

# **Women in Islam: Islamic Feminism, the Veil, Politics, and Love**

Syllabus | Summer HSSP 2011

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In this course, we will explore the changing and varied roles women have played in Islam from its founding to the present day. Classes will consist of lectures and discussions. Students should have a basic familiarity with the religion of Islam, an interest in learning about an under-represented topic, an open mind, and a willingness to engage in critical discussions. Students will be expected to write one brief journal entry after each class.

## **WEEK ONE: Introduction to Women in Islam**

- Women in the Prophet's lifetime
- Women in the Qur'an
- Historical Muslim women
- Prominent Muslim women

## **WEEK TWO: Women and Shariah**

- Probate law
- Family and divorce law
- Sex crimes
- Fiqh today

## **WEEK THREE: Controversies in Islamic Tradition and Cultural Practices**

- Purdah
- Gender separation in masjid
- Women and music (Abida Parveen)
- Veiling (burqa, niqab, abaya, khimar, hijab, chador, jilbab)
  - o Salafism
  - o Wahhabism in Saudi Arabia
  - o Iranian law
- Taliban rule in Afghanistan
- Honor killings

## **WEEK FOUR: Women as Imams**

- Mixed-gender congregations versus women only congregations
- Umm Waraqa hadith
- Ghazāla al-Harūriyya
- Khaled Abou El Fadl fatwa
- Ayesha and Umm Salamah (Ummahat al-Mu'miniin)
- Nikah ceremonies
- Delivering khutbah
- Leading salah and tarawih
- Hui in China (nüsi)
- El-Tawhid Juma Circle (Toronto) and Noor Cultural Centre (Toronto)
- Taking Islam to the People Family Eid Gah (Durban)

### **WEEK FIVE: Islamic Feminism**

- Asra Nomani
- Amina Wadud
- Leila Ahmed
- Shamima Shaikh
- Roquia Sakhawat Hussain
- Pray-in movement
- Muslim feminists on the veil
- Legal reform
- Qur'anic exegesis

### **WEEK SIX: Contemporary Muslim Women**

- Prejudices and misconceptions
- Women suicide bombers
- Anti-hijab laws in France and Turkey
- Women converts to Islam
- Women in government and politics
- Women reformers and activists
- Muslim women in higher education
- Marriage and family life

### **WEEK SEVEN: Student Presentations and Final Conclusions**

Group project presentations on a specific topic within “Women in Islam.” Groups of no more than three students will select a specific topic (such as a specific woman, a specific incident, women in a specific time period or region, etcetera.) not already covered in the course to research, analyze, and present to the class. Presentations should be no longer than ten minutes. Groups will be given some class time on other weeks to work on these, but should do the majority of research outside class.

### **Suggested Reading:**

*Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* by Leila Ahmed  
*Qur'an and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective* by Amina Wadud  
*Inside the Gender Jihad: Women's Reform in Islam* by Amina Wadud  
*The Veil and the Male Elite: A Feminist Interpretation of Women's Rights in Islam* by Fatima Mernissi  
*Women of Sufism: A Hidden Treasure* by Camille Adams Helminsky  
*My Soul is a Woman: The Feminine in Islam* by Annemarie Schimmel  
*Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* by Saba Mahmood  
*The Politics of the Veil (The Public Square)* by Joan Wallach Scott  
*The Veil: Women Writers on Its History, Lore, and Politics* by Jennifer Heath (Ed.)  
*The Scimitar and the Veil: Extraordinary Women of Islam* by Jennifer Heath  
*Rethinking Muslim Women and the Veil: Challenging Historical & Modern Stereotypes* by Katherine Bullock