

Course Submission Form

Instructions: All courses submitted for the Common Core must be liberal arts courses. Courses submitted to the Course Review Committee may be submitted for only one area of the Common Core and must be 3credits. STEM waiver courses do not need to be approved by the Course Review Committee. This form should not be used for STEM waiver courses.

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Course Revision & College	
Form Submission Initial Submission	College Queens College

Course Data		
Course ID 116543	Subject HIST (HIST - History)	Catalog Nbr 311
Catalog Status Approved	Contact Hours 3	No. of Credits 3
CourseTitle Jewish Society in Islamic Lands, 632-1517		
Course Description Exploration of the political, cultural, and religious history of Jews in the Islamic world from the rise of Islam to the 16th century. Topics to be covered include the historical relationship between Judaism and Islam, the organization and structure of the Jewish community and developments of Jewish law, philosophy, religious writing and literature. Particular attention will be given to points of contact between the two societies and the ways in which the Jewish experiences was shaped by the surrounding Islamic environment.		
Department History		
Pre-Requisites/Co-Requisites		

Course Syllabus [Attachment Filename(s)]
HIST_311_Syllabus.doc

Location(Required or Flexible) and Learning Outcomes	
REQUIRED	FLEXIBLE
English Composition <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	World Cultures & Global Issues
Math & Quantitative Reasoning	US Experience in its Diversity

Life and Physical Sciences

Creative Expression

Individual and Society

Scientific World

Learning Outcomes: Questions

Learning Outcomes: Responses

*** 1. Gather, interpret, and assess information from a variety of sources and points of view.**

HIST 311 explores the interaction between Judaism and Islam in the Middle Ages. This interaction is studied from a variety of angles and using various primary source types. The four written assignments provide students with the opportunity to do this on their own and in an organized fashion, 2 dealing with medieval material and 2 dealing with modern or contemporary sources.

For response paper 1 (see full assignment under class 8), students use a collection of primary sources to gather materials that offer an alternative view of early Muslim-Jewish relations to that found in the traditional Islamic historiographical sources. They interpret these sources, their divergence form the Islamic narrative and their significance in light of a secondary reading that lays out the methodological issues at stake in broad terms. The goal is to encourage them to be able to recognize and discuss a historical source's agenda.

For response paper 2 (see full assignment under class 16), students are asked to think about the homoerotic themes and imagery in Hebrew poetry from medieval Spain. Using a scholarly database like JSTOR they are to find and analyze 3 academic articles that reflect at least two different understandings of the significance of those themes. The goal is to get them to recognize our own historically contingent attitudes towards things like sexuality and to get them to consider how scholars arrive at diverging understandings of historical phenomena.

For response paper 3 (see full assignment under class 22), students are asked to identify and collect primary sources from a database of Jewish archival material from medieval Cairo (the Cairo Geniza). Using available search functions they gather a small corpus of primary sources of different types about a particular individual, theme or historical event. They describe the sources but also note how their topic is treated differently in the different kinds of sources. For example, a page from a medical work on eye ailments will offer a very different perspective on eye disease than a personal letter in which someone complains about their illness to a friend or family members.

For the final paper (see full assignment under item 29) students gather representations of "Al-Andalus" (Islamic Spain) from various genres of contemporary culture and analyze them in terms of a historiographical/methodological article that we will have already discussed. The goal is to encourage them to think about how contemporary culture builds upon and makes use of particular ideological understandings of the past, often in service of its own agendas.

*** 2. Evaluate evidence and arguments critically or analytically.**

Many of the classes involve close reading and discussion of primary sources (see examples above), and in these students are introduced to a range of critical and analytical approaches. In classes 4 and 5 students look at traditional Islamic historical sources about the birth of Islam from two radically different perspectives. In the first lecture these sources are presented through the lens of modern historians (Stillman) who take them more or less at face value and as accurate representations of what occurred in the seventh century. In the second lecture students are introduced to more recent, critical approaches (Cook) that argue that those sources are the product of a later period and therefore cannot serve as reliable guides to the time period of Muhammad at all. We then discuss how these different approaches affect our understanding of how those sources depict relations between Muhammad and the Jews of Medina ? are they historically accurate or later projections?

In class 6 students study the classical legal text that defines the status of non-Muslims living in the medieval Islamic state, the Pact of Umar. We focus on the discriminatory measures it contains and at this stage students think about how the regulations would have circumscribed the lives of non-Muslims. Then, as a follow-up, we examine the same text from two contrasting perspectives: a historical look at the pre-Islamic precedents for its various clauses and a consideration of sources that shed light on how these rules were actually enforced. It turns out that for much of the Middle Ages they were applied very erratically and in many cases not at all. Students come away appreciating the difference between prescriptive legal texts and descriptive historical texts.

In class 11 we study a medieval Jewish heresy, the Karaite movement, in relationship to developments in the wider Islamic society. At first we explore it through polemical treatises written by Karaites and their Jewish opponents. From this perspective students get a sense that the ritual and doctrinal issues at stake created a substantial rift in the Jewish community. Later we explore it through a range of everyday documents, including marriage contracts and personal letters that make it clear that ordinary Karaites and non-Karaites got along, did business together, attended one another's synagogues and even married each other.

Classes 25, 26 and the final writing assignment all focus on historiography. Having spent weeks studying the actual history, students now have an opportunity to think about the way modern historians have spun that history. At the risk of being overly simplistic, there are those who argue that life in the medieval Islamic world was good for th Jews and there are others who argue the opposite. We explore how each of these arguments is made, what evidence is cited, what is omitted, and the specific circumstances that led to the development of each of these modern historiographical position.

*** 3. Produce well-reasoned written or oral arguments using evidence to support conclusions.**

Students are required to write 3 response papers over the course of the semester (due classes 8, 16 and 22).

The first response paper asks students to consider variety of sources about Muslim-Jewish relations at the beginning of the seventh century. Students are to make an argument based on primary and secondary source information as to why different kinds of sources depict that relationship differently.

The second response paper asks students to gather and analyze different scholarly understandings of the homoerotic imagery that is found in medieval Hebrew poetry from Spain.

The third response paper asks students to evaluate a variety of documentary sources about a particular topic and to produce an argument about the differences between the sources.

Students are also required to answer primary source identification and analysis questions on the midterm (class 12) and final exam (class 29).

The following essay questions appear on the course midterm:
-How do traditional sources depict the relationship between Muhammad and the Jews of Arabia? Why are historians today less confident than they once were about those accounts? What might an alternative be?

-Discuss the role and the impact of the geonim within the Jewish community. To what extent was that role facilitated or enabled by features of the Islamic world of their day? Explain.

The following essay questions appear on the course final:
-According to historians, how did instances of anti-Jewish violence in medieval Europe differ from such episodes in the medieval Islamic world?
-Discuss the unique form of poetry that emerged in Spain in the 10th century. What factors led to its appearance? What were its distinctive features, and how did it differ from earlier forms of Hebrew poetry? What broader aspects of Jewish society in the Islamic world does it illuminate?

Finally, students write a final essay examining how the image of "Al-Andalus" is deployed in various genres of contemporary popular culture (due class 29).

4. Identify and apply the fundamental concepts and methods of a discipline or interdisciplinary field exploring world cultures or global issues, including, but not limited to, anthropology, communications, cultural studies, economics, ethnic studies, foreign languages (building upon previous language acquisition), geography, history, political science, sociology, and world literature.

The historical method?analysis of documentary evidence?is an integral part of the course and syllabus for HIST 311. History focuses on the fundamental issue of change ? how societies change over time. HIST 311 uses this method and this approach to explore the way Islamic civilization transformed the Middle East and its indigenous Jewish and Christian populations.

<p>5. Analyze culture, globalization, or global cultural diversity, and describe an event or process from more than one point of view.</p>	<p>HIST 311 introduces students to the various ways the culture and religion of the Islamic world impacted Jews and Judaism, including religion, literature and intellectual culture. All of these are examined from multiple viewpoints, paying especially close attention to the voices of those who advocated for change and those who opposed it. Response 1 (due class 8), for example, asks students to look at a range of different sources describing Muslim-Jewish relations at the time of Islam's founding.</p>
<p>6. Analyze the historical development of one or more non-U.S. societies.</p>	<p>HIST 311 examines the emergence of Islam and its translation into a political state and a multi-ethnic, multi-religious society in the Middle East and North Africa. It seeks to understand the place that Jews and Christians occupied in that society religiously, legally, and culturally. While the development of Islamic society is central to most of the lectures in the course, it is of particular relevance to classes 3 and 7.</p>
<p>7. Analyze the significance of one or more major movements that have shaped the world's societies.</p>	<p>One of the themes covered in this course is the Islamic world's reclamation of the rational-scientific tradition of the ancient Greek world and its transmission of this legacy to Europe. We explore this in classes 10, 15, 16 and 17 in particular. Jews in the Islamic world played a critical role in the development of rationalist thought in the Middle Ages.</p>
<p>8. Analyze and discuss the role that race, ethnicity, class, gender, language, sexual orientation, belief, or other forms of social differentiation play in world cultures or societies.</p>	<p>Religion is a central issue in HIST 311. Over the course of the semester we examine its role from several perspectives: how it can create a bond between individuals and serve as the basis for a society, how it can be used to create hierarchies within societies, how it can be used to exclude individuals or groups, and how it can be invoked to justify violence. Response 1 (class 8) asks students to assess how different historical sources understand religious difference and its significance.</p> <p>Sexual identity comes up in the homoerotic poetry that we read in classes 13 and 14, and in the prompt for Response 2 (class 16) in which students have an opportunity to write about this material.</p>
<p>9. Speak, read, and write a language other than English, and use that language to respond to cultures other than one's own.</p>	
<p>A. If there is a change to the course title, what is the new course title?</p>	
<p>B. If there is a change to the course description, what is the new course description?</p>	

C. If there is a change to the pre-requisites and/or co-requisites, what are the new pre-requisites and/or co-requisites?

Chair (Approver) Comments

Comments Meets SLOs.