

Course Outline: Gendering Islam: Discourses on the Muslim Male and Female

DEPARTMENT OF HUMANITIES

Note for students: This short course outline is provided for planning purposes only. Course information is tentative and subject to change; the final course syllabus will be available by the first day of classes.

Course Code

AP/HUMA 3814 6.0

Course Description :

This course examines the construction of gendered concepts of the “Muslim Male” and “Muslim Female” across both Muslim-majority societies and diasporic communities in the West. Interdisciplinary in methodology and approach, Gendering Islam exposes students to a broad range of primary and secondary sources, including works of historiography, jurisprudence, ethnography, literature, and visual arts. In their reading and analysis of these sources, students focus on the shifting paradigms in interpreting these concepts, enabling them to critically engage with prevalent misconceptions about gender and sexuality in Islam.

Course Delivery

Delivery Mode: SEMR

Gendering Islam is a full-year seminar that meets once a week on campus (in classroom) from September 2026 to April 2027. The course material is organized around the following topics and corresponding modules: Islamic Gender Scripts; Gender Ambiguity in Law, Literature and the Arts; Islamic Feminism and Its Discontents; Islam, Gender and Colonialism; Queer Islam, and Representations of the Muslim Male and Female in Visual Arts and Media. The required course material is divided into 7 modules, which vary in length. Each module is introduced with a short lecture which focuses on the key concepts, theories and methods from the model’s assigned course material. Students are expected to engage in various in-class activities, including discussion of the course material, group collaboration on a small multimedia project, role-playing, and participation in the end-of-term in-class conference. The course also offers students several experiential learning opportunities, including virtual visits to museums, in-person conversations with scholars of gender and activists, and writing, recording, and/or producing short audio/video pieces that demonstrate how images of Muslim bodies from various museum collections can be de-orientalized and decolonized.

Course Materials

All required textual and visual sources are available on Course's e-class website or through York University library.

Required Reading Material (selection):

1. Akabli, Jamal and Chadi Chahdi. "Hollywood's (mis) construction of gender: The aesthetics and politics of stigmatizing Arab/Muslim women." *International Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Translation*, vol. 5, no. 8, 2022, pp. 17-28
2. Ali, Kecia. *Sexual Ethics & Islam: Feminist Reflections on Qur'an, Hadith, and Jurisprudence*, Oneworld Publications, 2006.
3. Amer, Sahar. "Medieval Arab Lesbians and Lesbian-Like Women." *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, vol.18, no 2, 2009, pp. 215-236.
4. Bauer, Karen. *Gender Hierarchy in the Qur'an: Medieval Interpretations, Modern Responses*. Cambridge University Press. 2015.
5. Duderija Adis, Alina Isac Alak, Alina and Kristin Hissong. Editors. *Islam and Gender: Major Issues and Debates*. Routledge, 2020.
6. El-Rouayheb, Khaled. "Introduction" in *Before Homosexuality in the Arab-Islamic World*, University of Chicago Press, 2007, pp. 1-12.
7. Hamzic, Vanja. *Sexual and Gender Diversity in the Muslim World: History, Law, and Vernacular Knowledge*, I.B.Tauris, 2016.
8. Hirji, Faiza. "Through the Looking Glass: Muslim Women on Television— An Analysis of 24, Lost, and Little Mosque on the Prairie." *Global Media Journal -- Canadian Edition*, vol. 4, no. 2, 2011, pp 33-47.
9. Khoja-Moolji, Shenila S. and Alyssa D. Niccolini. "Comics as Public Pedagogy Reading Muslim Masculinities through Muslim Femininities in Ms. Marvel." *Girlhood Studies*, vol. 8, no. 3, 2015, pp. 23-39.
10. Kugle, Scott Siraj al- Haqq. *Living Out Islam: Voices of Gay, Lesbian, and Transgendered Muslims*. NYU Press, 2013.
11. Mahallati, Amineh. "Women in traditional Shari'a: A List of Differences Between Men and Women in Islamic Tradition." *Journal of Islamic Law and Culture*, vol. 12, no. 1, 2010, pp. 1-9.
12. Rahbari, Ladan. (2023). "Down the (Digital) Rabbit Hole: Mapping and Decolonizing. Safavid Women's Imagery in Digital Museums. *Journal of Material Culture*, vol. 28, no. 4, 2023, pp.559-575.
13. Sirri, Lana. *Islamic Feminism Discourses on Gender and Sexuality in Contemporary Islam*, Routledge, 2020.
14. Judith Tucker. *Women, Family and Gender in Islamic Law*. Cambridge University Press. 2005.
15. Ze'evi, Dror. "View from Without: Sexuality in Travel Accounts" in *Producing Desire: Changing Sexual Discourse in the Ottoman Middle East, 1500-1900*, University of California Press, pp. 149-167.

Required Films (selection):

1. *A Jihad for Love*. Directed by Sharma Parvez. 2007 (Online, York University Library)
2. *Me and the Mosque*. Directed by Zarqa Nawaz. National Film Board of Canada. 2010 (Online, York University Library).
3. *Between Allah and Me (and everyone else)*. Directed by Kyoko Yokoma. Kanopy, 2016. (Online, York University Library).
4. *Inside Out*. Directed by Zohreh Shayesteh. Icarus Films. 2006. (Online, York University Library).
5. *Hollywood Harems*. Directed by Tania Kamal El-Din. Women Make Movies, 1999. In-class viewing.
6. *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People*. Directed by Sut Jhally. Kanopy, 2014. (Online, York University Library).

Weekly reading & viewing material:

Example 1

1. Akabli, Jamal and Chadi Chahdi. "Hollywood's (mis) construction of gender: The aesthetics and politics of stigmatizing Arab/Muslim women." *International Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Translation*, vol. 5, no. 8, 2022, pp. 17-28.
2. *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People*. Directed by Sut Jhally. Kanopy, 2014. (Online, York University Library).

Example 2

1. Rahbari, Ladan. "Down the (Digital) Rabbit Hole: Mapping and Decolonizing Safavid Women's Imagery in Digital Museums." *Journal of Material Culture*, vol. 28, no. 4, 2023, pp.559-575.
2. *The Musée d'Orsay*, Paris. France. Selection and analysis of three 19th century paintings or photographs representing the "Oriental" men and women. Tentative Grade Breakdown and Deadlines

Assessment	Weight	Mode	Tentative Deadline
In-class participation (In-class contribution to discussions, participation in in-class course engagement activities) me]	[20%]	In-person	Weekly (2% per class meeting; September 2026 to March 15, 2027)
Collaborative Group Project and Presentation: “Islam and Gender Scripts” (each five-member group focuses on a different gender script discusses during the Fall term.)	20%	In-person team meetings (in class), take-home completion of individual contributions, in-class presentation; submission through Course’s eClass website.	September – December 2026, corresponding to the date when a given theme is discussed.
Film Analysis	10%	Take-home, submission through Course’s eClass website	Due: Flexible: Between October 15 and December 15, 2026
Individual Project: Individual presentation at the student conference “Representation of Gendered Muslim Bodies in Visual Arts and Media.”	15%	Take-home, in-class presentation and discussion; submission through Course’s eClass website	Due: February 22, 2027
Reflection Paper (1000 words) Topic: “Beyond the Script: Rethinking Gender Norms in Muslim Diasporas”	15%	Take-home; submission through Course’s eClass website	Due: March 2027
Final Exam	20%	In-Person, On Campus	TBA; During the exam period (April 2027)
	100%		