

HTS 2040 Syllabus

History of Islamic Societies-A

Fall 2026

Instructor Information

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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

- **Define** the major events, people, ideas, and developments in Islamic history from the origins of Islam through 1500.

- **Analyze** primary sources by placing them within their historical and cultural contexts and evaluating their perspectives and limitations.
- **Describe** the development of Islamic religious, political, and intellectual traditions and analyze how those traditions changed over time and varied across different societies.
- **Explain** social and cultural life in premodern Islamic societies, including the roles and experiences of women, religious minorities, enslaved people, elites, merchants, and scholars.
- **Evaluate** the place of Islamic history within global history
- **Construct** evidence-based historical arguments and evaluate competing interpretations of the development of Islamic societies.

Required Course Materials

- Vernon O. Egger. *A History of the Muslim World to 1750* (2nd edition)
- Said, Handun (ed) *Ibn Battuta in Black Africa*
- Making of the Islamic World Podcast (available [here](#))

Grading Policy:

Your grade will consist of the following items:

Map Quiz: (5%)

2 in class Exams 20% each (40%)

Reading and Podcast Quizzes (15%)

Participation/ Preparation (20%)

Final Project (20%)

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%

Description of Assignments

In-class exams

These will consist of a combination of short answers and an essay. You will be given a study guide prior to the exam

Map Quiz

You will be given a blank map and will have to identify places and topographical formations from a word bank. You will be given a study guide in advance

Final Project

Your final project will give you an opportunity to choose a topic of your choice from the course and do additional research on it. The end product is open: you can do a traditional written paper, a podcast, an oral presentation or anything else you can come up with. I will discuss the requirements for this further in class

Participation

Your participation will be graded based on completing weekly assignments to prepare for class discussion, including (but not limited to) answering short discussion questions, handing in annotated articles and turning in bullet points on the readings. Some of these will be turned in on Canvas or Perusall and others will be turned in at the end of class activities.

Short Quizzes

You will have (mostly) weekly short quizzes covering the podcasts and readings

Course Policies

Attendance

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". Note: this includes Institute approved absences, so if you will have a lot of those, discuss it with me so we can adjust accordingly. You are responsible for finding out if you missed in-class work and making it up.

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.

Additional Policies

Discussion Policy and Expected Classroom Conduct

Any successful learning experience requires mutual respect on the part of the student and the instructor. Neither instructor nor student should be subject to others' behavior that is rude, disruptive, intimidating, or demeaning. The instructor has primary responsibility for and control over classroom behavior and maintenance of academic integrity. Students who engage in any acts that result in disruption of a class may be directed by the instructor to leave the class for the remainder of the class period. In order to keep discussions productive and respectful, I expect all of us (and I don't exempt myself from this) to observe the following guidelines

- Presume goodwill
- Listen deeply
- Accept each other's truth (not the same as agreeing, it is an approach of empathy for the speaker)
- Challenge yourself
- Expect discomfort
- Respect confidentiality
- Speak up

I am available at any time if you need to debrief from a discussion or would like to call my attention to anything.

STATEMENT ON INCLUSION

The Ivan Allen College of Liberal Arts supports the Georgia Institute of Technology's commitment to creating a campus free of discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, or veteran status. We further affirm the importance of cultivating an intellectual climate that allows us to better understand the similarities and differences of those who constitute the Georgia Tech community, as well as the necessity of working against inequalities that may also manifest here as they do in the broader society.

Use of Generative AI

[This policy was adopted from Dr. Andrew Buskell, who graciously has allowed me to use it for my courses].

This course has two policies surrounding AI and coursework. First, for all work where you write material outside of class you must write your work on OneDrive's Microsoft Word. As Georgia Tech students, you all have institutional access to OneDrive and Microsoft Word. The reason I require this is that this has version control. When you submit work, you provide "editing" access to this version control document. This allows me (if necessary) to see and understand how you have written your assignment and how your thinking and writing has developed.

Second, and related to the above, the use of any standalone (e.g. ChatGPT, site, OpenAI Research) or integrated AI tools (e.g. Grammarly, Co-Pilot, Notebook LM) is impermissible. It is impermissible at all points in process of producing and submitting work. This includes the stages of brainstorming, preparation, writing, and/or correction of materials. (Spelling and grammar checkers that alert you to errors are fine, so long as you don't use a tool like Grammarly or Microsoft Co-Pilot to modify your text). You might worry about your writing, especially if English is not your first language. Know that when I read your work and evaluate it, I ignore spelling mistakes and grammatical errors. I evaluate your understanding, reasoning, and analysis — not how colorful or snappy your writing is. Spelling and grammatical errors only become an issue when they seriously impede my ability to understand the text, evidence, and argumentation. If you believe that an AI tool is essential to you completing your submitted work you must: (i) check with me as to whether the use of the tool is permissible, (ii) accept responsibility for all material submitted including errors, hallucinations, or outright falsehoods produced by AI tools, (iii) include a short written statement (typically around 100 words) that is open and transparent about what elements of the essay were produced with AI tools, and (iv) document specific content, if any, was generated by AI tools through correct citation practices. The unattributed use of AI tools to produce text, citations, or images will be seen as a violation of academic integrity and reported to the Office of Student Integrity. Though penalties for such violations differ — and will typically be settled on a case-by-case basis (what OSI calls Faculty Conference Resolution) — it will typically result in the assignment being marked "0". If the assignment is worth less than 10 points, a minimum penalty that deducts 10 points (one grade classification) from your overall grade will be applied. Detection tools will be used, including Turnitin, to check for plagiarism and unattributed AI-generated text and I reserve the right to employ other means of detection as needed.

Extensions, Late Assignments, & Re-Scheduled/Missed Exams

For course assignments (in this case your quizzes and family recipe project) you have two "late day" tokens to use over the term, with no explanation needed. Each token provides you with two additional days (48 hours) to submit work without a late penalty applying.

When you submit your late assignment on Canvas, simply add a note saying that you are using one of your "late day" tokens. Note that I will not use up your "late day" tokens without you telling me.

You cannot use these "late day" tokens for participation assignments (ie: assigned readings, discussion preparation and related assignments) or for your final project. These have to be presented, read, or submitted, by the assigned due date. Finally, late assignments will incur a penalty of 2 points for each day that they are late. I will not accept work that is more than a week late.

Student Use of Technology in the Classroom

Research shows that laptops in the classroom decrease engagement and can make learning harder. They are also extremely distracting for other students and can be soul killing for your instructor. As a general rule, laptops, tablets and smartphones are not allowed in class, unless you have a documented accommodation. There will be exceptions for days when we spend class time working on projects. (Please see the article from the Chronicle of Higher Education that I have also posted on Canvas: ["Why I am Asking You Not to Use Laptops"](#))