The course provides an understanding of the emergence and consolidation of major political and social institutions in the Central Islamic Lands (Arabia, the Fertile Crescent, Iran, Khurasan and Central Asia) from the rise of Islam to the Mongol invasion. The themes are organized around the issue of the evolution (and reconstruction) of Islamic ideology, polity and society during the process of unification and transformation of the diverse political and social landscapes lying between the Nile and the Oxus.

General Readings: Intended to provide students with a short list of references that might serve as the basis for Specialized Readings (below) and navigate the search for further readings. Students can choose as many books as they wish from the list. The idea is to spend more time on fewer pages, not memorizing a lot of information but rather thinking through some of the issues raised by the readings.

2. Gabriel Said Reynolds, *The Emergence of Islam*, 2012* (Must for theme 1)
4. Mathew S. Gordon, *The Rise of Islam* (Lucid Survey with excerpts from primary Sources; photocopy in SSS3)
9. H. Kennedy, *Caliphate, the History of an Idea*, 2016 (based on no. 6, focused on leadership)*

1. Arabia and the Near East in Late Antiquity and the rise of Islam

The discussion on the origins of Islam is varied and gives us a sense of the nature of the source material and its interpretation by traditional Islamic scholars, Orientalists and Revisionists. The two seminal concepts which Muhammad introduced were monotheism and the community of believers (Donner’s discussion that Muhammad’s community was ecumenical!)

Themes: Historiography of the origin of Islam. Creation of the community of believers

2. Islamic state under the Prophet and the Umayyads

The challenges to the unity of the community and the protection of its interests formed the basis for the creation of the Islamic state by Muhammad and the caliphs. The Islamic state leads towards imperialization under the Umayyads (661-750 AD). The death of the Prophet creates opportunities for innovations (Caliphate) but also divisions (sects).

Themes: Rashidun Caliphate and Islamic conquests; civil wars (fitna); Umayyad state; Abd al-Malik’s Arabization and Islamization


3. Abbasid absolutism and Islamic Public Sphere

The Abbasid Revolution (750 AD) transformed the character of the Islamic state. The key historiographical issues are the nature of the Revolution and its impact. The Abbasids further consolidated the political authority of the Caliph, while ulama (Islamic scholars) and Sufis consolidated Islamic public sphere. The official and public spheres collided during the reign of al-Mamun and caused separation between religion and politics

Themes: Da‘wa and dawla; political absolutism & problems of legitimacy; Abbasids & the ulama; institutional bases of Islam: sharia, kalam, madrasas; challenges to established order: tasawwuf, shu’ubiya; mihna; Greek learning in the Arab World; political thought; Iran & Islam

4. Unity in the face of political divisions

Periodisation of Islamic History and Marshall Hodgson; Political fragmentation of Islam and cultural efflorescence. Creation of Saljuq and Ghaznavid Sultanates brought Turks into the Central Islamic Lands.

Themes: Breakup of the Abbasid Caliphate; Iqta & military slave bureaucracy; ‘the Shi’i Century’ (Fatimids and Buyids); rise of Turkish Sultanates; popular preaching & conversions; efflorescence of literature and art in the tenth and eleventh centuries.


5. Social order and economic organization

Whether establishment of the Islamic state led to a new social formation? Does Commercial Capitalism constitute a mode of production? What social order did medieval Islam envisage?

Themes: Secular elites (ayan & amir); agrarian economy; trade & commercial techniques; Geniza Records; ‘Islamic’ urbanization; Islam & Capitalism; social order; slavery; gender.

Sexuality’, *NCHI*, IV, 355-79*; Ahmed, ‘Women and the Advent of Islam’; Mernissi, *Women & Islam*;* Schimmel, My Soul is a Woman; Ghosh, In an Antique Land*

6. Islam and the ‘Other’

Themes: Houses of Peace and War; protected people (zimmis) and jizya; Mongols & the sack of Baghdad; Nomads and state Formations; Islam and Christianity; India and the Islamic Frontier.


**Note:** Most readings are available with Shubho Photostat (SSS 3) in a Reader, some in Central Library and CHS Library (Pashchimabad). References marked with asterisk* are available in soft copies on the website of the Central Library. Send mail on snajafhaider@gmail.com to get soft copies. Please note that more readings will be recommended as we go. Students stand to gain from reading the assigned material **before** coming to the class.

**Evaluation:** Half of the grades come from the two tutorials (critical essay presented with intelligent participation in the discussion which is mandatory). A critical study would mean that you reflect upon the theme rather than repeat the readings. The end semester examination carries 50 % of the credit.

**Contact Hours:** Wednesday and Friday (1 AM to 3 PM), Tuesday (4-5 PM) in room 319, SSS3. If contact hours do not work call 9871575587 or send mail for appointments

**Glossary:** Islam = Submission [to the will of God]
Allah = Arabic word for God, word for God in Islam. Persian for Allah is Khuda
*Rusul* = Messenger (Prophet with a message, sometimes contained in a book /scripture, such as, in the case of Islam, the Quran. Notable *rusuls* are Moses, David, Jesus and Muhammad)
*Muminun* = Believers (according to Donner, all monotheists); sing. *mumin*
*Muslimun* = Muslims among the believers (Donner’s interpretation); sing, Muslim
*Umma* = Community of believers, later Community of Muslims
*Khalifa* = Deputy or successor (Anglicized Caliph). Head of Muslim community (also called *amir ul muminun* or commander of the believers)
*Imam* = Another term for leader of the community or any leader for that matter (such as, *imam* of a mosque who leads the prayers). The term has a special meaning in Shiism (a ‘sect’ of Muslims)

**Chronology:** Muhammad 570-632 AD. Four Caliphs 632-661 AD. Umayyads 661-750 AD. Abbasids 750-1258 AD. Buyids 945-1055 AD. Samanids 819-1105 AD. Ghaznavids 977-1187 AD. Seljuqs 1037-1072.