

ARBC 3501: Men and Women in Islam

Fall 2026

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Office Hours: Wednesdays, 2:00-4:00 PM on Zoom

Class Meetings: Tuesday + Thursday, 5:00-6:15 PM, Skiles 268

Course Description

This course examines questions about men and women in Islam and the Muslim world through religious texts, scholarly interpretations, historical and cultural contexts, and contemporary Muslim experiences. You will engage with a range of perspectives on the Qur'an, Islamic thought, marriage, social roles, representation, and lived experience. Taught in English.

About This Course

This course is organized into four modules: Understanding Islam; Islam in History and the World Today; Men and Women in Islam, and Muslim Men and Women Through Western Eyes.

In this course, you will explore these topics through scholarly readings, Islamic texts, historical and cultural examples, and contemporary Muslim experiences

Discussions will take a variety of formats and give you opportunities to examine arguments and evidence, consider different perspectives, and develop your own informed conclusions.

Core Impacts

This is a Core IMPACTS course that is part of the Humanities area. Core IMPACTS refers to the core curriculum, which provides students with essential knowledge in foundational academic areas. This course will help students master course content, and support students' broad academic and career goals. This course should direct students toward a broad Orienting Question: *"How do I interpret the human experience through creative, linguistic, and philosophical works?"* Completion of this course should enable students to meet the following Learning Outcome: *Students will effectively analyze and interpret the meaning, cultural significance, and ethical implications of literary/philosophical texts or of works in the visual/performing arts.* Course content, activities, and exercises in this course should help students develop the following Career-Ready Competencies:

- Ethical Reasoning
- Information Literacy
- Intercultural Competence

Learning Outcomes

1. Analyze and compare diverse Islamic interpretations and Muslim experiences across historical periods and geographic contexts.
2. Construct arguments and use evidence from course readings and other materials to participate in discussions about women and men in Islam.
3. Evaluate different scholarly perspectives on topics such as Orientalism, social/gender roles, marriage, leadership, representation, and lived experience.
4. Construct and defend your own conclusions about course questions using evidence and perspectives encountered throughout the semester.
5. Give and receive constructive criticism through peer review, group work, and class discussion.
6. Develop public speaking skills through regular participation in class discussions and presentations.
7. Identify and examine personal biases and group privilege that may shape how we understand Islam, Muslim women and men, and Muslim societies.

Course Materials

1. John L. Esposito, *What Everyone Needs to Know about Islam*, 2nd ed., Oxford University Press, 2011. **Hardcover ISBN:** 978-0-19-979413-3. **eBook ISBN:** 978-0-19-979423-2
2. Weekly readings will include scholarly articles, selected book chapters, Islamic texts, and other materials available through Canvas.

You are expected to complete the assigned reading before class and have access to it during class discussions and activities.

How This Course Works

Reading and discussion are essential parts of this course. Each week will center on a big question and an assigned reading, typically 15-20 pages. You are expected to come to class prepared to discuss the reading, ask questions, consider different perspectives, and refer to the text during discussion.

Readings and discussion are central to the course. Your weekly responsibility is:

Read 15–20 pages → take a short quiz → come ready to talk about it.

Class meetings will include brief introductions to key ideas and context, followed by different forms of discussion and analysis. You may work individually, in pairs, in small groups, or as a whole class to examine texts, compare perspectives, respond to claims, analyze cases, and apply ideas from the readings. At times, we will also work with Qur'anic passages, historical sources, literature, media, and other materials connected to the week's question.

Grading

Assessment	Percentage
Weekly Reading Quizzes	20%
Class Participation & Discussion	15%
Presentations	20%
Midterm	20%
Final Project	25%

Final Grade Scale	
A	90-100%
B	80-89%
C	70-79%
D	60-69%
F	Below 60%

Grading Description

Weekly Reading Quizzes (20%)

Short, low-stakes quizzes will check your understanding of the assigned readings and help you come prepared for class discussion. Questions will focus on main ideas, arguments, concepts, and evidence rather than minor details.

Class Participation & Discussion (15%)

Your preparation and engagement are essential to this course. Participation includes coming prepared, contributing thoughtfully to individual, pair, small-group, and whole-class activities, listening and responding to others, and using the readings to support discussion.

Presentations (20%)

You will give a short presentation connected to one of the course's big questions. The presentation will give you an opportunity to investigate a scholarly source or related issue and communicate what you learn to the class. Additional instructions will be provided on Canvas.

Midterm (20%)

The midterm will assess your understanding of the first half of the course and your ability to work with course ideas and readings. The format may include a short written assessment, a take-home analysis, or an applied analysis of a claim, passage, case, or representation. The format and expectations will be shared in advance.

Final Project (25%)

You will work in a small group to create a short video project that draws on the questions, readings, and ideas explored throughout the course. Project format and guidelines will be introduced during the semester.

Class Schedule

Course Topics and Calendar of Activities (Subject to Change). Weekly homework and asynchronous activities will be posted on Canvas. Specific assignments and due dates may be adjusted based on the pace and needs of the class.

Week	Module / Big Question	Key Ideas	Reading / Materials	Due Dates
1	MODULE 1: UNDERSTANDING ISLAM What is Islam?	Foundations; Qur'an and Hadith; beliefs and practices; historical context	Esposito	Reading quiz 1
2	How do culture and religion influence one another?	Culture; religious practice; diversity across Muslim communities	Esposito	Reading quiz 2
3	Who decides what Islam means?	Qur'an and Hadith; interpretation; religious authority; Islamic law; different approaches to Islamic texts	Wadud, <i>Qur'an and Woman</i> , Introduction Esposito	Reading quiz 3
4	MODULE 2: ISLAM IN HISTORY AND THE WORLD TODAY How have politics and history shaped the lives of Muslim women and men?	Colonialism; politics; law; social change; historical context	Esposito + selected short reading/video	Reading quiz 4

5	How have the lives and roles of Muslim women and men changed over time?	Continuity and change; family and social roles; education; work; public life	Selected historical and contemporary examples/media	Thu 9/25 Presentation 1
6	MODULE 3: WOMEN AND MEN IN ISLAM How does Islam view the relationship between women and men?	Traditional and contemporary approaches; equality and difference; gender, justice, roles, and interpretation	Irfaan Jaffer Amina Wadud Esposito	Reading quiz 5
7	Midterm	Review and connections across course questions	Fall break/no class on Oct 6. No new reading	Thu 10/8 Midterm
8	What is marriage in Islam?	Marriage and courtship; partnership; rights and responsibilities; authority; justice; lived experience	Mir-Hosseini et al., "Towards Marriage as a Partnership of Equals"; Huda Fahmy, <i>That Can Be Arranged</i>	Reading quiz 6
9	What roles have women played in shaping Islamic thought and society?	Scholarship; religious knowledge; education; public life; leadership	Esposito + short profiles, primary sources and/or videos	Reading quiz 7
10	What does it mean to be a Muslim man?	Masculinity; religious and social expectations; character; family roles; responsibility	Selected Arat & Hasan excerpt; Qur'anic passages + short media	Tue 10/27 Presentation 2
11	How do the experiences of Muslim women and men differ across cultures and places?	Geography; culture; local practices; different Muslim societies and communities	Short comparative cases/readings + media	Reading quiz 8
12	MODULE 4: ISLAM THROUGH WESTERN EYES How has the West imagined Islam and Muslims?	Orientalism; representation; assumptions about Islam and Muslims	Edward Said, Orientalism, selected excerpt	Reading quiz 9
13	Do Muslim women need "saving"?	Representation of Muslim women; assumptions about oppression, freedom, and agency	Lila Abu-Lughod, "Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving?"	Reading quiz 10
14	Final Project Production Lab	Group project development; filming; editing; instructor feedback	Nov. 24: Project work. Nov. 26: Thanksgiving, no class.	Final Project Work
15	Final Project Screenings	Group video screenings and class discussion	No new reading	Tue Dec 8 Final Group Video Project

Course Expectations & Policies

Academic Integrity & AI

You are expected to uphold the Georgia Tech Honor Code in all course work.

AI tools may be used to support your understanding of course material, for example, to clarify an unfamiliar term or concept, help you understand a difficult passage after you have read it, or help you study. AI should not replace the assigned reading or your own analysis of it.

Unless an assignment specifically allows AI use, submitted work must reflect your own thinking and writing. You should also be prepared to discuss and support your ideas using the course readings and other assigned sources.

Attendance & Participation

Regular attendance and preparation are important in a discussion-based course. You are expected to complete the assigned reading before class and participate thoughtfully in individual, pair, small-group, and whole-class discussions and activities.

Regular attendance supports your learning and participation in this course. Attendance is not graded by deducting points for individual absences. Instead, if you finish the semester with **four or fewer absences, 5 bonus points will be added to your participation grade.**

Institute-approved absences will be handled according to Georgia Tech policy, including reasonable opportunities to make up missed work.

Respectful Discussion

This course will include questions on religion, marriage, social roles, modesty, equality, culture, and other topics on which people may disagree. You are encouraged to ask questions and disagree with ideas. Discussions should remain respectful, focus on ideas and evidence, and avoid assumptions about classmates or communities.

Student-Faculty Expectations Agreement

A successful class depends on mutual respect, preparation, communication, and effort. You can expect me to come prepared, communicate clearly, provide timely feedback, listen to your questions and concerns, and support your learning. I ask that you bring the same commitment to the course by coming prepared, participating actively, communicating openly and respectfully, and supporting your classmates. Together, we will work to create a classroom where everyone feels comfortable learning, practicing, asking questions, and making mistakes.

Late Work

Deadlines and late-work expectations for graded assignments will be provided with each assignment. If circumstances affect your ability to complete work on time, contact me as early as possible.

Accommodations

Georgia Tech is committed to providing equal access to all students. If you require accommodations, please contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at disabilityservices.gatech.edu or 404-894-2563 as early as possible. Once you receive your accommodation letter, please share it with me so we can discuss how to best support your learning.

Modified Operations and Digital Learning Days

If weather or another emergency affects campus operations, I will communicate with you through **Canvas and/or email** about any changes to our class. If we cannot meet in person, we may have an asynchronous digital learning day instead. I understand that power or internet outages may also affect your ability to participate, and we will adjust as needed.

Campus Resources

You are encouraged to take advantage of Georgia Tech's academic and personal support resources, including the Office of Disability Services, Center for Academic Success, Counseling Center, Dean of Students, and Stamps Health Services. Additional information is available on the Georgia Tech website.