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)
  - Salafism
  - Wahhabism in Saudi Arabia
  - 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 (niisi)
- 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