**Curriculum Project: Muslim Communities in the Modern World**

The introduction to this project is designed to accomplish two specific goals: To introduce students to what Islam and Muslim communities look like in the modern world, and to start students thinking about this topic in a way that helps them formulate a question that will guide their research.

1. **Start with a class brainstorm/discussion:** How do we “understand” Islam? From where do we get this “understanding?” What are we missing? This could be done in a think-pair-share format.

2. **Introduction to images of Islamic world:**
   
   “Sacred Spaces” [http://cmes.hmdc.harvard.edu/files/Sacred_spaces/default.html](http://cmes.hmdc.harvard.edu/files/Sacred_spaces/default.html) (15 minutes total)
   
   Mute the film and show first 3 minutes. While students view the film, they will jot down answers to:
   
   - What images surprised you? Why?
   - What images looked familiar to you? Why?

   **Saudi Aramco** [http://sawdia.com/](http://sawdia.com/) (potential homework assignment)
   
   Students will examine a minimum of 15 images from at least 5 different categories (their choice).
   
   **Brief description of each image; what images surprised you/what images looked familiar to you?**

3. **Exploring Muslim Understandings of Islam:**
   
   [http://cmes.hmdc.harvard.edu/files/Asani%20essay_FINAL_1.pdf](http://cmes.hmdc.harvard.edu/files/Asani%20essay_FINAL_1.pdf)
   
   Shortened, level-appropriate version attached.

**The Project:**

After completing the project introduction activities, students will begin to formulate a question that will guide their research. Questions should relate to one of the following topics:

- Daily prayer/recitation of faith
- Diet/food as adhering to religious guidelines
- Charity
- Music/dance as a way of demonstrating faith
- Hajj
- Art/architecture as a way of demonstrating faith
- Practices during Ramadan (fasting/iftar/Eid al-Fitr)
- Clothing/dress as a way of demonstrating faith
- Justice/Righteousness

Most students will need help formulating a question relating to one of these topics. Questions should focus around how Muslims “live out” the tenets of their religion. Students should also be encouraged to focus on a particular geographic region/country, as traditions and practices differ greatly within the global Muslim community.

For reference, the ten countries with the largest Muslim populations are Indonesia, Pakistan,
Bangladesh, India, Turkey, Iran, Egypt, Nigeria, and China. However, students shouldn’t be deterred from choosing any country with a large Muslim population, including western countries (such as the US or France), or a country in sub-Saharan Africa.

Sample student questions/topics:

- How does daily prayer fit into everyday life? (prayer rooms in public spaces, iPhone apps, etc.)
- How do Muslims contribute to charities/justice? (Resalah, Aga Khan, Islamic Relief, etc.)
- What does going on the Hajj entail? (travel agencies, etc.)
- How do people celebrate Ramadan? How does daily life change when a family celebrates Ramadan?
- How is the declaration of faith demonstrated through art, architecture, music, or dance?
- What makes a mosque? What parts of a mosque are cultural instead of religious?
- How does a Muslim woman decide how much of her body/hair to cover?
- What are the challenges that Muslims face when trying to eat halal? What does this mean in other countries? (For example, pork is illegal in Egypt; where can Muslims in western countries find halal foods?)

Resources: Muslim Communities in the Modern World


BBC Religion: Islam: [HTTP://WWW.BBC.CO.UK/RELIGION/RELIGIONS/ISLAM/]

Five Myths about Mosques in America: [HTTP://WWW.WASHINGTONPOST.COM/WPDYN/CONTENT/ARTICLE/2010/08/26/AR2010082605510.html]

Frontline: Muslims: [HTTP://WWW.PBS.ORG/WGBH/PAGES/FRONTLINE/SHOWS/MUSLIMS/]

Glossary – 25 common Muslim devotional terms: [HTTP://CMES.HMDC.HARVARD.EDU/FILES/GLOSSARY_FINAL_2_1.PDF]


“Halal Food in France Takes an Upscale Turn” [HTTP://WWW.NYTIMES.COM/2010/09/09/WORLD/EUROPE/09FRANCE.HTML?_R=2]

“Inside America’s Mosques” (Foreign Policy Magazine) [HTTP://WWW.FOREIGNPOLICY.COM/ARTICLES/2010/09/09/INSIDE_AMERICAS_MOSQUES?PAGE=0,0]

Islam and Islamic Studies Resources (University of Georgia): [HTTP://WWW.UGA.EDU/ISLAM/]

Islamic Food and Nutrition Council of America: [HTTP://WWW.IFANCA.ORG/HALAL/]
Adapted from “Exploring Muslim Understandings of Islam”
By Ali S. Asani

It is one of the great ironies of our times that peoples from different religious, cultural, racial and ethnic backgrounds are in closer contact with each other as never before, and yet this closer contact has not resulted in better understanding and appreciation for differences. Rather, our world is marked with greater misunderstandings and misconceptions, resulting in ever-escalating levels of tensions between cultures and nations … As a result of not having the intellectual tools to understand and engage with cultural and religious differences, people tend to paint those who are different from themselves with one color, with a single brush stroke, representing them through simplistic caricatures and other unjust forms of humiliation…

For example, many people commonly assume that “Islam” is the principal cause for a variety of ills that plague some majority Muslim countries such as the lack of democracy, economic underdevelopment and unjust treatment and marginalization of women. To many Muslims, such explanations are as absurd as the claim that Christianity is responsible for the United States, a predominantly Christian nation, having one of the highest crime rates in the world…

Let us consider experiences of being Muslim in our contemporary world, a
WORLD THAT IS DIVIDED INTO MANY NATION-STATES AND IN WHICH A PERSON’S IDENTITY AND RIGHTS AS AN INDIVIDUAL VARY DRAMATICALLY ACCORDING TO THE COUNTRY IN WHICH HE OR SHE RESIDES. THESE STATES, ALONG WITH THE POLITICAL IDEOLOGIES THEY ESPouse, ARE ENORMOUSLY INFLUENTIAL IN DETERMINING THE WAYS IN WHICH AN INDIVIDUAL MUSLIM INTERPRETS, PRACTICES AND EXPERIENCES ISLAM. WE MAY CITE HERE A FEW EXAMPLES. A MUSLIM WOMAN LIVING IN THE TALIBAN CONTROLLED REGIONS OF AFGHANISTAN, WHERE THOSE IN POLITICAL AUTHORITY MANDATE THAT WOMEN MUST COVER THEMSELVES COMPLETELY FROM HEAD TO TOE, EXPERIENCES HER RELIGION VERY DIFFERENTLY FROM A MUSLIM WOMAN IN TURKEY WHERE THOSE WHO ARE COMMITTED TO A VISION OF SECULARISM, VEHEMENTLY DISCOURAGE HER FROM WEARING EVEN A SIMPLE HEAD SCARF SINCE IT IS SEEN AS A SYMBOL OF RELIGIOUS FUNDAMENTALISM AND A BETRAYAL OF CHERISHED NATIONAL IDEAS OF SECULARISM. THE EXPERIENCE OF BEING A MUSLIM IN SENEGAL, A NATION WHERE CERTAIN GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS ESPousing A MYSTICAL OR SufI INTERPRETATION OF ISLAM EXERCISE A GREAT DEAL OF POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC INFLUENCE, DIFFERS FROM THE EXPERIENCE OF A MUSLIM IN SAUDI ARABIA WHERE SUCH MYSTICISM IS BANNED FOR IT IS CONSIDERED TO BE A HERESY, CONTRARY TO THE STATE’S OFFICIAL WAHHABI RELIGIOUS IDEOLOGY. BEING A MUSLIM IN CHINA, A STATE THAT IS OFFICIALLY ATHEIST AND CONSIDERS ITS MUSLIM POPULATIONS TO BE ETHNIC RATHER THAN RELIGIOUS MINORITIES, DIFFERS FROM BEING MUSLIM IN PAKISTAN, A MUSLIM MAJORITY STATE IN WHICH THE[GOVERNMENT’S USE OF ISLAM AS A POLITICAL FORCE] HAS LED TO VIOLENT SECTARIAN CONFLICT. THE EXPERIENCE OF BEING A MUSLIM OF TURKISH ORIGIN IN GERMANY IS VERY DIFFERENT FROM BEING AN AFRICAN AMERICAN MUSLIM IN THE UNITED STATES. ...THIS ESSAY IS PREMISED ON THE IDEA THAT THE STORY OF ISLAM IS NOT ONE STORY BUT MANY STORIES INVOLVING PEOPLES OF MANY DIFFERENT RACES, ETHNICITIES AND CULTURES, MANY LITERATURES AND LANGUAGES, MANY HISTORIES, AND A MYRIAD OF INTERPRETATIONS, SOME OF WHICH ARE BOUND TO BE IN CONFLICT WITH EACH OTHER. TO ACQUIRE A CORRECTLY NUANCED UNDERSTANDING OF ISLAM AND ITS ROLE IN MUSLIM SOCIETIES, THE CRUCIAL QUESTIONS WE SHOULD BE ASKING ARE: WHICH ISLAM? WHOSE ISLAM? IN WHICH CONTEXT?

THE FULL TEXT OF THIS ARTICLE CAN BE FOUND AT HTTP://CMES.HMDC.HARVARD.EDU/FILES/ASANI%20ESSAY_FINAL_1.PDF

“Kathy began borrowing books about Islam. She was curious, having no particular intention to leave the Christian faith. At first she was simply intrigued by the basic things she didn’t know, and the many things she’d wrongly presumed. She had no idea, for instance, that the Qur’an was filled with the same people as the Bible – Moses, Mary, Abraham, Pharaoh, even Jesus. She hadn’t known that Muslims consider the Qur’an the fourth book of God to His messengers, after the Old Testament (referred to as the Tawrat, or the Law), the Psalms (the Zabur), and the New Testament (Injeil). The fact that Islam acknowledged these books was revelatory for her. The fact that the Qur’an repeatedly reaches out to the other, related faiths, knocked her flat:

WE HAVE BELIEVED IN GOD
AND WHAT HAS BEEN SENT FORTH TO US,
AND WHAT WAS SENT FORTH TO ABRAHAM,
Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes
and what was given the Prophets
from their Lord;
we separate and divide not
between any one of them;
and we are the ones who submit to Him.

“She was frustrated that she hadn’t known any of this, that she’d been blind to the faith of a billion or so people. How could she not know these things?

“And Muhammad. She’s been so misinformed about Him. She’s thought He was the actual god of Islam, the one who Muslims worshipped. But he was simply the messenger who related the word of God. An illiterate man, Muhammad was visited by the angel Gabriel (Jibril in Arabic), who related to him the words of God. Muhammad became the conduit for these messages, and the Qur’an, then, was simply the word of God in written form. Qur’an meant “Recitation.”

“There were so many basic things that defied her presumptions. She’s assumed that Muslims were a monolithic group, and that all Muslims were made of the same devout and unbending stock. But she learned that there were Shiite and Sunni interpretations of the Qur’an, and within any mosque there were the same variations in faith and commitment as there were in any church. There were Muslims who treated their faith lightly, and those who knew every word of the Qur’an and its companion guide to behavior, the Hadith. There were Muslims who knew almost nothing about their religion, who worshiped a few times a year, and those who obeyed the strictest interpretation of their faith. There were Muslim women who wore T-shirts and jeans and Muslim women who covered themselves head to toe. There were Muslim men who modeled their lives on the life of the Prophet, and those who strayed and fell short. There were passive Muslims, uncertain Muslims, borderline agnostic Muslims, devout Muslims, and Muslims who twisted the words of the Qur’an to suit their temporary desires and agendas. It was all very familiar, intrinsic to any faith.”

From Zeitoun by Dave Eggers

Project: Muslim Communities in the Modern World

For this project, we are going to take what we have learned about the foundations of Islam and apply it to the modern world. We will investigate as a class what Islam and Muslim communities look like in the modern world. Then, you will choose a research topic, formulate a question, and answer that question with your own research. The final product of this project will be a textbook page that you create — a page that incorporates your research, writing, and visuals to answer the question that you
THOUGHT UP!

Step 1: Formulating a question:

Questions should focus around how Muslims “live out” the foundations of their faith. Your question must focus on one of the topics below:

• Daily prayer/recitation of faith
• Charity
• Hajj
• Practices during Ramadan (fasting/iftar/Eid al-Fitr)
• Clothing/dress as a way of demonstrating faith/the diversity of faith
• Art/Architecture as a way of demonstrating faith/the diversity of faith
• Music/dance as a way of demonstrating faith/the diversity of faith
• Diet/food as adhering to religious guidelines
• Righteousness/Justice

Your question must also focus on a particular geographic region/country, as practices differ greatly within the global Muslim community. Please choose from the list below:

Indonesia
• Pakistan
• Bangladesh
• The United States
• India
• Turkey
• Iran
• Egypt
• Nigeria
• China
• Sub-Saharan Africa (pick a specific country/region)

** If you would like to choose another country or region, please see me before finalizing your research question.

Step 2: Completing your research:

Your research should consist only of scholarly sources. The library’s online resources are a great place to start. There is also a list of recommended resources attached to this project. Do not use any wiki sites. Remember that databases like
Galenet and ABC-Clio count as encyclopedias.

**A complete and correctly cited bibliography** is also a requirement of this project, so keep track of all resources you use. This biography **MUST** be neatly handwritten.

**Step 3: Creating a textbook page:**

**Think:** What parts of your textbook do you find useful? Which do you find appealing? What do pages in your textbook generally look like?

Effective textbooks have a combination of text and visuals. Textbooks guide their readers with questions and will bold or highlight words/concepts that are important. Your research question will inspire this textbook page.

**Your page must include:**

- A title (inspired by your research question).
- **Narrative text** (in complete sentences) that answers your question/ is relevant to your title and topic
- **Visuals and graphics** (for example, boxes, bullet points, tables/graphs, timelines, pictures, and illustrations) that are relevant to your title and topic.
- **Bolded words/key phrases and their definitions** (this may be worked into your narrative text)

**The Details:**

You will create **two pages of a textbook** (each page will be 8 ½ x 11 sized). You can arrange your pages as a spread (like looking at a book) or as two separate pages. Your project must also include a bibliography (attached to the back of your textbook pages).

A large portion of this project is research. I will be checking your research periodically in class. You will receive a grade for these research checks.

Your project will be graded on the quality and depth of research, as well as the neatness and effort shown on the textbook page.

**Resources: Muslim Communities in the Modern World**
“30 Days as a Muslim” by Morgan Spurlock (video): http://videosift.com/video/30-Days-As-A-Muslim-44mins

BBC Religion: Islam: http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/islam/

Five Myths about Mosques in America: http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/08/26/AR2010082605510.html


Glossary – 25 common Muslim devotional terms: http://cmes.hmdc.harvard.edu/files/glossary_FINAL_2_1.pdf


“Inside America’s Mosques” (Foreign Policy Magazine) http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/09/09/inside_americas_mosques?page=0,0

Islam and Islamic Studies Resources (University of Georgia): http://www.uga.edu/islam/

Islamic Food and Nutrition Council of America: http://www.ifanca.org/halal/

Islamophobic: http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/series/islamophobic

The Islam Project: http://www.islamproject.org/

Muhammad: The Legacy of a Prophet: http://www.pbs.org/muhammad/


Muslim Voices Festival: http://muslimvoicesfestival.org/about/festival


# Global History: Muslim Communities in the Modern World

**Name:** __________________________  **Civilization:** __________________________

## Research and Bibliography (15 pts)

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<td><strong>Handwritten and correct bibliography is attached (sources in alphabetical order and cited correctly)</strong></td>
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**Research and Bibliography total:** _____/20

## Ideas and Content (70 pts)

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**Ideas and Content total:** _____/70

## Appearance and Effort (10 pts)

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**Appearance and Effort total:** _____/10

**Comments:**

**Final Grade:**

_______/100