Attention!

This is a representative syllabus. The syllabus for the course you are enrolled in will likely be different. Please refer to your instructor’s syllabus for more information on specific requirements for a given semester.
COURSE DESCRIPTION

The Islamic conquests that swept across the Near East, North Africa, and Central Asia in the seventh and eighth centuries CE remain one of history’s most transformative events. But what was it like to witness, experience, and participate in the early Islamic conquests? How did the Muslim conquerors justify their newfound dominion and how did their imperial ambitions shape the trajectory of early Islamic religion and its diverse expressions? Utilizing new historical methods for reading and interpreting the sparse contemporary and near-contemporary testimonies for this historical period, this course explore how these testimonies, both Muslim and non-Muslim, continue to challenge historians to revise the history of the Islamic conquests. Strong focus is placed on reading primary source materials.

INSTRUCTOR

Office

Hours

Email

Twitter

Textbooks for Purchase


CLASS SCHEDULE

SESSION 1 - Jan 9

The Study of Islamic Origins

READINGS:


Jan 16 - MLK DAY No Classes

SESSION 2 - Jan 23

Three Early Testimonies to Muḥammad


- BL Add. 14,461 (compare Palmer and Penn translations)
- Thomas the Presbyter (compare Palmer and Penn translations)

SESSION 3 - Jan 30

Muḥammad and the Islamic Conquests before the Islamic Tradition

- Jacob of Edessa, Letters and Chronicle, tr. Penn

SESSION 4 - Feb 6

Western Syriac Historiography

• *Maronite Chronicle* (compare Penn and Palmer)

• Excerpts from *Theophilus of Edessa*, tr. R. Hoyland, *Theophilus of Edessa’s Chronicle and the Circulation of Knowledge in Late Antiquity and Early Islam* (Liverpool, 2012).

**SESSION 5 - Feb 13**

*Eastern Syriac Historiography*

• John bar Penkāyē, *Rēš Mellē* (tr. Penn and Brock)

• *Chronicle of Khuzistan*, tr. Penn

**SESSION 6 - Feb 20**

*Islam in early Christian Disputational Literature*


• John Damascene, *De Haeresibus*, tr. J. Sahas


**SESSION 7 - Feb 27**
Apocalyptic Responses to the Islamic Conquests (1 of 2)

- Excerpts from *The Syriac-Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* (compare Brock [in Palmer] and Penn)
- *Sermon of Pseudo-Ephrem on the End of the World* (compare Penn and Reeves [click here])
- Excerpts from *The Baḥīrā Apocalypse (East-Syriac Recension)*, trans. B. Rogemma

SESSION 8 - Mar 6

Apocalyptic Responses to the Islamic Conquests (2 of 2)

- *The Secrets of Rabbi Shimʿon b. Yoḥai*, tr. Reeves

Mar 13, Mar 20 - SPRING BREAK & AOS - No Class

SESSION 9 - Mar 27

The Enigma of ‘Abd al-Malik’s Dome of the Rock


SESSION 10 - Apr 3

How early is the Qurʾān?
• Fred M. Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins: The Beginnings of Islamic Historical Writing* (Darwin, 1998), 35-63, “The Date of the Qur’ānic Text”.
• Patricia Crone, “How did the quranic pagans make a living?” *BSOAS* 68 (2005): 387-399. [click here]

**SESSION 11 - Apr 10**

*Documentary Sources and Their Value*

• Stefan Heidemann, “The Evolving Representation of the Early Islamic Empire and Its Religion on Coin Imagery,” in *The Qurʾān in Context: Historical and Literary Investigations into the Qurʾanic Milieu* (Leiden, 2010), 149-195. [click here]

**SESSION 12 - Apr 17**

*The Birth of Arabic Historiography*


**SESSION 14 - Apr 24**

*Documentary Sources in Literary Guises?*