Women in Islam Seminar Project
Funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities in conjunction with
West Virginia University and FACDIS

James J. Natsis
West Virginia State College
Fall 2003

Teaching Module

I. Lesson Plan

Theme : Women in Islam

**Learning objectives :**

To be familiar with basic terms regarding Islam.
To identify the five pillars of faith.
To locate Islamic presence in Africa.
To understand pre-Islamic traditional society, and how Muslim women are socialized in two West African nations ( Nigeria and Senegal).

**Activities**:

The professor will distribute a handout with basic terms associated with Islam, the five pillars of faith, and other general information. A second handout will include a map of Muslim populations in Africa and readings on women in Islam through African literature. The class will read the handout together and discuss the information. Students will read the Introduction, Chapter 3 (Socialization and the Subordination of Women) and the Conclusion from Barbara Callaway The Heritage of Islam. The professor will discuss the material in the book chapters with the students.

**Sample questions**:

What are the differences between Islam and other world religions?
What was women’s role in society before Islam?
How has Islam influenced women in Senegal? Nigeria?
What were the differences between women and Islam in the two countries?
How does Islamic fundamentalism affect women in these two countries?

II. Revised Syllabus
West Virginia State College
Office of International Affairs and the Department of History
Fall 2003

History 444: Africa: A Family of Cultures in Transition
Wednesday 7:00-9:45ID#1567 W220
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“We didn’t know what Africa was. Europeans despised everything about Africa, and in France people spoke of a civilized world and a barbarian world. The barbarian world was Africa…. Therefore, the best thing one could do with an African was to assimilate him: the idea was to turn him into a Frenchman with black skin.” Aime Cesaire 1967.

**Course description**:

This course is a study of an emerging and changing Africa from the Mediterranean Coast to the Cape of Good Hope as a major cultural and political player of the 21st century. Emphasis is placed on analyzing changes in traditional African cultures resulting from the impact of colonialism and, to a lesser extent, the spread of Islam. We will look at traditional African society and how the colonial era disrupted the continent. Political and social aspects of the new African cultures and identity will be analyzed in the aftermath of European colonialism. A special focus will be placed on Francophone Africa.

**Goals of the course**:

* To familiarize students with Africa’s “Triple Heritage” and how it pertains to identity today.
* To analyze an important slice of Africa’s extensive history known as the “colonial era” and the general impact it had on Africans.
* To understand concepts such as nationalism, identity, and alienation and how the colonial system, and especially an exposure to western education, defined them.
* To better understand the early developments of African societies, kingdoms/city states, traditions and the indigenous “way of life.”
* To understand Africa’s place in today’s world.
* To better discern facts from myths regarding African women, tradition, and Islam.
* Readings available for purchase

James J. Natsis (2002) *Learning to Revolt: The Role of Students in the National Movement in Colonial Tunisia*. University Press of America

Joseph E. Harris (1998) *Africans and their History*. 2 nd rev. ed. Meridian

**Academic misconduct**

WVSC is concerned that all students understand what is expected of them with regard to honesty in the classroom and in out-of-class assignments. All forms of dishonesty, particularly cheating and plagiarism, are unacceptable. If they occur, student(s) will be penalized. Copying from others or using another student ’s notes during an exam is cheating. Failure to appropriately cite sources of materials used in a paper is plagiarism (if it leaves the impression that the material and/or phrasing are the students). The minimum penalty for cheating or plagiarism is a zero on the exam or paper involved.

**Students will be evaluated as follows**:

Attendance & participation
10%

Journal
30%

Presentation
20%

2 Essay Exams
40%

A = 90-100

B = 80-89

C = 70-79

D = 60-69

**Essay Exams**

Students will submit an essay exam at mid-term and during the final exam period. The professor will issue the question(s) one week before the assignment is due. The essay question(s) will derive from the main topics of our readings, film, presentations, and class discussions.
Presentations

Students will prepare a presentation towards the end of the semester. Students will be assigned a country and be asked to present the following: 1) general information on the country; 2) what are the three most urgent issues concerning your country, why are they important, and how to go about resolving them. Provide visuals, especially a map, and be prepared to discuss these issues with the class. Students will be expected to take over the class for a full 30 minutes, giving presentation and leading discussion.

**Journal**

Students will submit a total of four journal entries (3 pages: double spaced, 12 point font) based on different themes discussed in class (see Course Schedule on syllabus for themes). Students will submit 2 entries at mid-term and 2 during finals. The journal entries will reflect your observations, thoughts, and reflections regarding the various themes.

**Participation & Attendance**

As we only meet once a week, it is important that students attend class regularly. Emphasis is placed on student involvement through discussions within small groups and as a whole class. A student’s infrequent attendance and lack of preparation and participation will be reflected in the final grade.

**Course Schedule—Fall 2003**

* Week 1
	+ Introduction
	+ Administrative matters
	+ Discus syllabus
	+ Map of Africa
	+ Reflections on the African continent and its people.
	+ What is culture?
	+ Film: Africa: Continent of Contrasts (35 minutes)
* Week 2
	+ Nature of a Continent
	+ Film: The Africans—A Triple Heritage: The Nature of a Continent.
	+ Harris. (Chapter 1) A Tradition of Myths and Stereotypes (Chapter 2) The Evolution of Early African Societies
	+ Special Guest: Richard Ndunguru—University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
	+ Assign countries for presentations
* Week 3
	+ Early Kingdoms and City-States
	+ Harris (Chapter 3) Early Kingdoms and City-States
* Week 4
	+ Africa and the World
	+ Harris (Chapter 4) Africa and the World 1400-1850 (Chapter 5) The Expansion of Africa (Chapter 6) Repartition and the Development of a Pan-Africanist Tradition
* Week 5
	+ Colonial Era
	+ Film: The Africans—-The Triple Heritage: Tools of Exploitation
	+ Harris (Chapter 11) The Scramble and Partition (Chapter 12) African Diplomacy Resisitance and Rebellion (Chapter 13) The European Colonizers: Policies and Practices
	+ Independence
	+ Handout on “Islam” map and readings “Women in Islam through African Literatures.”
* Week 6
	+ Independence
	+ Harris (Chapter 14) TheStruggle for Independence
	+ Natsis. Introduction, Part I
* Week 7
	+ Education
	+ Natsis. Part II
	+ Submit essay questions
	+ Journals due
* Week 8
	+ Women in Islam
	+ Callaway, Barbara & Lucy Creevey (1994) The Heritage of Islam : Women, Religion, and Politics in West Africa. (Introduction, Chapter 2, Conclusion)
	+ Essay Exam due
* Week 9
	+ La Francophonie (article on francophonie)
	+ Natsis, James. “The Francophonie: What’s in it for Africa.” Unpublished paper.
* Week 10
	+ Africa: Not much different than us?
	+ Film: Ça twiste à Poponguine (Part 1)
* Week 11
	+ Global Africa
	+ Film: Ça twiste à Poponguine (Part 2)
	+ Visit Benin Room
* Week 12
	+ South Africa A Country Apart
	+ Film: Mandela (60 minutes)
	+ Presentation: South Africa
* Week 13
	+ Presentations
	+ Libya Nigeria
	+ Guinee Equatorial Djibuti
* Week 14
	+ Presentations
	+ Congo-Zaire Mali
	+ Chad Algeria
	+ Thanksgiving holiday no classes
* Week 15
	+ Presentations
	+ Cote d’Ivoire ( Ivory Coast) Mozambique
	+ Uganda Cameroon
	+ Final Exam Journals due

**III. Narrative Description**

We spent one year working on the Women in Islam workshop funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities. We met for 2 days in November during the FACDIS conference. We corresponded throughout the year and engaged in two internet chat sessions. We met in June for one week (7 days) in Morgantown and Washington, DC.

I learned a lot throughout the year from various readings, conversations, films, site visits, and lectures. The Islamic world ranges from Morocco and Mauritania in the West to Indonesia in the East. Many other parts of the world have significant Muslim populations including the United States.

Most of North Africa, much of West Africa, especially in the northern parts of the countries away from the coast, North Central Africa (e.g. Chad, Sudan), and the East African coast have significant numbers of Muslims. The course analyzes Africa’s triple heritage—traditional, Islamic, and Christian-European. The role of women had been essentially ignored by writers throughout the ages. There has been an increasing amount of literature documenting and analyzing the role of the African woman in light of traditional Africa, Islamic social norms and the modern world.

**IV. Bibliography**

**Internet sites**

[http://www.Tunisiaonline.com](http://www.tunisiaonline.com/)

[http://www.Planetware.com](http://www.planetware.com/)

[http://www.All-africa.com](http://www.all-africa.com/)

**Film**

Silence of the Palace ( Tunisia)

The Virgin Diaries ( Morocco)

The Battle of Algiers ( Algeria)

**Books**

Ahmed, Leila. *Women and Gender in Islam: History Roots of a Modern Debate*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992.

Ba, Mariamma. *So Long a Letter*. Translated by Modupé Bodé-Thomas. London: Heinemann. 1981.

Callaway, Barbara. *The Heritage of Islam: Women, Religion, and Politics in West Africa*. Boulder, CO: Lynn Rienner Publishers, 1994.

Djebar, Assia. *A Silster to Scheherazade*. Translated by Dorothy S. Blair. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1993.

Hale, Sondra. *Gender Politics in Sudan: Islamism, Socialism and the State*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997.

Natsis, James J. *Learning to Revolt : The Role of Students in the National Movement in Colonial Tunisia*: Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1992.