Course Description, Objectives and Policies

DSC 100 - Islamophobia and Racism

MW 2:30-3:45 p.m. (Seney Hall 209)

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Office: Seney Hall 115B

Hours: MW 4:00-5:00 p.m., or by appointment

Course Description

In this discovery seminar we will investigate the complex interplay of race and religion in the longer history of US nation-building by examining the multiple ways in which Muslim communities in the United States have been both maintaining and reconfiguring their cultural, ethnic and religious identities in a multicultural society where they face marginalization, prejudice and misunderstanding. Connecting the discussion of Islamophobia—the most recognizable term in public debate to refer to anti-Muslim discrimination—with the study of racism, this discovery seminar suggests that we must pay attention to structural forms of violence and inequality that have produced anti-Muslim discrimination if we wish to challenge its underlying assumptions and everyday practices. Although we will focus on contemporary events, we will also pay attention to how anti-Muslim discrimination extends to earlier moments including Muslim immigration prior to 1900 through slavery and voluntary immigration, the rise of Islamic black nationalism, and the experiences of American Muslims in the post-9/11 world. Class materials will include current events articles and newscasts, fictional and autobiographical accounts, ethnographic, historical, and political science texts, plus a series of films about Muslims in America.

Course Objectives

The course does not aim to defend Islam or Muslims or to present an uncritical and idealized image of “good Muslims.” Nor will we try to set straight all of the grotesque conspiracy theories that frame Muslim-Americans as dangers to America because of their religion. Instead we will examine the multiple ways in which Muslim communities in the United States have been both maintaining and reconfiguring their cultural, ethnic and religious identities in a society where they face marginalization, prejudice and misunderstanding.

The goals and objectives for you as a student in this course are:

- to gain knowledge of Islamic traditions in America through the multidisciplinary lens of religious studies;
- to investigate representations of Islam and Muslims in American culture, and comprehend how those representations are framed, and why;
• to analyze the history and dynamics of racism and explore the impact of racism on people who are racialized;
• to build awareness of and develop frameworks to analyze interlocking forms of oppression;
• to develop your ability to analyze and critically evaluate ideas, arguments, and points of view related to the study of religion, including the problems related to the study of Islam such as negative media stereotypes and “essentialism”;
• to construct your own arguments within the framework of the academic study of religion to convince others that your way of conceptualizing a matter is correct; and
• to develop further your critical skills as a thinker, reader, writer, and speaker within and beyond the academic study of religion.

Readings

Textbooks


All other required and optional readings for the course will be accessible to you electronically through our Canvas site. Often you will find pdf files of a specific journal article or section from a book you are required to read for a class session. In other instances, you will be taken to the Library’s Electronic Reserve site or to sites such as JSTOR, Proquest, MUSE or Lexis-Nexuss—all useful research tools for scholarly journals which I discuss later.

Canvas Learning Technology

This course will involve using the online communication tools on Canvas as well as readings and documents located there. You would do well to acquaint yourself with the features Canvas offers and different usages and use them as frequent points of entry and exploration around many of the issues we will be discussing as well as in preparation for the assignments.

Course Requirements and Grading

The Final Grade will be calculated as follows:

1. Preparation and Participation (10%)
2. Reading Responses (10%)
3. Omeka Archive Case Study: U.S. Mosque Controversies (20%)
4. Oral History Interview Project (30%)
5. Digication Integrative ePortfolio (30%)
1. Preparation and Participation (10%)

**Preparation:** I expect you to keep up with all readings and assignments and to get the notes for missed class sessions from your peers. Appropriate preparation means reading the material several times, making notes, and coming to class with specific questions; part of this preparation should include consultation with recommended readings and standard reference works in order to understand fully the argument in the text.

**Participation:** There will be ample opportunity for you to participate in our class. Apart from my lectures you will be involved in activities such as class discussion, group work with subsequent presentations, and in-class writing assignments. Additional activities and assignments including peer assessments on written and oral work will also count toward your participation grade. While I will call on you often and ask about the content of assigned readings you are strongly encouraged to ask questions and suggest topics for discussion in class on your own.

**Class Discussion:** While I will lecture from time to time, the class will be conducted much more on a seminar model of examining your informed responses to the reading material. High-quality participation is key to the overall success of our class discussion. This means that I expect you to: raise thoughtful questions, analyze relevant issues, build on others’ ideas, synthesize across readings and discussions, expand the class’ perspective, and appropriately challenge the texts’ and each other’s assumptions and perspectives. We will use a number of different techniques to prepare and conduct class discussion throughout the semester. All place a premium on mastering the content of a reading, evaluating it, and preparing cogent ways to convey your ideas before class. All also rely on public performance and evaluation.

**Student Minutes:** Taking notes on lectures and class discussion is a critical part of your learning experience. You are all expected to take notes during class as you will have to draw on them for your own work as well as when preparing for essays and reflections. Your notes will also be the basis for **brief 2-minute presentations** that each of you is to give in class as part of your participation grade. Every day our meetings will start with one of you presenting on the previous class session. Be concise as you only have two minutes of talking time, and resist the temptation to provide a summary of the previous class. Instead, highlight the main points and provide details only when relevant. Your peers will provide you with feedback on your presentation’s content, structure, and delivery. Additional tips and guidelines for presentations and public speaking can be found on our Canvas site.

2. Reading Responses (QNQ’s) (10%)

For this class you are asked to write short analytical responses to the assigned readings (250-300 words). This task is designed to encourage you to keep up with your reading, keep you engaged with the material, enrich class discussion (as you will already have something to say), help you practice your skills in thinking critically and writing fluidly, and, finally, provide a log of your thoughts at this state in your studies. See Canvas for more details.

3. Omeka Archive Case Study: U.S. Mosque Controversies (20%)

In recent years, the Atlanta metro area has witnessed an increase in attacks and intimidation campaigns against Muslim communities. Mosques in particular, existing as well as proposed, have been targets of these acts. Anti-mosque activism is not limited to the Atlanta metro area but affects Muslim communities nationwide. The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) has begun to map **Nationwide Anti-Mosque Activity.** Our case study project this semester will contribute to these efforts at documenting and archiving U.S. cases where local Muslim groups have encountered community resistance. Each of us will select **one of these cases** to investigate in more detail and
present our findings to class before the middle of the semester. Our work for this project will include researching the press coverage in newspapers, magazines, and journals, identifying significant information, developing a timeline, and writing a narrative summary of about 1,000 words about our cases. We will use the open-source web publishing platform Omeka.org to create and share the cases in an online archive. Details about the information you should be researching and recording can be found on the Omeka Case Files: Information to find on each case Canvas page. See Canvas for more details.

4. Oral History Interview (30%)

You will conduct a topic-driven interview with a member of a Muslim community in Metro Atlanta about their experience with anti-Muslim discrimination. These interviews will add to the growing body of historical knowledge on Muslim life in the United States through living people’s testimony about their own experiences. A central aim is to understand how American Muslims have understood and reacted to their marginalization and what strategies of resistance they have developed. Over the course of the semester you will formulate a central question or issue for your project, engage in some background research, conduct and transcribe the interview, evaluate your data by identifying a central theme from the interviewee’s testimony and relates to an idea or topic discussed in class, and create a final (multi-modal) project that can be shared in class and beyond. See Canvas for more details.

5. Digication Integrative e-Portfolio (30%)

The e-portfolio is a collection of artifacts along with your reflections and self-assessment of past and future learning. It is “integrative” because the assignment asks you to be intentionally reflective on different learning experiences throughout the semester and to synthesize, abstract, and articulate some of the key lessons learned from your experiences. As we go through the semester, we will make time to archive, select, and reflect on various learning artifacts. You will be introduced to Digication, which you will be able to use as online platform for your e-portfolio. You can turn in your completed e-portfolio during final exam week. See Canvas for more details.

Policies

Attendance

You must be present for class meetings in order to do well in the course. You should aim to arrive to class meetings a couple minutes early having read the assignment and taken notes, including at least two questions or observations to contribute to discussion. Latecomers will be counted absent at the very beginning of class. Should you be late, you are permitted to enter the classroom only if you do so silently and without disturbing class proceedings. You are allowed to be absent from a total of three (3) class sessions. With every additional absence your final grade for this class will go down 5%. This means you will have to plan ahead with your allowance of three absences. Talk to me ahead of time if you foresee any difficulties for yourself with this policy. My expectations of professionalism extend to classroom etiquette. This includes such behavior as arriving on time, staying in the classroom until an official break or the end of the class period, and packing up only when class has finished.

Religious Holidays Arrangements

Instructors are encouraged, not required, to accommodate students’ academic needs related to religious holidays. Please make every effort to negotiate your religious holiday needs within the first two weeks of the semester; waiting longer may compromise your instructor’s ability to extend satisfactory arrangements. If you need guidance negotiating your needs related to a religious
holiday, the College Chaplain, Rev. Lyn Pace, ppace@emory.edu, Candler Hall 202, is willing and available to help. **Please be aware that Rev. Pace is not tasked with excusing students from classes or writing excuses for students to take to their professors. Emory’s official list of religious holidays may be found at http://www.religiouslife.emory.edu/faith_traditions/holidays.html.

Devices in Class

You may utilize laptops and tablets in their capacity as learning aids during class. You may not use them for communicating, browsing, gaming, doing schoolwork for other courses, or otherwise departing from the task at hand during the brief periods of the week we will spend together. Your phone(s) should be powered down, or in airplane mode, and stowed during class. If you find yourself needing to access the day’s reading on your phone, or are expecting a time-sensitive call, announce it before class begins.

Honor Code

The Honor Code applies to all assignments, in and out of the classroom. All work in this course must be entirely your own and entirely original to the requirements of this course in this semester. For more info, visit: http://oxford.emory.edu/catalog/regulations/honor-code.html.

Accommodating Students with a Disability

- If you have a documented disability and have anticipated barriers related to the format or requirements of this course, or presume having a disability (e.g. mental health, attention, learning, vision, hearing, physical or systemic), and are in need of accommodations for this semester, we encourage you to contact the Office of Accessibility Services (OAS) to learn more about the registration process and steps for requesting accommodations at oas_oxford@emory.edu.
- If you are a student that is currently registered with OAS and have not requested or received a copy of your accommodation notification letter, please notify OAS immediately.
- Students who have accommodations in place are encouraged to coordinate with their professor during the first week of the semester, to communicate specific needs for the course as it relates to approved accommodations.
- Accommodations may not be implemented until the instructor is provided an accommodation letter and discusses the accommodation plan for this course face to face with the OAS student. Accommodations may not be implemented

For additional information regarding OAS, please visit the website: http://equityandinclusion.emory.edu/access.

Title IX Reporting

Title IX Reporting: Every Emory employee who is informed about an allegation of sexual misconduct involving any student is required to notify a Title IX Coordinator either directly or through their relevant reporting structure. However, employees who serve in a professional role in which communications are afforded confidential status under the law (e.g., medical providers, therapists, and professional and pastoral counselors) are not bound by this requirement but may, consistent with their ethical and legal obligations, be required to report limited information about incidents without revealing the identities of the individuals involved, to a Title IX Coordinator or Deputy Title IX Coordinator. All members of the Emory community are encouraged to promptly report incidents of sexual harassment and discrimination.

For more information, visit: http://sexualmisconductresources.emory.edu/policies/index.html.