History 145A: The Middle East 600 – 1000

Time: T, R 11:00-12:15
Place: Arts 1353
Instructor: Professor Adam Sabra
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Office: HSSB 4224
Office Hours: T, R 10:00-11:00

Description:
This course provides an introduction to the history of the Middle East from the rise of Islam in the seventh century of the Common Era until the Turkish invasions of the eleventh century. It focuses on the theme “Empires and Identities.” We begin by examining the rise of Islam and the formation of the first Islamic empire under the Prophet Muhammad’s successors, the caliphs. The early empire has been described as an “Arab Kingdom,” but it proved to be short-lived. We will then look at the more cosmopolitan Abbasid Empire, during whose reign medieval Islamic culture flourished. The second half of the course examines the formation of various types of identity under these empires. These include ethnic (Arab, Persian), religious (Muslim, Christian, Jewish, Zoroastrian), and sectarian (Sunni, Shi`i) identities. Finally, we will examine cities as sites of governance, and rural areas as sources of taxation. Subjects like freedom, slavery, and gender are dealt with as they come up.

Course Books
Reader available via SBPrinter.

Assignments and Grading:
Attendance and participation in class discussion (10%)
Two interpretative papers, 5-7 pages in length (30% each)
Final exam (30%)

Course Policies
Late work will be graded down.
There will be no extensions.
All work should be your own. You are welcome to discuss paper topics and the like, but you are the sole author of your written work. Cases of plagiarism will be dealt with in accordance with UCSB policies.

Lectures and Readings:
The Middle East in the Seventh Century
January 5: Course introduction, Physical and Human Geography
January 7: Arabia between Persia and Byzantium  
Donner, ch. 1  
Egger, pp. 4-20

**The Origins of Islam and the Conquests**  
January 12: The Origins of Islam  
Donner ch. 2, Appendix A  
Egger, pp. 20-31

January 14: The First Wave of Conquests  
Donner ch. 3  
Egger, pp. 33-44

**The Umayyad Caliphate**  
January 19: The First and Second Civil Wars  
Donner ch. 4  
Egger, pp. 44-60, 62-69

January 21: When Did Islam Emerge?  
Donner ch. 5, Appendix B

**The Abbasid Caliphate**  
January 26: The Abbasid Revolution and Its Consequences  
Egger, pp. 69-72, 86-94

January 28: paper on Ma’mar ibn Rashid due.

Competitors to the West and Challengers to the East  
February 2:  
Egger, pp. 94-104, 142-170

**Sectarian Identities**  
February 4: Sunnis  

February 9: Shia  

**Non-Muslims and the Islamic State**  
February 11: Legal and Social Status  

February 16: Zoroastrians

February 18: Christians

**Imperial Culture**
February 23: The Creation of a Cosmopolitan Culture
Egger, pp. 114-137

**Ethnic Identities**
February 25: The Conquerors

March 1: The Conquered Reemerge

**March 3: Paper due on Ibn Fadlan**

**The Country and the City**
March 8: Urban Growth and Transformation
Egger, pp. 104-111

March 10: Governing and Taxing the Countryside

**Final Exam: Wednesday, March 16, 12-3pm.**