Majed Khader   
Marshall University  
Fall 2003  
September 2003

Women in Islam

**Introduction**

The status and the treatment of women in Islam are not new issues. For so many years, this subject has been receiving attention and good coverage from women’s groups, international organizations, interested individuals, Islamic studies specialists, and from various academic units and institutions. On the other hand, Islamic main sources of jurisdictions, the Quran and the Sunna (Hadeath), have already provided clear guidelines and answer for several of the questioned and concerns that have been expressed about the status of women in Islam. Thus, this lesson plan is designed to integrate the divine family law in Islam, which incorporated the status of women in Islam, and what has been said, written, and produced about this topic. These will include various view points and backgrounds such as articles written by subject specialists, scholars, the media, and women activists.

**Objectives:**

By the end of the time period designated to cover this topic, students should:

* Have a better understanding of the family structure in Islam
* Understand the rights and obligations of each member of the family in Islam
* Be familiar with women’s rights in Islam
* Be familiar with women’s obligations in Islam
* Easily identify facts from misconceptions about women in Islam
* Recognize stereotyping issues affiliated with women in Islam

Be able to distinguish between culture and religion

**Materials:**

* Required readings materials (from the bibliography)
* Recommended readings materials (from the bibliography)
* Videotape on Women in Islam
* An exhibit which will include head covers prayer uniforms, and selected brochures and pamphlets on women and the family in Islam.

**Procedure:**

RST 303 meets once a week from 6:30-9:00 pm. During the time period planned for Women in Islam, the following procedures will be implemented:

* I will start the session lecturing about the family in Islam: components, duties, and responsibilities (15 minutes).
* Then, I will introduce the guest speaker to the class. The speaker’s topic is “What does it mean to you to be a Muslim woman?” The speaker will address topics such as women’s rights, obligations, problems, culture, misconceptions, etc. (45 min).
* After concluding her presentation, I will show a short segment of videotape on women in Islam (20 min).
* The class will recess for (10 minutes).
* After the break, the class will meet again. The class will be divided into five small groups to discuss what has been covered about the subject of women in Islam and come up with questions and comments to be shared in class with the instructor and the guest speaker (15 minutes).
* Then each group will share their comments and questions with the instructor and the speaker (35 minutes)
* The remaining class time will be designated for final comments from the instructor about women in Islam and for viewing the displayed materials (10 minutes).

**Follow-Up**

For the upcoming class, each student will be required to submit a report that should include:

One to two paragraphs on their observations about last week’s topic   
A chart of myths and facts on women in Islam based on their reading assignments, instructors lecture, guest speakers comments, and the videotape.

**Conclusion**

Islam consists of a comprehensive divine system of laws, code of conducts, and rules. These laws emphasize and reaffirm that women are as essential to life and to society as men. The laws also stress the fact that women are not inferior or lower than men. Both men and women are vital members of the society, and every individual has a significant role to play in life.

Societies, cultures, mankind, and politics are among some of the influential factors that have changed the divine law on earth. Unfortunately, women are most effected by these changes and became the victims of sex discrimination. Hopefully, the collective efforts of many will grant Muslim women their rights as vital member’s of society, and help reinstate their rights as revealed in the divine law. Divine law does not discriminate, we can move in the right direction.

**MARSHALL UNIVERSITY**

**DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES (RST)**

**Revised Syllabus**

**COURSE TITLE:** WORLD OF ISLAM (RST 303) 3 HOURS

**INSTRUCTOR:** DR. MAJED KHADER, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR

**OFFICE:** MORROW LIBRARY / GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS DEPARTMENT

**OFFICE HOURS:** MONDAY AFTER CLASS HH 445. OTHERS BY APPOINTMENT PLEASE CALL 696-3121

**E-MAIL:** [Khader@Marshall.Edu](mailto:Khader@Marshall.Edu)

**COURSE OBJECTIVES:**

The World of Islam (RST 303) is a concise course about Islam, the second largest and the fastest growing religion in the world. It is designed to accomplish the following objectives and leaning outcomes:

* Introduce students to the foundations of the Islamic religion.
* Familiarize the class with the basic beliefs and obligations of Islam.
* Present the state of relationships between Islam, world religions and beliefs.
* Provide students with basic information on the principles of social, economic, judicial, and political systems in Islam.
* Familiarize the class with common Islamic vocabulary, holidays, and Islamic scientists and leaders throughout history and their contribution to humanity.
* Brief students with the basic rights and obligation of women in Islam.
* Identify some of the misconceptions associated with women in Islam including misconceptions related to education, employment, and polygamy.
* Describe, explain, and analyze the cultural, economic, geographical, and political aspects of Muslims and Islam around the world.
* Identify the major trends, problems, and issues of concern which are global in scope but unique for Islamic communities.
* Enhance diversity at Marshall University.

**RST 303 is**

* an informative introductory course about Islam
* Concise course because of the wide variety of Islamic topics to be covered in a short period of time.
* An educational tool
* Multicultural in nature
* Designed to bridge the gap between Islam and world believes mainly the monotheistic religions.
* Intended to clear facts from myths and misconceptions

**RST 303 is not**

* Designed to preach Islam
* Anticipated to convert it’s audiences
* Planned to be taught in a religious setting or environment
* An in-depth course about Islam

**TEXTS:**

Khader, *The Basics of the Islamic Religion: Selected Writings*. On Reserve at Drinko Library

Baker, Bill. *More In Common Than We Think: The Bridges Between Islam And Christianity*. Defenders Publications, 1998

Assigned Readings on regular and e-reserve at the Drinko Library

**CLASS FORMAT:**

The class will meet each Monday of the Fall semester from 6:30 pm – 9:00 pm. Lectures, group activities, small discussion groups, case studies, individual students reports on given topics, field visits, non-print media, and the Internet will be used to achieve the objectives of this class. Guest speakers (upon availability) will be invited to share their knowledge, religious experiences, and faith with the class.

**GRADING SYSTEM:**

Student’s final grade is based on the two exams, two quizzes, weekly assignments, term project, and attendance. Students are expected to take their examinations and submit their assignments and the term project on scheduled dates. If an examination is missed for a legitimate reason, a makeup exam will be given.

Course grades are based upon total accumulated points as specified below:

ACTIVITY TOTAL POINTS

1. Periodic assignments 20

2. Quizzes 20

3. Midterm 20

4. Final Exam 20

5. Term Project 15

6. Attendance 05

100

GRADES TOTAL POINTS

A 90 – 100

B 80 – 89

C 70 -79

D 60 – 69

F 0 – 59

**ASSIGNMENTS AND TERM PROJECT:**

All assignments and the term project must be typed. Several assignments are in the form of reaction statements to an article or class activity such as a reaction to a guest speaker presentation or an input/critique to videotape played in class.

All assignments are due on the dates specified. A penalty of a half point will be charged per assignment submitted the next class session after the due date. No assignment will be accepted more than one class session later than its due date. Each non submitted assignment is subject to a loss of one point from the 20 points designated for periodic assignments.

The term project will be graded in content and form (quality of information and references, title page, table of contents, organization, references, etc.). This paper should be 8-10 typed double-spaces pages.

To receive appropriate credit for assignments, reaction statements, and the term project, please double check “Assignments/Term Project Guidelines.”

**ATTENDANCE:**

Class attendance is important and required. Attendance will be taken at each class session. Students are expected to attend all scheduled class meetings. According to the university catalogue, “absences such as those resulting from illness, death in the family, or institutional activities are to be excused when you report and verify them to your instructor.” Absences will be recorded as excused or unexcused. A student who misses three or more unexcused class meetings is considered excessively absence. Excessive absences may result in an “F”. It is possible to fail the course based on attendance alone.

Consistent tardiness or leaving early from class will be counted as an absence. If there is a legitimate reason for you to miss class, arrive late, or leave early, please let me know.

If you miss a class, you are responsible for obtaining assignments prior to the next class.

**PLAGIARISM:**

Ethically, professionally, and legally, you must give credit to sources you used for assignments and projects. MU university plagiarism policy will be implemented with plagiarism evidences.

**BIBLIOGRAPGY**

The following is a list of some helpful sources on Islam:

*The Holy Quran*. Translation and Commentary by A. Yusuf Ali.

Abdalati, Hammuda. (1975). *Islam in Focus*. Indianapolis, IN.: American Trust Publications.

*The Book of Signs.* (1991). Videocassette. Chicago, IL: Sound Vision.

Baker, Bill. (2001). *More in Common Than You Think: The Bridge Between Islam and Christianity*.

Bucaille, Maurice. (1978). *The Bible, The Quran, and Science: The Holy Scriptures Examined in the Light of Modern Knowledge*. Indianapolis, IN: American Trust Publications.

Al-Tantawi, Ali. (1991). *General Introduction to Islam: The Faith*. Qatar: Presidency of Sharia Courts & Islamic Affairs.

Esposito, John. (1988). *Islam: The Straight Path*. Oxford University Press.

Hamidullah, Muhammad. (1969). *Introduction to Islam*. Paris: Centre Culturel Islamique.

Haykal, Muhammad Husayn. (1976) *The Life of Muhammad*. Indianapolis, IN: American Trust Publications.

Haneef, Suzanne. (1979). *What Everyone Should Know About Islam and Muslims*. Chicago: Kazi Publication.

Khader, Majed (1990-2002). *The Basics of the Islamic Religion: Selected Writings*. (On reserve)

Lawrence, Bruce B. (1998). *Shattering the Myth: Islam Beyond Violence*. Princeton University Press.

Maududi, A. A. (1988). *Towards Understanding Islam*. Indianapolis, IN: Islamic Teaching Center.

Safi, Louay M. (2001). *Peace and the Limits of War*.

**Extra Credit Bibliography**

The following sources are listed for those students interested in an extra credit on the subject of “women in Islam.” Extra credit is used to make up for a missing assignment or to improve student’s grade. Only one article can be read and summarized for an extra credit.

Bardon, J. & Cooke, B. (1990). *Opening the Gates*. London: Virago Press

Esposito, J. L. (1988). “Muslim Family Law.” In Esposito, J. L. *Islam: The Straight Path*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Fernea, E. W. (1985). *Women and the Family in the Middle East: New Voice of Change*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Haddad, Y.Y. & Smith, J. (2003). “Adjusting the tie binds: challenges facing Muslim women in America.”

Keddie, N. & Beck, L (1978). *Women in the Muslim World*. Harvard University Press.

Keddie, N. & Baron, B. (1991). *Women in Middle Eastern History: Shifting Boundaries in Sex and Gender*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Tucker, J. (1993).”Gender and Islamic History.” Washington, D.C.: American Historical Association.

Sonbol, A. E. (1996). *Women, the family, and divorce laws in Islamic History*. Syracuse University Press, 1996.

Sonbol, A. E. (200?). “Rethinking Women and Islam.”

Walther, W. (1993). *Women in Islam*. Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishing Inc.

Walther, W. (1993). *Women in Islam from Medieval to Modern Times*. Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishing Inc.

**TENTATIVE SCHEDULE**

August 25

* Introduction to the course
* Islamic sources and materials
* Library Tour (on your own)
* Islam on the Internet Journey

September 1

* Labor Day Holiday – University Closed

September 8

* Arabia before Islam
* The Land
* People & Society
* Values
* Tradition
* Religions
* Language
* The Arabic Alphabets
* Reading Assignment:
  + Khader Article #1
  + Haykal, *The Life of Muhammad*. Chapter 1

September 15

* The Birth of Islam
* Mohammed the prophet
* Birth, family, profession, life, & religion
* The revelation of the Qura’n
* Opposition of the people of Mecca
* Hijra (Migration to Medina)
* The Islamic State(s)
* First civilized government in Arabia
* The Rightly-guided Caliphs (Al-Khulafa Al-Rashidin)
* The Omyat
* The Abbasids
* Reading Assignment:
  + Khader Article # 2
  + Baker, Chapter I & II

September 22

* Quiz #1
* The Foundation of the Islamic Religion
* The Qura’n
* The Hadeath
* Islamic Jurisdiction and Legal Resources
* Ijma’(consensus of learned Islamic scholars)
* Qiyas (reasoning by analogy)
* Reading Assignment:
* Khader Article #3
* Baker Chapter III
* September 29 Fundamentals of Islam
* Confession of Faith (Shahadatain)
* Prayers (Salat)
* Mandatory Charity (Zakat)
* Reading Assignment:
  + Khader Article #4, 5, 6,
  + Baker Chapter III

October 6

* Fundamentals of Islam – Continued
* Fasting (Sowm)
* Pilgrimage to Mecca (Hajj)
* The Articles of Faith
* Belief in God (Absolute Unity of God)
* Belief in the Angels
* Belief in the Prophets and the Scriptures
* Belief in the Final Judgment
* Belief in the Divine Decree and Predestination
* Reading Assignment:
  + Khader article #7, 8, 9
  + Baker Chapter III

October 13

* The Islamic Empire and the Spread of Islam
* The Concept of Jihad in Islam
* Islam in Asia
* Islam in Africa
* Islam in Europe
* Islam in America (North and South)
* Arabic/Muslim Concept
* Reading Assignment:
  + Baker Chapter VI.

October 20

* **Midterm Exam**
* Islam and Society
* Human Rights in Islam
* Social System
* The Family
* Marriage
* Festivals
* Islamic Social & Political Societies, Movements, Organizations, and Parties
* Practicing Islam in America
* Reading Assignment:
  + Khader Article #13, 14

October 27

* Islam and World Religions
* Islam and Christianity
* Islam and Judaism
* Islam and Other World Religions, Faiths, and Beliefs
* Reading Assignment:
  + Baker Chapter IV, VI

November 3

* Women in Islam
* Women as a vital member of the family & society
* Women and Islamic laws
* Women’s rights
* Women’s obligations
* Women and Polygamy
* Women and Education
* Women and employment
* Women, culture, and religion
* Women and stereotyping
* Reading Assignment:
  + Khader article #11
  + Baker Chapter V
  + An article from “Women in Islam brief bibliography” for class group project

November 10

* Quiz #2
* Islamic Contribution to the Sciences and Humanities
* Reading Assignment:
  + Baker Chapter VI

November 17

* Economic System in Islam
* Tax Laws
* Laws Concerning Wills
* Public Goods and Foreign Trade
* Political System in Islam
* Constitution
* Elections
* Government
* Foreign Policy
* The Lawful, Prohibited, and Not Recommended in Islam
* Food
* Drink
* Socialization
* Reading Assignment:
  + Khader article #12

November 24

* Islamic Sects
* Sunni Shia
* Islamic groups
* Sophism
* Non Islamic BUT Islamic Sounding Religious Groups / Faiths
* Bahism
* Druze
* ReadingAssignment:
  + Khader article #10

December 1

* Islam and the Arts (VC 378)
* Islam beyond stereotypes
* September 11, 2001(9/11) and Islam
* Current Trends in Islam
* Conclusions and Reviews
* Term Paper Due Date
* Reading Assignment:
  + Khader Article #15,16
  + Baker Chapter V

December 8

* **Final Exam**

Some important dates to remember (**From Fall 2003 Schedule of Courses / Calendar of Events, P.176**)

* August 25-29 Ad/Drop Schedule Adjustment
* September 1 Labor Day Holiday – University Closed
* September 2 Withdrawal Period Begins
* October31 Last day to drop a full semester individual course
* Nov.3-Dec.5 Complete withdrawals only
* Nov. 26-Nov.28 Thanksgiving Break – Classes dismissed
* Dec. 1-Dec.5 Dead Week
* Dec. 5 Last class day and last day to completely withdraw for Fall Semester
* Dec. 8 Final Exam

**Narrative Description**

I believe that FACDIS/NEH seminar on “Women in Islam” was an ample learning opportunity for the participants and the presenters. The participants gained insights and learned something new about this timely and important topic. The seminar also generated new scholarly and friendly relationships between the participants on the one side and the participants and the presenters on the other. I also believe that the presenters benefited from the seminar by giving them an opportunity to communicate with scholars from another state who share with them common interest on the subject of the seminar.

In regards to the seminar topics and educational sessions, I believe that they were comprehensive, concise, and helpful in many ways. Professor Arnett briefed the participants on the history of Arabia before Islam, the birth of Islam, the religion of Islam itself, and the history the Islamic state. His notes provided the participants with a general background on the subject of the seminar and laid the foundation for the subject of the seminar.

Professor Spleth’s lecture was also unique and helpful. She covered women in the literature and the Islamic world. She also covered aspects of the literature that dealt with female suffering and suppression in Islamic countries.

Our main seminar speakers, professors Sonbol, Abugideiri, and Haddad, treated the subject from various aspects. Professor Sonbol covered the legal aspect of women in Islam. She also talked about Islamic women and the media. Professor Abugideiri covered the subjects of equality and women in Islam, and Muslim thought on gender and family. She also shared with us her personal experiences as a young Muslim woman. Finally, Professor Haddad touched upon several key issues related to women in Islam in general, and American Muslim women’s issues, identity, concerns, and experiences in life.

In addition to the main speaker, several of the seminar participants shared with the group their own personal experiences on the subject of the seminar. Panel discussion, individual presentations, displays, etc. are some examples of the participant’s contribution.

Visiting the local mosque in Morgantown, the trip to D.C., and meeting informally with Muslim people during these two visits and tasting ethnic food from various world countries added a special flavor to the program.

I believe that the contents of the seminar were very helpful in many ways. Definitely, I will incorporate various aspects of the seminar during class time designated for my coverage of the subject of women in Islam. I will also utilize the provided list of reading and the non-print materials on the subject.

Overall, the seminar was a win win for all involved parties, FACDIS, the participants, and the presenters. A word of thanks and appreciation is due to all Ann Levine, FACDIS Assistant Director, WVU, Center for Women’s Studies directed by Barbara Howe, and the core faculty Professors William Arnett and Janice Spleth. Their efforts and hard work is very much appreciated.

**Internet teaching resources**

The internet is one of the useful and timely source of information on a variety of subjects including Islam. The following are just some samples of Internet teaching/learning resources and databases:

Cornell University . Middle East and Islamic Studies Collection. <http://www.library.cornell.edu/colldev/mideast/>

The library of Congress.   
[http://www.loc.gov](http://www.loc.gov/)

**Bibliography**

Baker, B. (1998). *More in Common Than You Think*. Defenders Publications.

Bardon, J. & Cooke, B. (1990). *Opening the Gates*. London: Virago Press

Esposito, J. L. (1988). “Muslim Family Law” In Esposito, J. L. *Islam: The Straight Path*. New York: Oxford Univ. Press.

Fernea, E. W. (1985). *Women and the Family in the Middle East: New Voice of Change*. Austin: Univ. of Texas Press.

Haddad, Y.Y. & Smith, J. (2003). “Adjusting the tie binds: challenges facing Muslim women in America” In Haddad, Y.Y. & Esposito, J. (eds) (1998). *Islam, Gender and Social Change*. Oxford University Press.

Keddie, N. & Beck, L (1978). *Women in the Muslim World*. Harvard University Press.

Keddie, N. & Baron, B. (1991). *Women in Middle Eastern History: Shifting Boundaries in Sex and Gender*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Khader, M. (1998). “Islam treats both sexes equally, but not identically” In *The Herald-Dispatch*, August 30, 1997

Tucker, J. (1993). *Gender and Islamic History*. Washington, D.C.: American Historical Association.

Sonbol, A. E. (2001). “Rethinking Women and Islam” In Esposito, J. & Haddad, Y. (eds). *Daughters of Abraham*. University Press of Florida.

Sonbol, A. E. (1996). *Women, the family, and divorce laws in Islamic History.* Syracuse University Press

Synbol, A. E. (200?). “Rethinking Women and Islam”

Walther, W. (1993). *Women in Islam*. Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishing Inc.

Walther, W. (1993). *Women in Islam from Medieval to Modern Times*. Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishing Inc.

**Filmography**

The following is a list of some helpful videotapes on Islam. A number of these tapes are covering issues related to women in Islam. Others are general tapes on Islam with adequate treatment to the family, women, and society in Islam

*A Female Cabby in Sidi Bel-Abbes*. (2002).

*Islam*. PBS video, 1991

*Islam, the faith and the people*. Brown Publishing, 1991.

*The Message: the story of Islam*. Anchor Bay Entertainment, 1998

*Muslims in Appalachia*. (2002).

*The Story of Islam*. MPI Home Video, 1990

*Silences of the Palace*.

*Women of Hizbollah*. (2000).

*Zinat: One Special Day* (2000).