



<b>Course Title</b>	<b>Islam and Feminism</b>
<b>Category</b>	Religion, Ethics & Law
<b>Class Time</b>	<b>Master Course, July 20<sup>th</sup> – July 31<sup>st</sup> 2020</b> <b>Track D</b> <b>Schedule:</b> Week 1: Mon, Tue & Thu: 10am – 12pm & 1pm – 3pm, Fri: 12am – 4pm  Week 2: Tue & Wed: 10am – 12pm & 1pm – 3pm Thu: 12pm – 4pm & 5pm – 7pm (Tadjik teahouse) Fri: 10.30am – 2pm
<b>Course Level &amp; Target Group</b>	Master students and advanced undergraduate students (final year) of all subjects with an academic background and a strong interest in Islamic studies, gender studies, urban anthropology and sociology.
<b>Course Language</b>	This course is taught in English, including readings in English. For the understanding of the texts and the discussions in class a language level B2 (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) is required.
<b>ECTS</b>	5 ECTS (40 contact hours)
<b>Instructor</b>	Prof. Dr. Riem Spielhaus

### Course Description

The pairing of “Islam” with “feminism” would seem like an oxymoron to many, especially based on public discourses on Muslims and Islam in both Europe and the United States. Since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, represented Muslim women as inherently oppressed by their religion and by men in their societies and communities. This narrative has been employed to legitimize European colonialism as well as US military intervention in the Middle East. A number of scholars are therefore calling for a reflective analysis of both feminism and Islam and the discourse that connects the two of them in order to then develop a significantly more nuanced picture of the ways in which gender is related to Islam and Muslims. Such an approach aims at recognizing the agency of Muslims in formulating and debating ideas about gender norms and practices in their own societies and communities.

This course will not only give insights into different movements and lines of thought within Islam that engage in gender perspectives and strive for women’s rights, it will also examine how feminism has been changed and challenged by the encounter with Islam and female Muslim activists.

A meeting with activists, readings of academics as well as media texts and political statements will support lectures and debates in the seminar.

Based primarily on textual resources, the course combines materials from Islamic studies, Islamic theology, women and gender studies, and anthropology to provide a broad array of readings both primary and secondary. We will engage in close readings of selected texts, especially the writings of Muslim feminist theologians and thinkers, and gain insights into the arguments and debates that have animated both scholarship and activism in this area. Our analysis and discussion will revolve around issues of religious authority, modes and possibilities of interpreting sacred texts and sources, and the complicated flow of power and agency in religious and political communities.

Our presence in Berlin, Germany, will also allow for some engagement with local Muslim communities

and Muslim women activists, as well as a possible exploration of Muslim women in art.

Through a study of both discourses and practices related to Islam and feminism in the past decade the course gives participants an insight into Islamic debates about female authority, gender specific interpretations of Islamic texts and at the same time develop critical and reflective views on how feminist goals within North America and European countries concerning Islam in the public sphere.

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## Course Objective & Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Critically examine primary and secondary writings on Islam and feminism
  - Engage in educated discussions of various perspectives and frameworks
  - Meaningfully critique public discourse on Muslim women as oppressed and silent
  - Recognize the mutual impact of contemporary Muslim and feminist thought and practice on each other
  - Present short summaries of complex readings
  - Engage in further research on the topic
  - Create a piece of artistic expression related to the topic of the course
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## Readings

All required readings will be provided as pdf to registered students prior to the start of the course.

### Required (in alphabetical order)

Abou-Bakr, Omaira. "Islamic Feminism: What's in a Name?" *Middle East Women's Studies Review* 15.4 (2001):1-4.

Abugideiri, Hibba. "Hagar: A Historical Model for 'Gender Jihad.'" *Daughters of Abraham: Feminist Thought in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*. Ed. Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad and John L. Esposito. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001. 81-107.

Abu-Lughod, Lila (2002) "Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving? Anthropological Reflections on Cultural Relativism and Its Others," *American Anthropologist*, 103:3 (September 2002): 783-790.

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

Ali, Kecia, "Timeless Texts and Modern Morals: Challenges in Islamic Sexual Ethics." *New Directions in Islamic Thought: Exploring Reform and Muslim Tradition*, eds. Kari Vogt, Lena Larsen, and Christian Moe (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2009): 89-99.

Ali, Kecia, Juliane Hammer, and Laury Silvers, eds., *A Jihad for Justice: Honoring the Work and Life of Amina Wadud* (Boston, 2012).

Ali, Kecia, *Sexual Ethics and Islam: Feminist Reflections on Qur'an, Hadith, and Jurisprudence*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Oxford: Oneworld, 2016).

Ali, Kecia, *Feminist Thought in Islam*, in: C. Fitzpatrick and A. Walker (eds.): *Muhammad in History, Thought, and Culture: An Encyclopedia of the Prophet of God*, Vol I, 2014, pp. 195–197.

Amir-Moazami, Schirin, "Dialogue as a governmental practice. Managing gendered Islam in Germany", *Feminist Review*, 2011.

Badran, Margot and Miriam Cooke: *Opening the Gates: A Century of Arab Feminist Writing*. 1990.

Barlas, Asma, *"Believing Women" in Islam: Unreading Patriarchal Interpretations of the Qur'an* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002).

Barlas, Asma, "Women's Readings of the Qur'an," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Qur'an*, ed. Jane Dammen McAuliffe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 255–272.

Bracke, Sarah, *Subjects of Debate: Secular and Sexual Exceptionalism, and Muslim Women in the Netherlands*, in: *Feminist Review* 98(1), 2011: 28–46.

Cooke, Miriam. "Multiple Critique: Islamic Feminist Rhetorical Strategies." *Postcolonialism, Feminism, and Religious Discourse*, eds. Laura E. Donaldson and Kwok Pui-Lan (New York: Routledge, 2002), 142–160.

Hammer, Juliane, "Activism as Embodied Tafsis: Negotiating Women's Authority, Leadership and Space

- in North America," in *Women, Leadership, and Mosques: Changes in Contemporary Islamic Authority*, eds. Hilary Kalmbach and Masooda Bano, Leiden: Brill, 2012): 457-480.
- Hammer, Juliane, "Gendering Islamophobia: (Muslim) Women's Bodies and American Politics," *Bulletin for the Study of Religion* 42:1 (February 2013): 29-36.
- Hammer, Juliane and Riem Spielhaus, Muslim Women and the Challenge of Authority: An Introduction, in: *The Muslim World*, 103(3), 2013, pp. 287-294.
- Hidayatullah, Aysha, *Feminist Edges of the Qur'an* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).
- Kahf, Mohja. She Who Argues: A Homily on Justice and Renewal. *The Muslim World*, (2013), 295-304.
- Kuppinger, Petra, "Women, Leadership, and Participation in Mosques and Beyond: Notes from Stuttgart," in *Women, Leadership, and Mosques*, eds. Masooda Bano and Hilary Kalmbach (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 323-344.
- Mahmood, Saba. "Feminist Theory, Agency, and the Liberatory Subject." *On Shifting Ground: Muslim Women in the Global Era*, ed. Fereshteh Nouraie-Simone (New York: Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 2005), 111-152.
- Seedat, Fatima, "When Islam and Feminism Converge," *Muslim World*, 103:3 (2013): 404-420.
- Seedat, Fatima, "Islam, Feminism, and Islamic Feminism: Between Inadequacy and Inevitability," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 29:2 (fall 2013) 25-45.
- Selby, Jennifer A., *Questioning French Secularism: Gender Politics and Islam in a Parisian Suburb*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.
- Shaikh, Sa'diyya, "A Tafsir of Praxis: Gender, Marital Violence, and Resistance in a South African Muslim Community," in D. C. Maguire & S. Shaikh (Hrsg.), *Violence against Women in Contemporary World Religions: Roots and Cures* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2007), 66-89.
- Spielhaus, Riem, "Making Islam Relevant: Female Authority and Representation in Islam," in *Women, Leadership, and Mosques*, eds. Masooda Bano and Hilary Kalmbach (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 437-456.
- Terman, Rochelle, "Islamophobia, Feminism, and the Politics of Critique," *Theory, Culture & Society* 2015, 1-26.
- Wadud, Amina, *Qur'an and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).
- Wadud, Amina, *Inside the Gender Jihad. Women's Reform in Islam*. Oxford: OneWorld Publications, 2006.
- Weber, Charlotte, "Unveiling Scheherazade: Feminist Orientalism in the International Alliance of Women, 1911-1950," *Feminist Studies* 27:1 (spring 2001): 125-157.
- Zine, Jasmin, "Creating a Critical Faith-Centered Space for Antiracist Feminism: Reflections of a Muslim Scholar-Activist," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 20:2 (fall 2004): 167-187.

## Course Schedule

Four days each week, two sessions per day, including a mosque visit, a discussion with local Muslim women activists and a visit to a museum. All other class meetings take place in the seminar room.

This schedule is tentative and subject to change before the start of the course.

Day 1: Introduction; A brief history of Islam and feminism

Day 2: The histories of feminism

Day 3: Histories of Muslim women's activism

Day 4: Mosque visit; Current media debates about Muslim women

Day 5: Reading Muslim feminist theologians: Amina Wadud and Asma Barlas

Day 6: Reading Muslim feminist theologians: Kecia Ali, Aysha Hidayatullah, Sa'diyya Shaikh

Day 7: Reflecting on Muslim feminist activism, Farewell in Tadjik teahouse

Day 8: The possibilities of Muslim feminisms

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## Assignments

Daily reading/discussion journal: 5 in total, 600 words minimum, containing a) thoughts on discussion the previous class day and b) thoughts and questions related to the readings for the next day – helps the students reflect in class discussions and readings and formulate their own thoughts, understanding of materials, and questions

Class reading presentations: 3 in total, 6-8 minutes each, short summary of argument, outline of the reading, sources and methods employed, critical reflection and two discussion questions – develops critical reading and discussion skills and public presentation abilities

Art project: creation of a small, reflective visual or textual art piece on representations of Muslim women in public discourse – an alternative to purely academic textual writing and speaking, open to creative possibilities

Final essay: a short (2500 word) research paper furthering one of the class topics including some additional research and the formulation of a research statement or thesis – research skills, critical reading of sources, and formulation of an independent academic argument

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## Assessment Components

This course employs a 1000-point system. Each assignment has a maximum number of points, which all count towards the final grade.

Participation -- 200

Journals (5, 50 points each) -- 250

Reading presentations (3, 50 points each) -- 150

Art project -- 150

Final Essay -- 250

A minimum of 80% class attendance is required. Failure to fulfil one of the mentioned components results in failure of the class.

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## Grading Scale:

**1,0** 940-1000; **1,3** 900-930; **1,7** 870-899; **2,0** 840-869; **2,3** 800-839; **2,7** 770-799;  
**3,0** 740-769; **3,3** 700-739; **3,7** 670-699; **4,0** 640-669; **5,0** 639 and below

Local grade	Explanatory note
<b>1,0; 1,3</b>	<b>Very good</b> - The student's work shows excellent use of empirical and theoretical material in well-structured arguments. The commitment in class is exemplary, the written texts are comprehensive and the creative art project is innovative. Critical thought and extensive reading are shown in the student's work and behaviour.
<b>1,7; 2,0; 2,3</b>	<b>Good</b> - The discussed topics are well understood by the student. The commitment in class is good and the student has the ability to formulate coherent texts and to produce a creative art project.
<b>2,7; 3,0; 3,3</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b> - The student's work is acceptable and shows a basic grasp of the discussed topic, but the work fails to organize arguments coherently and the student fails to show own ideas and findings in a creative way.
<b>3,7; 4,0</b>	<b>Sufficient</b> - The work passes because some relevant points are made, but it shows poor understanding, lack of critical awareness and own commitment.
<b>5,0</b>	<b>Fail</b> - The work shows that the discussed topic is not understood; there is little or no critical awareness and the participation in class was is not sufficient.

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## Expectations & Policies

Preparation for lively discussions in the classroom: be on time, have at least the required readings completed and points in mind for discussion or clarification.

Assignments: complete all assignments according to the specified requirements on schedule including handing over to the lecturer.

Commitment in class: pay particular attention to the lecturer and respect differences of opinions (classmates', lecturers, local constituents engaged with on the visits).

Academic guidelines: Comply with academic integrity policies (such as no plagiarism or cheating, nothing unethical), especially the academic honour code and the student code of conduct (see FAQs on [www.huwisu.de](http://www.huwisu.de)).

Attendance policy: No unexcused absences are permitted. Students must contact their class teachers to catch up on missed work – to excuse absence please contact the HUWISU office (80% class attendance are required).

Field trips: if classes involve a field trip or other external visits, these require attendance as well as appearance on time – transportation difficulties are never valid reasons for an excused absence.

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## Extra-curricular Activities

HUWISU offers a fine selection of interesting extra-curricular activities and aims to give all participants an unforgettable stay in Berlin. Your program includes excursions, sport activities and social gatherings providing you the opportunity to get to know the city, the university and your classmates better and to meet students from all parts of the world. The costs for these offers are included in the program fee.

Below, you find examples of previously offered cultural activities. You will be informed about the respective cultural program after your enrolment via email as well as during the course period.

### Political and historical guided tours:

- **Federal Chancellery (Bundeskanzleramt):** It's the central coordination point for the entire government policy. The office is in constant contact to departments and other authorities.
- **German Parliament (Bundestag):** As the highest organ of the legislative in Germany it's elected by the German people. In practice Germany is governed by a bicameral legislature, of which the Bundestag serves as the lower house and the Bundesrat equals the upper house.
- **House of Representatives (Abgeordnetenhaus):** It's the state parliament (Landtag) of Berlin and located in the center of the reunified city. Together with the Martin Gropius Bau, the Topography of Terror and the Bundesrat, it presents an arresting contrast to the flair of the new Potsdamer Platz.
- **Topography of Terror:** A permanent exhibition with focus on the central institutions of the SS and police during the "Third Reich" and the crimes they committed throughout Europe. With the help of mostly photographic material, visitors are led through the major themes of the exhibition's five main segments.
- **Political Archive:** As the "memory" of the Federal Foreign Office it preserves the files on German diplomacy since 1867, as well as the international treaties signed by the Federal Republic of Germany and its predecessors in title. The records are preserved, processed and made available for academic research.

### Cultural guided tours:

- **Kreuzberg Tour:** Kreuzberg has emerged from its history as one of the poorest quarters in Berlin in the late 1970s to a cultural center of today's Berlin. A unique area and one of the hippest neighborhoods in Berlin with many bars, pubs and clubs.
  - **Museum Island (Museumsinsel):** was awarded UNESCO World Heritage Status in 1999 and is an ensemble of five museums: Old Museum, New Museum, Old National Gallery, Pergamon Museum and Bode Museum.
  - **Berlin Cathedral (Berliner Dom):** Berlin's largest and most important Protestant church is located on the Museum Island.
  - **Daytrip to Potsdam:** Be inspired by the illustrious attractions of the UNESCO's World Heritage while underway through the city of Potsdam. Immerse yourself in the history and present of Potsdam and discover many palaces, gardens, and historic quarters such as the "Holländisches Viertel" or the "Nikolaikirche".
  - **Exhibitions:** Berlin is known for its unique galleries and exhibitions, that is why we will visit at least one during the Summer University.
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Social gatherings:

- **Welcome Get-Together:** We invite you to meet all participants as well as the HUWISU staff in a relaxed atmosphere.
  - **Boat trip:** Get to know Berlin from a completely new perspective and see Berlin's famous sights while floating along the river Spree.
  - **Beach Volleyball:** A fun outdoor sport activity on long warm summer evenings for those who love to play and everyone who just want to enjoy watching the others play, lying in the sand, meet friends for some drinks, or simply relax in the middle of Berlin.
  - **Farewell Party:** At the end of the Summer University we will come together to celebrate the exciting time with HUWISU.
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## Your Instructor

**Prof. Dr. Riem Spielhaus, Professor of Islamic Studies, Georg-August-Universität, Göttingen**

Trained in the study of Islam and Muslim presences in Europe, scholarly trajectory has taken Riem Spielhaus from research on mosques in Berlin and European Muslim communities intersecting with women, gender and activism to education. She sees herself in both Islamic studies and American religions, and in conversation with women's and gender studies, sexuality studies and critical race theory.

Before joining Georg-August-Universität Göttingen as a Professor of Islamic Studies with a focus on education and cultures of knowledge and the Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Studies in Braunschweig as head of the department Textbooks and Society Riem Spielhaus studied Islamic studies and African studies at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, where she also earned her PhD, writing on debates over Islam and the self-positioning of Muslims in Germany. Spielhaus worked as a postdoctoral research fellow at the Centre for European Islamic Thought at the University of Copenhagen, Denmark, and the Erlangen Centre for Islam and Law in Europe at the Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg. Her research interests include female authorities on Islam, the institutionalisation of Islam, the political participation and religious practices of Muslims in Europe, and the production of knowledge about Muslims in Europe. She published several articles on female leadership in Islamic communities and co-edited a special issue of *The World of Islam* on "Muslim Women and the Challenge of Authority".

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Please note that the course and its syllabus are subject to change. Last update: January 2020