

Islam and Muslim Communities in Latin America, the Caribbean, and the Latinx U.S.

Contact Details:

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Abstract:

Too often, the so-called "Muslim world" is imagined as being bound to the Middle East and North Africa. Beyond this, more generous geographies of the "Muslim world" may include the African Sahel, the Balkans, and Southeast Asia. What of Latin America and the Caribbean? Could the American hemisphere also be considered part of the "Muslim world?" In this course, students will encounter the story of Islam and Muslim communities in Latin America, the Caribbean, and the Latinx U.S. — past and present — as part of, rather than as alien to, the "Muslim world." Students will explore the overall narrative of flows, encounters, and connected histories that extend across the American hemisphere and are connected with other nodes throughout the "Muslim world." Rather than telling these stories in isolation, this course overviews the comprehensive historical and contemporary contours of Islam and Muslim communities in Latin America, the Caribbean, and the Latinx U.S.. Beyond introducing students to the story of Islam in the Americas, this course provides opportunities for students to interrogate and complicate current models of the "Muslim world" and situate the story of Islam in Latin America, the Caribbean, and Latinx U.S..

Course Aims/Objectives:

- 1. To learn how to reflect critically on how you, as a student of religion, arrive at your beliefs, values, and practices and bring to consciousness the degree that these might shape how you report on the various cultures and subcultures which you study.
- 2. To appreciate the study of global Islam in all its scope, changeability, and variety.
- 3. To give you an opportunity to voice why this is an important topic in the current cultural, social, and political climate.
- 4. To familiarize you with the multiple narratives, representations, and manifestations of Islam across the American hemisphere both in history and the contemporary scene.
- 5. To familiarize you with the resources available to study this topic.
- 6. To provide you with insight concerning, and opportunities to explore, the historical and contemporary communities of Muslims across the American hemisphere and their networked connections with other communities across the globe.
- 7. To foster your ability to think deeply about, and be critical of, the production and reception of scholarship and popular representations of Muslim communities in the Americas.

Required Texts:

- [PROVIDED] Chitwood, K (forthcoming). The Muslims of Latin America and the Caribbean.
- del Mar Logroño Narbona M, Pinto PG, Karam JT (eds) (2015). *Crescent Over Another horizon: Islam in Latin America, the Caribbean, and Latino USA*. University of Texas Press, Austin.
- [PROVIDED] Selections from "Islam" section in Gooren, H (ed) (2019). Springer Encyclopedia of Latin American Religions. Springer, Berlin.
- Khan A (ed) (2015a). *Islam and the Americas*. University Press of Florida, Gainesville.

Course Assignments and Expectations:

- 1. **Critical Reading Response:** Each week, a core of common readings will form the basis of our discussions. Your careful reading and reflection upon these weekly readings is essential to the success of this course. Therefore, you will be expected to complete all the readings for the course and, in preparation for each class period, submit a 500-750 word critical reading response. This critical reading response should include a *brief* synthesis of the topics and themes covered in the reading, but the majority of the response should be the students' own *critical* reaction to the readings what did you find helpful, what was not helpful, what questions do you still have, how does this shape your perspective on the study of Islam in the Americas/global Islam, why does this matter? etc. Your critical feedback will not only provide a basis for our seminar discussions, but will also help inform the revisions of Dr. Chitwood's manuscript, which we will be critiquing throughout the semester.
- 2. Written Project or Digital Production: Each student will prepare a "digital production" on a chosen topic that is relevant to the course (e.g. Islam in the Dominican Republic, Islam and Resistance, "Secret Muslims" in the Americas, etc.). This digital production can be a video, an in-depth feature blog, Wikipedia project, social media project, or something else of the student's choosing. The idea is that instead of writing a paper for the instructor to read, students will prepare a digital product that can be shared more readily and widely with a popular audience. With that said, academic rigor is expected, as is proper citation. Students will need to discuss their chosen topic and digital platform and/or format with Dr. Chitwood early in the semester (at the latest, the topic of your digital production should be approved by 19 June). The requirement for each digital production format will vary in terms of length, expectations, etc. The final digital productions

will be due 15 August. Students may also choose to write a 15-20 page research paper on a topic of their choosing. Those who choose this option will be required to stick to the same schedule as the digital productions.

3. **Presentation of Written Project or Digital Production:** Although the final projects are not due until 15 August, students will be expected to present their digital production or written project-in-progress on 24 July. These presentations will include the students' topic, research, and the development of their digital or written project. Their digital or written project should be in a *draft* form, but presentable enough to be workshopped with fellow seminar students and Dr. Chitwood. Each student will present the why, what, and how of their project in class for the purposes of discussion and critical feedback on the content and the production. Students will be expected to integrate those discussions and feedback into the final version of their digital production or written project.

Schedule:

Friday, 24th April — 1pm-5pm

Theme: Course Introduction & History pt. 1 - Pre-Columbian Contact? + "Forbidden Passages"

Readings:

- Chitwood, Introduction, Chs. 1 and 2;
- del Mar Logroño Narbona, Pinto, & Karam, Introduction;
- Khan, Introduction, Ch. 2, and Cook, "De los Prohibidos."

Watch: "Islam and Muslim Communities in Latin America & the Caribbean" & "Islam in America Before Columbus | Deeper Roots"

Friday, 15th May — 1pm-5pm

Theme: History pt. 2 - Enslaved Muslims + Indentured Servants

Readings:

- Bal & Sinha-Kerkhoff, "Ethnic and Religious Identification among Muslim East Indians in Suriname (1898–1954);"
- Chitwood, Chs. 3 and 4 pt. 1 (pp. 86-97);
- Diouf, "Introduction;"
- Karam, "African Rebellion and Refuge on the Edge of Empire;"

- Reis, "American Counterpoint: New Approaches to Slavery and Abolition in Brazil;"
- Kettani, "Bahia Muslim Slaves Rebellion: Rebellion of the Males, Brazil 1835;"
- Morgan, "Black Islam;"
- Escalante, A. 2019, "The Long Arc of Islamophobia: African Slavery, Islam, and the Caribbean World."

Listen: "The Long Journey of Omar Ibn Said"

Watch: "Another America: The First America Muslims" & "How the autobiography of a Muslim slave is challenging an American narrative"

Friday, 22nd May — 1pm-5pm

Theme: History pt. 3 - Arab Immigration + Latinx U.S./conversion

Readings:

- Chitwood, Ch. 4 pt. 2 (pp. 97-108), Ch. 9;
- Chitwood, "Islam en Español;"
- Espinosa, Galvan, & Morales, "Latino Muslims in the U.S.;"
- Funk, "A Political Economy of Arab-Latin American Relations;"
- King & Perez, "Double-Edged Marginality and Agency: Latina Conversion to Islam;"
- Martínez-Vásquez, "Dis-covering a Historical Consciousness: The Creation of a US Latina/o Muslim Identity;"
- Pridgeon, "Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, Latin American Solidarity;"
- Londono, "Orientalism."

Watch: "Why Latinos Embrace Islam?" & "Arab Latinos"

Friday, 5th June — 1pm-5pm

Theme: Contemporary Communities Pt. 1 - Mexico, Brazil, and Tres Fronteras

Readings:

- Ali, "Bahamian and Brazilian Muslimahs;"
- Cañas Cuevas, "The Politics of Conversion to Islam in Southern Mexico;"
- Chitwood, Chs. 5, 6, & 8;
- Elmaleh, "Lebanese-Muslim Diaspora in the Triple Frontier;"

- Medina, "Islam in Mexico & Conversion to Islam in Mexico;"
- Marquez, "Islam in Brazil;"
- Morales, "Islam in Chiapas;"
- Karam, "Crossing the Americas;"
- Linares García, "Muslim Community Educational Center" & "Women in Islam in Mexico;"
- Pinto, "Conversion, Revivalism, and Tradition."

Watch: "Ramadan in Brazil," & "Mexican Muslims,"

Friday, 19th June — 1pm-5pm

Theme: Contemporary Communities Pt. 2 - Trinidad and Tobago + Suriname

Readings:

- Borsellino, "Muslims and the Media in Trinidad;"
- Baptiste, "More Than Dawud and Jalut;"
- Chickrie, "Muslims in Suriname," & "The Afghan Muslims of Guyana & Suriname;"
- Hoefte, "Locating Mecca;"
- Jean, "Trinidad and Tobago,"
- Kasssim, "Forming Islamic Religious Identity among Trinidadians in the Age of Social Networks;"
- Mohammed, "Island Currents, Global Aesthetics;"
- Persaud, "Islam in Trinidad;"
- Reddock, "Up Against a Wall."

Watch: Abu Bakr Interview (VICE)

<u>Friday, 3rd July — 1pm-5pm</u>

Theme: Contemporary Communities Pt. 3 - Cuba + Puerto Rico

Readings:

- Chitwood, Ch. 7;
- Chitwood, "Islam in Cuba;"
- Chitwood, Los Musulmanes Boricuas "Puerto Rican Muslims and the Search for 'Authentic' Puerto Rican Peoplehood."

- Jardines del Cueto, "Islamic League of Cuba;"
- Mesa Delmonte, "Cubans Searching for a New Faith in a New Context;"
- Ramadan-Santiago, "Islam in Puerto Rico" + "Insha'Allah/Ojalá, Yes Yes Y'all."

Watch/Listen: Islam in Cuba (BBC), Alejandro Ismael

Friday, 24th July — 1pm-5pm

Theme: Class presentations and discussion

*No readings, just prep for the presentations of your projects

Bibliography:

*Course readings will be provided throughout the semester, but students may also look to the following texts for additional information and/or research topics.

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- Anzaldua G (2007) Borderlands/La Frontera: the new mestiza, 4th edn. Aunt Lute Books, San Francisco
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- Baptiste JP (2015) More Than Dawud and Jalut: Decriminalize the Jamaat al Muslimeen and Madressa in Trinidad. 269–294
- Barzegar, A. (2003), "Latino Muslims in the United States: An Introduction." *Journal of the High Plains Society for Applied Anthropologists*, vol. 23, no. 2.
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- Bowen, P.D. (2010b), "The Latino American Da'wah Organization and the 'Latina/o Muslim' Identity in the United States." *Journal of Race, Ethnicity and Religion*, 1, no. 11, pp. 1-23
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- Chitwood K (2014) Targeted Islamic outreach to Hispanics achieving results. Religion News Service
- Chitwood K (2015) Islam en Español: the narratives, demographics, & reversion pathways of Latina/o Muslims in the U.S. University of Waikato Islamic Studies Review 1(2):35–54
- Chitwood K (2016a) Globalizing the study of American Islam: approaches to the field through the lens of globalization theory. University of Waikato Islamic Studies Review 2(2):27–49.
- Chitwood K (2016b) "The fluid dynamics of Puerto Rican Muslim community," Caribbean studies association conference, Nassau, Bahamas, June 5–10, 2017 and "youth, Islam, and the construction of religious identities: a case-study among Puerto Rican Muslims". Latin America Studies Association, New York City
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- Cuevas SC (2015) The Politics of Conversion to Islam in Southern Mexico. 163–185
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- Deutsch N (2015) Fear of a Brown Planet: Pan-Islamism, Black Nationalism, and the Tribal Twenties. 92–114
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