The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Syllabus

Shaykh Google and halal dating: the digital transformation of Islam - 38903

Last update 05-09-2023

<u>HU Credits:</u>   2

<u>Degree/Cycle:</u> 2nd degree (Master)

<u>Responsible Department:</u> Islamic & Middle East Stud.

<u>Academic year:</u> 0

<u>Semester:</u> 2nd Semester

<u>Teaching Languages:</u> English

<u>Campus:</u> Mt. Scopus

<u>Course/Module Coordinator:</u> Prof Simon Wolfgang Fuchs

<u>Coordinator Email:</u> Simonw.Fuchs@mail.huji.ac.il

<u>Coordinator Office Hours:</u> Monday 15-17

Teaching Staff:
  Prof Simon Fuchs

Course/Module description:
  What impact does the digital transformation have on Islam? This course looks in particular at evolving global debates on religious authority, how to understand and interpret the religious tradition, and shifting gender roles.

Course/Module aims:
  Make sense of Islam's digital transformation (including uneven and unexpected processes) in a global context and 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:
  - Categorize the main elements of digital religion
- Explain how Islam has been impacted by digital change
- Show how various Muslim actors navigate virtual words
- Evaluate the impact of digital resources on religious authority
- Measure how religious needs are met (and constructed) by digital products
- Criticize the ways radical actors make use of digital opportunities

Attendance requirements(%):
  100

Teaching arrangement and method of instruction: Discussions, student-led presentations, group work and analysis of primary sources

Course/Module Content:
  The publicly available version of the internet has just turned 32. During this period, our world has changed dramatically: the ways we shop, communicate, and use media are shaping our lives in ways that people in the 1980s could not even imagine. In this course, we will explore how the consequences of these new digital opportunities have impacted conceptions of Islam in the "Muslim World" and globally. Which websites, blogs, and offerings were popular during the early days of the internet? Who received most "traffic"? To what extent does the digital transformation benefit voices of traditionalism and where does it open up new avenues for progressive views? Has the internet "democratized" Islam? What does

it mean for the Islamic scholarly tradition if texts, quotes, and images are permanently available on Instagram and TikTok? Which developments do we see in the fields of Islamic video games and podcasts? How are rituals like pilgrimages impacted by advances in VR? How can we measure the impact of smartphone apps on ideas of "halal dating" and which new Muslim communities and (gendered) identities can arise in virtual settings? What does constant connectivity mean for radical actors and activists?

Required Reading:
 List of sample required readings (full details on Moodle):
Gary Bunt, Hashtag Islam. How Cyber-Islamic Environments Are Transforming Religious Authority (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2018)
Ruth Tsuria und Heidi A. Campbell, "Introduction to the study of digital religion," in Heidi A. Campbell und Ruth Tsuria (ed.), Digital Religion. Understanding Religious Practice in Digital Media (Milton: Taylor & Francis Group, 2022), 1–22
Andrea Stanton, "From Mecca with Love: Muslim Religious Apps and the Centering of Sacred Geography," in Robert Rozehnal (ed.), Cyber Muslims: Mapping Islamic Digital Media in the Internet Age (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022), 161–175
Babak Rahimi, "Jamkaran. Embodiment and Messianic Experience in the Making of Digital Pilgrimage," in Babak Rahimi und Peyman Eshaghi (ed.), Muslim pilgrimage in the modern world (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2019), 207–222
Vít Šisler, "Virtual Worlds, Digital Dreams: Imaginary Spaces of Middle Eastern Video Games," in Mohamed Zayani (ed.): Digital Middle East. State and society in the information age (London: Hurst, 2018), 59–84.
Anna-Maria Walter, "The self in a time of constant connectivity: Romantic intimacy and the ambiguous promise of mobile phones for young women in Gilgit, northern Pakistan," American Ethnologist, 48, no. 4 (2021): 446-461
Farah Hasan, „Keep It Halal! A Smartphone Ethnography of Muslim Dating," Journal of Religion, Media and Digital Culture, 10, no. 1 (2021): 135-154
Sana Patel, "Hybrid Imams: Young Muslims and Religious Authority on Social Media," in Robert Rozehnal (ed.), Cyber Muslims: Mapping Islamic Digital Media in the Internet Age (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022), 34–50
Nermin Elsherif, "When the Silent Past Gets a Troubling Voice Facebook Publics, Circulatory Texts and the Negotiations of National Identity," Middle East Journal of Culture and Communication (2022): 1–21
Mona Abdel-Fadil, "Let's Talk About Sex: Counselling Muslim Selves Online," CyberOrient, 10,1 (2016): 29-60

Additional Reading Material:
  A more detailed syllabus with required and additional readings will be provided in class and will also be made available on Moodle.

<u>Grading Scheme:</u>
  Essay / Project / Final Assignment / Home Exam / Referat 60 %
  Presentation / Poster Presentation / Lecture/ Seminar / Pro-seminar / Research proposal 20 %
  Active Participation / Team Assignment 20 %

<u>Additional information:</u>
  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 uploading 2-3 discussion questions each week on the mandatory readings before class. The course cannot be completed without submitting these assignments on time.