

HTS 2040 Syllabus

History of Islamic Societies-A

Fall 2026

Instructor Information

Instructor: Laura Bier

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General Course Information

Description

This course is a survey of Islamic history from pre-Islamic times to the beginnings of the Ottoman empire in the 15th century. It traces the development of Islamic society, with particular attention paid to the plurality of cultures that comprised the region. Specific themes that we will explore include: the institutional and spiritual formations of Muslims, the political structures, literary and artistic creations of Islamic civilization, travel and trade, war and conquest, gender and sexuality, interfaith relations and everyday life.

Course Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this class, students will be able to

- identify major individuals, events, and themes relevant to the history of the Islamic World
- Describe Islam as a belief system as well as a historical cultural and civilizational concept
- Analyze different types of historical evidence and think critically about how they shape historical analysis
- Analyze the complexity of human behavior, and how historical, economic, political, social or geographic relationships develop, persist or change.

Required Course Materials

- Vernon O. Egger. *A History of the Muslim World to 1750*
- Said, Handun (ed) *Ibn Battuta in Black Africa*
- Amitav Ghosh: *In an Antique Land*
- Making of the Islamic World Podcast (available [here](#))

Grading Policy:

Your grade will consist of the following items

10 Short Weekly Podcast Quizzes [20%]

2 Short Primary Source Analyses (one written, one in the format of your choosing)
[15+15=30]

Participation: 25% (based on completion of brief, informal written assignments to prepare for in-class discussions and activities)

Final Project 25%

Your final grade will be assigned as a letter grade according to the following scale:

Letter Grade	Percentage
A	90-100%
B	80-89%
C	70-79%
D	60-69%
F	0-59%

Course Policies

Attendance and/or Participation

There is no penalty for missing a single course session. But once you miss 5 or more classes, the grade ceiling starts getting lowered and the highest grade you can achieve is a "B". Miss 7 or more classes, the highest you can get is a "C"; 9 or more, a "D".

Participation grades will be calculated solely in written participation assignments discussed above.

Academic Integrity

Georgia Tech aims to cultivate a community based on trust, academic integrity, and honor. Students are expected to act according to the highest ethical standards. Review [Georgia Tech's Honor Code](#) and the student [Code of Conduct](#).

Any student suspected of cheating or plagiarism on a quiz, exam, or assignment will be reported to the Office of Student Integrity, who will investigate the incident and identify the appropriate penalty for violations.

Core IMPACTS

This is a Core IMPACTS course that is part of the Social Sciences area

Core IMPACTS refers to the core curriculum, which provides students with essential knowledge in foundational academic areas. This course will help master course content, and support students' broad academic and career goals.

This course should direct students toward a broad Orienting Question:

- How do I understand human experiences and connections?

Completion of this course should enable students to meet the following Learning Outcomes:

- Students will effectively analyze the complexity of human behavior, and how historical, economic, political, social or geographic relationships develop, persist or change.

Course content, activities and exercises in this course should help students develop the following Career-Ready Competencies:

- Intercultural Competence
- Perspective-Taking
- Persuasion

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

This is a public institution and all of you are members of the public. It is your right to have the accommodations you need to be successful in this class and at this university. You are not asking for "special treatment" if you have a temporary health condition or permanent disability that requires accommodations (conditions include but are not limited to; mental health, attention-related, learning, vision, hearing, physical or health impacts). If you have already established accommodations with the Offices of Disability Services, please communicate your approved accommodations to me at your earliest convenience so we can discuss your needs in this course.

If you have not yet established services through Disability Services, but think you may need accommodations, please contact the Office of Disability Services at 404.894.2563 or dsinfo@gatech.edu or disabilityservices.gatech.edu.

Student-Faculty Expectations Agreement

At Georgia Tech, we believe that it is important to strive for an atmosphere of mutual respect, acknowledgement, and responsibility between faculty members and the student body. [The Student-Faculty Expectations](#) articulate some basic expectations that you can have of me and that I have of you. In the end, simple respect for knowledge, hard work, and cordial interactions will help build the environment we seek. Therefore, I encourage you to remain committed to the ideals of Georgia Tech while in this class.

