discourse on music." in *Islam and Popular Culture* edited by van Nieuwkerk, Karin, Mark LeVine, and Martin Stokes. 2016: 151-168. University of Texas Press.

Wednesday, July 22

Alagha, J. (2016). Shi'a Discourses on Performing Arts: Maslaha and Cultural Politics in Lebanon. In *Islam and Popular Culture* edited by van Nieuwkerk, Karin, Mark LeVine, and Martin Stokes. 2016: 169-86. University of Texas Press.

Thursday, July 23

Barendregt, B. (2012). Sonic discourses on Muslim Malay modernity: the Arqam sound. *Contemporary Islam*, 6(3), 315-340.

Nasyid videos from across the globe

Friday, July 24

Cooper, B. M. (2001). The Strength in the Song: Muslim personhood, Audible capital, and Hausa women's performance of the hajj. In *Gendered Modernities* (pp. 79-104). Palgrave Macmillan, New York.

Additional videos of Islam and Music for a comparative understanding

Week 4 (July 27—August 31) Hip-hop and Islam

Monday, July 27

Hill, J. (2017). A mystical cosmopolitanism: Sufi Hip Hop and the aesthetics of Islam in Dakar. *Culture and Religion*, 18(4), 388-408. (To be uploaded)

Watch videos of Sufi Hip Hop

Tuesday, July 28

Khabeer, S. A. (2007). Rep that Islam: the rhyme and reason of American Islamic hip hop. *The Muslim World*, 97(1), 125.

Watch videos from Khabeer's blog

Wednesday, July 29

Masquelier, Adeline. 2016. "The mouthpiece of an entire generation": Hip-Hop, Truth, and Islam in Niger. In A. Masquelier & B. Soares, eds. *Muslim Youth and the 9/11 Generation*.

Watch videos of Hip Hop from Niger

Thursday, July 30

Su'ad Abdul Khabeer and Maytha Alhassen (2013). "Muslim Youth Cultures" in *the Cambridge Companion to American Islam* edited by Safi, O., & Hammer, J. 2013:299—311.

Cambridge University Press. (To be uploaded)

Watch videos from Abdul Khabeer's page Hip-hop and Islam <https://vimeo.com/307312613> , <https://vimeo.com/254873288>

Friday, July 31

Sonic Da'wa: "Can Hip-Hop be Halal? Deen Squad give rap an Islamic twist - BBC Trending"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dGXrWd23FA>. Read the comment section and then report what you have observed.

Are Deen Squad On The Verge Of Kufr??? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Key6g3POuOg>

Watch and discuss videos of Deen Squad, Mahir Zain, Sami Yusif, and Haddy Rappia, Gurmi woman from Bauchi, etc.

Second response paper due on Monday, August 3 at 5 pm

Week 5 (August 3—7) Halal soaps, movies, TV shows, video games and the emergent of new Muslim culture

Monday, August 3

Nieuwkerk, K. V. (2011). Of Morals, Missions, and the Market New Religiosity and 'Art with a Mission' in Egypt. *Nieuwkerk, K. van (ed.), Muslim Rap, Halal Soaps and Revolutionary Theater: Artistic Developments in the Muslim World*, 177-204. (Not available at UF Library)

Tuesday, August 4

Moll, Yasmin, "The Revolution Within: Islamic Televangelists and the Politics of Ethics in Egypt," Oxford Islamic Studies Online (http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/arab_spring_1.html)

Supplementary reading: Kubala, P. (2007). Satellite TV & Islamic Pop Culture in Egypt. *ISIM Review*, 20, 2. (To be uploaded)

Wednesday, August 5

[Wadja](#) (2012)- An enterprising Saudi girl signs on for her school's Koran recitation competition as a way to raise the remaining funds she needs in order to buy the green bicycle that has captured her interest.

Thursday, August 6

Daniels, T. P. (2013). "Islamic" TV Dramas, Malay Youth, and Pious Visions for Malaysia. In *Performance, Popular Culture, and Piety in Muslim Southeast Asia* (pp. 105-133). Palgrave Macmillan, New York. Ramy (American Muslim TV series)

Watch a movie *Sepet* by Yasmin Ahmad about pluralism and Liberal Islam

Friday, August 7

Sisler, Vit. (2013). Playing Muslim hero: construction of identity in video games. In *Digital Religion: Understanding Religious Practice in New Media Worlds*, 136-146. Routledge.

Watch a scene from Ramy (American Muslim TV series)

Week 6 (August 10—14) Other themes in Islam, media, and Popular Culture

August 10--13 Gender, media, Islam and pop culture

Monday, August 10

Whitsitt, N. (2003). Islamic-Hausa feminism meets Northern Nigerian romance: the cautious rebellion of Bilkisu Funtuwa. *African studies review*, 46(1), 137-153.

Romances by women authors in Nigeria challenge traditions

https://www.phillytrib.com/lifestyle/romances-by-women-authors-in-nigeria-challenge-traditions/article_5a0de371-b1ef-5994-913f-e834ccfe13f1.html

Interview with Hausa popular romance and feminist writers

<https://www.dw.com/en/worldlink-a-voice-for-nigerian-women/av-37500496>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_sz0KjViEds

Tuesday, August 11

Nisa, E. F. (2018). Creative and lucrative Da'wa: the visual culture of Instagram amongst female Muslim youth in Indonesia. *Asiascape: Digital Asia*, 5(1-2), 68-99. (To be uploaded)

Gaye Williams Ortiz "A Cinema of Solidarity: Women, Film, and Islam" by

<https://imagejournal.org/article/cinema-solidarity-women-film-islam/>

Wednesday, August 12

[Touch of Pink](#) (2004) - A gay Canadian living in London has his perfectly crafted life upset when his devoutly Muslim mother comes to visit.

Thursday, August 13 Muslims and Standup comedy

Amarasingam, A. (2010). Laughter the best medicine: Muslim comedians and social criticism in post-9/11 America. *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 30(4), 463-477.

-Muslims put their faith in stand-up - Muslim comedians are finding success on stage without losing their religion <https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=news/177BBDB524C62B58>.

-Do Muslims smile? American stand-up Muslim comedian https://video.alexanderstreet.com/watch/ahmed-ahmed?utm_source=aspresolver&utm_medium=MARC&utm_campaign=Video

-Comic **Ramy** Youssef On Being An 'Allah Carte' Muslim: 'You Sit In Contradictions'

<https://www.npr.org/transcripts/735658229/?storyId=735658229>

Friday, August 14

Bunt, G. R. (2018). "Status Update: Islamic Dimension of faith in cyberspace," a Chapter in *Hashtag Islam: How cyber-Islamic environments are transforming religious authority*. Pp 35—65. UNC Press Books.

Third response paper due on Monday, August 14, 2020, at 5 pm