

## **HIST 232-401: Women in the Middle East: A Modern History**

**Instructor:** James Ryan, Department of History

**Email:** [jamryan@sas.upenn.edu](mailto:jamryan@sas.upenn.edu)

**Meeting Time:** Thursdays, 1:30 PM – 4:30 PM

**Room:** TBA

**Office Hours:** TBA/By Appointment

*SYLLABUS DRAFT SUBJECT TO CHANGE*

**Course Description:** How have women, as subjects, objects, and agents, shaped the history of the modern Middle East? Until relatively recently, the history of women in the Middle East was characterized in a two dimensional way – as objects in need of reform, or victimized subjects in need of saving. This course will examine a wide breadth of work from the past two decades that has worked to show the myriad and diverse ways in which women have impacted the history of this region in the modern era, and ask serious questions about what that means for our contemporary views on Middle Eastern politics, and to some extent the wider Islamic world. Students will be introduced to cutting edge scholarship that mines previously ignored or unheard of sources on women’s history, and will be encouraged themselves to write and reflect on women’s history from many different vantage points and lenses. The course will be organized around thematic concepts including labor history, urban history, reproductive politics, fashion and geopolitics.

**Assignments:** There will be four components that will make up your grade in this course. You will be responsible for writing an essay, due at the end of the course, between five and seven thousand words long on a subject relevant to the course and chosen in consultation with the instructor. The essays should aspire to a reflection on the scholarly works examined in class, informed by some limited additional primary source research, and might appear suitable for publication in either (slightly stodgy) outlets like the New York Review of Books, and the Times Literary Supplement, or hipper venues like the Los Angeles Review of Books or Publicbooks.org. Essays will be graded on style, persuasiveness of argument, and the incorporation of a variety of source material.

The second component of the course will consist of contributions to the course source-blog. You will be required to post to the blog six times throughout the course of the semester. Each post must highlight and examine a single source, be it a piece of text, a photograph, an audio recording, a film or some other artifact, in roughly 300-500 words. Posts should take the form of “explainers” by highlighting the significance of the source, and describing its particular history. Good examples of document and source blogs include: Tozsuz Evrak, The Cornucopia Blog, stambouline.org, The Vault, Ajam Media Collective, Afternoonmap.org, etc. Blog posts will be graded for quality, the lowest grade will be dropped at the end of the course only if all six are completed – if you only submit five posts, you will receive an “0” for the sixth grade, and it will count.

The third component will be a student presentation. Typically, the instructor will preface each class discussion with a very short introduction to the module being examined, lay out why the particular readings were chosen, and fill in some of the historical gaps left uncovered by the readings. Each student (or if necessary, pairs of students) will then be responsible for introducing

the readings for the week, and kicking off the discussion. The presenting student(s) should have a healthy command of all of the readings, and ideally will have explored some additional readings identified by the instructor. Presenters should introduce the class to the subjects addressed in each of the readings, and present their own thoughts as to how the readings speak to one another and the theme for that week. The presenter will be required to put together a minimum of three discussion questions that will be crafted in consultation with the instructor. A first draft of discussion questions should be emailed to the instructor by 5 p.m. on the Tuesday before the presentation, and a final draft will be emailed to the entire class by 5 p.m. on Wednesday, a day before the class meets. Grades on the presentation will be pass/fail, no partial credit will be awarded.

The final component will be class participation. This is an upper level seminar course, and as such it is reading intensive and will only thrive so long as that reading is completed and the discussion in the class is vibrant. This does not necessarily mean that the quantity of contribution to class discussion is what you will be graded on. Contributions to discussion are expected to be thoughtful and considerate of everyone else's views. Contrast and contestation are encouraged so long as they remain on topic and grounded in the material presented in the reading. The point of class conversations is twofold. First, it presents an opportunity to learn and digest the readings and historical material in a congenial, Socratic way. Second, good class conversations will only aid you in your written work for the course. The best writing benefits from healthy discussion, and this course serves as a forum for both. Grading participation is of course subjective, but so long as participants are thoughtful, engaged, and curious – both as speakers and as listeners – students should have little to fear in this department.

**Grading:**

Review Essay: 50% **DUE DATE: MAY 9, 2017 5:00PM BY EMAIL**

Course Blogs: 15% **SEE SYLLABUS FOR DUE DATES**

Presentation: 15%

Participation: 20%

**Classroom Policies:** As instructor, I am eager to create as productive and stimulating classroom environment as I can. In order to achieve this, I am open to accommodating any particular learning needs students may have so long as they do not also disrupt the learning experience of other students. To that end, electronic devices such as laptops and tablets are allowed in order to take notes or access readings [NOTE: You are REQUIRED to bring readings with you to class in electronic or hardcopy form]. I may allow audio recording of class meetings, but only with the unanimous consent of the other students and with the understanding that it will be used for personal use only. If you abuse this allowance, I will know, and you will be disallowed from using these devices in class. Absences MUST be accompanied by a notification from Student Health Services or University Athletics in order to be excused. It goes without saying, but plagiarism is absolutely not allowed and grounds for failure in the course.

**Required Texts:** The following books you will be required to read all or most of during the course of the semester. They will be available at the Penn Book Center for purchase and on reserve at Van Pelt Library

Qasim Amin, *The Liberation of Women and the New Woman* American University in Cairo Press, 2000  
Beth Baron, *The Women's Awakening in Egypt: Culture, Society, and the Press* Yale University Press, 1997  
Farha Ghannam, *Live and Die Like a Man: Gender Dynamics in Urban Egypt* Stanford University Press, 2013  
Elizabeth Thompson, *Colonial Citizens: Republican Rights, Paternal Privilege, and Gender in French Syria and Lebanon* Columbia University Press, 2000  
Eve Troutt Powell, *Tell this in My Memory: Stories of Enslavement from Egypt, Sudan and the Ottoman Empire*, Stanford University Press, 2012

**January 12:** Introduction, Women's History in Method and Theory

**Readings:** Joan W. Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis" *American Historical Review* Vol. 91, No. 5, pp. 1053-1075  
Gendering Middle East History Roundtable *International Journal of Middle East Studies* Vol. 48 No. 3 p. 551-588

**January 19:** Women in the Pre-Modern Middle East

**Readings:** Nikki Keddie, *Women in the Middle East* p. 1-59  
Leslie Pierce, "AHR Forum: Writing Histories of Sexuality in the Middle East" *The American Historical Review* Vol. 114 No. 5, 1325-1339

**January 26:** "The Woman Question" in the Modern Middle East Part I

**Readings:** Qasim Amin, *The Liberation of Women and the New Woman*\*\*\* p. 1-106  
Beth Baron, *The Women's Awakening in Egypt: Culture, Society, and the Press* p. 1-9, 103-193  
Andrea Siegal, "A Literary Perspective: Domestic Violence, the 'Woman Question,' and the 'Arab Question' in Early Zionism" in Kashani-Sabet and Wenger, eds., *Gender in Judaism and Islam* p. 241-267

**FIRST COURSE BLOG DUE FEBRUARY 1**

**February 2:** "The Woman Question" in the Modern Middle East Part II

**Readings:** Michael Camron Amin, *The Making of the Modern Iranian Woman* p. 1-15, 48-113  
Elizabeth Thompson, *Colonial Citizens: Republican Rights, Paternal Privilege, and Gender in French Syria and Lebanon* p. 1-13, 113-170  
Orit Bashkin, "An Autobiographical Perspective: Schools, Jails, and Cemeteries in Shoshanna Levy's Life Story" in *Gender in Judaism and Islam* p. 268-310

**February 9:** Sex and the City: Women in Urban Spaces Part I

**Readings:** Cem Behar and Alan Duben *Istanbul Households* p. 1-86, 194-238  
Sevgi Adak, "Women in the Post-Ottoman Public Sphere: Anti-Veiling Campaigns and the Gendered Reshaping of Urban Space in Early Republican Turkey" in Maksudyan,

ed., *Women and the City, Women in the City: A Gendered Perspective on Ottoman Urban History* p. 36-67

Lisa Pollard, "From Husbands and Housewives to Suckers and Whores: Marital-Political Anxieties in the 'House of Egypt', 1919-1948" *Gender and History* Vol. 21 No. 3, p. 647-669

## **SECOND COURSE BLOG DUE FEBRUARY 15**

### **February 16: Sex and the City: Women in Urban Spaces Part II**

**Readings:** James Ryan, "'Unveiling' the Tramway: The Intimate Public Sphere in Late Ottoman and Republican Istanbul" *Journal of Urban History*  
On Barak, "Times of *Tamaddun*: Gender, Urbanity, and Temporality in Colonial Egypt" in *Women and the City, Women in the City* p. 15-35  
Elizabeth Thompson, *Colonial Citizens*, p. 171-224

### **February 23: Women at War**

**Readings:** Elif Maher Metinsoy, "Writing the History of Ordinary Ottoman Women during World War I" *Aspasia* Vol. 10 (2016): 18-39  
Yiğit Akın "War, Women, and the State: The Politics of Sacrifice in the Ottoman Empire During the First World War" *Journal of Women's History* Vol. 26 No. 3 (2014) p. 12-35  
Elizabeth Thompson, *Colonial Citizens*, p. 15-70

## **THIRD COURSE BLOG DUE MARCH 1**

### **March 2: Bondage and Freedom**

**Readings:** Ceyda Karamürsel, "The Uncertainties of Freedom: The Second Constitutional Era and the End of Slavery in the Ottoman Empire" *Journal of Women's History* Vol. 28 No. 3, p. 138-161  
Eve Troutt Powell, *Tell This in My Memory*, p. 1-6, 115-211

### **March 9: NO CLASS SPRING BREAK**

### **March 16: Women at Work**

**Readings:** Liat Kozma, "Women's Migration for Prostitution in the Interwar Middle East and North Africa" *Journal of Women's History* Vol. 28 No. 3, p. 93-113  
Sabiha Zekeriya, "Does a Woman Possess the Right to Work?" and "What Does it Mean to Fight Against Prostitution" Lutfy Levonian trans., in *Turkish Press* p. 94-99  
E. Tutku Vardağlı, "Searching for Women's Agency in Tobacco Workshops: Female Tobacco Workers of the Province of Selanik" in *A Social History of Late Ottoman Women*

## **FOURTH COURSE BLOG DUE MARCH 22**

### **March 23: Sex, Power, and Reproductive Practices**

**Readings:** Omnia El Shakry, “Reproducing the Family: Biopolitics in Twentieth-Century Egypt” in Solinger and Nakachi, eds., *Reproductive States: Global Perspectives on the Invention and Implementation of Population Policy* p. 156-195  
Firoozeh Kashani-Sabet, “Iran’s Population Politics: A Historical Debate” in *Reproductive States*, p. 196-217  
Morgan Clarke and Marcia C. Inhorn, “Mutuality and Immediacy Between *Marja*’ and *Muqallid*: Evidence from Male In Vitro Fertilization Patients in Shi’i Lebanon” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*

**March 30:** Fashioning Modernity

**Readings:** A. Holly Shissler, “Beauty is Nothing to be Ashamed Of: Beauty Contests as Tools of Women’s Liberation in Early Republican Turkey” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* Vol. 24, No. 1  
Hale Yilmaz, *Becoming Turkish* p. 78-138  
Marie Grace Brown, *Khartoum at Night* (selections)

**FIFTH COURSE BLOG DUE APRIL 5**

**April 6:** Masculinities

**Readings:** Farha Ghannam, *Live and Die Like a Man*  
Paul Amar, “Middle East Masculinity Studies: Discourses of ‘Men in Crisis,’ Industries of Gender in Revolution” *Journal of Middle East Women’s Studies* Vol 7. No. 3  
**Film:** *Devrim Beni Aramadi* (Devrim Didn’t Call Me Back)  
[http://72.29.75.211/~filmkole/binyayla.net/i/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=140:devrim-beni-aramadi-2006ankara&catid=9:goncagul&Itemid=16](http://72.29.75.211/~filmkole/binyayla.net/i/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=140:devrim-beni-aramadi-2006ankara&catid=9:goncagul&Itemid=16)

**April 13:** Queer Trajectories

**Readings:** Afsaneh Najmabadi, *Professing Selves* (selection)  
Roundtable, “Queer Theory and Middle East Studies” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 45. No. 2, 331-352  
Film: *Transgender in Iran*

**April 20:** Student mini-Conference on essay topics **SIXTH COURSE BLOG DUE BY CLASS TIME**

**Assignment:** In our last meeting, students will be grouped in pairs or threes according to selected topics and give a five to ten-minute presentation on their research and analysis, followed by a question and answer period. This exercise is meant to simulate peer review and conference presentation of a draft of your papers, which you will be revising and strengthening in the two weeks following this review session and the due date for the paper. This assignment itself is a component of your participation grade.

