



The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Syllabus

The Muslim Sea: Ideas Networks and Trade in the Indian Ocean - 35140

Last update 05-09-2023

HU Credits: 2

Degree/Cycle: 1st degree (Bachelor)

Responsible Department: Asian Studies

Academic year: 0

Semester: 1st Semester

Teaching Languages: English

Campus: Mt. Scopus

Course/Module Coordinator: Prof Simon Wolfgang Fuchs

Coordinator Email: Simonw.Fuchs@mail.huji.ac.il

Coordinator Office Hours: Monday 15-17

Teaching Staff:

Prof Simon Fuchs

Course/Module description:

What do we gain from conceptualizing the vast Indian ocean as a “Muslim Sea”? This course explores how Islam spread and was shaped by intimate connections between East Africa and Southeast Asia via maritime routes.

Course/Module aims:

Obtain an understanding of how Muslim communities managed to stay in touch across the vast expanse of the Indian Ocean and how Islam came to the region in the first place. Gain skills in academic writing, reading, and analyzing primary and secondary sources.

Learning outcomes - On successful completion of this module, students should be able to:

- Outline how Islam spread throughout the Indian Ocean region
- Debate whether there is such a thing as “Monsoon Islam”
- Differentiate between premodern and modern experiences of the hajj
- Recall what role genealogies play among Muslim Indian Ocean communities
- Point out the impact of European colonialism in the wider Indian Ocean world
- Establish the importance of Sufism and Islamic law in maritime connections

Attendance requirements(%):

100%

Teaching arrangement and method of instruction: Discussions, group work, analysis of primary sources

Course/Module Content:

Over the last few years, global history has taken a remarkable “oceanic turn.” The main focus lies no longer on local, regional, or national historiography. Instead, the interest in connections and networks across vast geographical and temporal distances has taken center stage. For Islamic Studies, scholarship on the Indian Ocean, which ties together the Middle East, Africa, South Asia, and Southeast Asia, is particularly productive. This course focuses on the premodern period until the early decades of the 20th century. What does it mean to consider the Indian Ocean as a “Muslim Sea”? What has this seemingly boundless maritime space to do with

conversions to Islam and the spread of religious ideas? What can we learn in terms of Muslim seafaring and trade, on issues such as slavery, Sufism, and the changing character of the hajj? We will also discuss how disruptive (and enabling, to some extent) European colonial expansion was for Muslim communities around the Indian Ocean.

Required Reading:

Sample of required readings (all details on Moodle)
Radhika Seshan and Ryuto Shimada, *Connecting the Indian Ocean World Across Sea and Land* (London: Routledge, 2023)
Nile Green, "Rethinking the 'Middle East' After the Oceanic Turn," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 34, no. 3 (2014): 556-564
Sebastian R. Prange, *Monsoon Islam. Trade and Faith on the Medieval Malabar Coast* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018)
Mahmood Kooria, *Islamic Law in Circulation. Shafi'i Texts Across the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022)
Eric Tagliacozzo, *The Longest Journey. Southeast Asians and the Pilgrimage to Mecca* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013)
Engseng Ho, *The Graves of Tarim. Genealogy and Mobility across the Indian Ocean* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010)
Fahhad Bishara, *A Sea of Debt. Law and Economic Life in the Western Indian Ocean, 1780-1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017)
John Slight, *The British Empire and the Hajj. 1865-1956* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015)
Michael Francis Laffan, *Under Empire. Muslim Lives and Loyalties Across the Indian Ocean World, 1775-1945* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2022)

Additional Reading Material:

A full syllabus with required readings and supplementary readings will be distributed in class and will be made available on Moodle.

Grading Scheme:

Essay / Project / Final Assignment / Home Exam / Referat 70 %
Active Participation / Team Assignment 15 %
Mid-terms exams 15 %

Additional information:

Please note that regular attendance is mandatory. Absences will result in a deduction from your grade. If a student accumulates more than three absences (excluding reserve duty and exceptional circumstances supported by

documentation), they will be required to discontinue the course. Students are expected to come to the sessions prepared for discussion, having read the assigned material at home. Preparedness for the sessions is accompanied by short writing assignments before each class, which are mandatory (ungraded). The course cannot be completed without submitting these assignments on time.