

MWF 10:00–10:50pm

HSSC S2323

**Instructor: Elias G. Saba**

**Email: [sabaelia@grinnell.edu](mailto:sabaelia@grinnell.edu)**

**Office: HSSC N2152**

**Office Hours: T 2:00pm-3:30pm;**

**F 8:30–9:50am**

or by appointment

**His 100-01: Introduction to Historical Inquiry – The Prophet Muhammad  
Spring 2022**

**Course Description:**

This course provides an introduction to issues of historical causation, argumentation, and evidence, by exploring the life and impact of the prophet Muhammad on the Arabian Peninsula and West Asia in the early seventh century. We will begin with an introduction to the study of history and historical methods. From there, we will read a variety of primary and secondary sources in order to answer the question: Who was the Prophet Muhammad?

**Course Requirements:**

This is a seminar course. It is imperative that each student carefully reads all of the assigned readings on time and comes to class ready to participate in class discussion.

In this course, we will focus on the reading primary texts and thinking about how to interpret them. Learning how to read and interpret primary texts is a deceptively complex task, so we will carry out this charge in a variety of ways, through formal and informal writing and through class discussion. It is vital that you prepare all of the readings and be open to the difficulty of this seemingly simple task.

In addition, there will be a series of formal assignments designed to push you to evaluate and re-evaluate primary texts. The final assignment will be an annotated bibliography for a research project on Muhammad. Each of the writing assignments is designed to promote a different way of reading history and to help push you to locate historical information from primary sources. They can also all be seen as different ways of preparing you for the final annotated bibliography, which requires you to envisage a project that employs the skills we will develop in this course.

All assignments must be submitted to pass the course. There is no penalty for early assignments. Late assignments will be penalized a third of a letter grade for every day late. Again, there is no penalty for early assignments. Repeat, there is no penalty for early assignments.

**Grading:**

- Assignment One (10%) [Feb. 7]
- Assignment Two (10%) [Apr. 6]
- Assignment Three (10%) [Apr. 27]
- Primary Source Presentation (5%) [Mar 9, 11]
- Annotated Bibliography (35%) [May 13]
- Final Presentations (5%) [May 19]
- Participation (25%)

**Learning Outcomes:**

- Learn how to identify primary and secondary sources.
- Learn how to read and critically analyze primary and secondary sources.
- Engage with history as a craft and a discipline
- Understand a variety of different concepts and methods for investigating and explaining the past.
- Develop your skills of oral communication, dialogue, and classroom citizenship.
- Gain a thorough understanding of the life of the Prophet Muhammad and the challenges of describing this life.

**Course Policies:**

- I try always to prioritize belonging and generosity in our learning spaces. For both teachers and learners, this means respecting and remaining curious about others' individual experiences, traditions, and ideas; working toward critical distance from aspects of our own experiences; and maintaining openness to being unsettled by perspectives and experiences different from our own. We ask that all members of our course communities consider equity of access in the ways we speak and engage others, share materials for exploration and discussion, and use examples when contributing to class conversation.
- You are expected to attend every class. Two or more unexcused absences will have a negative impact on your final grade. Grinnell College offers alternative options to complete academic work for students who observe religious holy days. Please contact me within the first three weeks of the semester if you would like to discuss a specific instance that applies to you. If you miss a class, make sure you do the assigned readings and get notes from a classmate. Class preparedness and participation is a major factor in the final grade and unexcused absences will count against this final grade. Missing more than 30% of the classes with unexcused absences will result in a failing grade.

- We are undertaking this semester in the midst of what is known as the Covid Pandemic. The instructor will be happy to work with students on an individual basis to make up lost class time and work in the event of a covid-related extended absence. In the event this becomes necessary, we will work together to come to a fair and equitable solution.
- Please send all e-mail to [sabaelia@grinnell.edu](mailto:sabaelia@grinnell.edu). During the week, I will respond to within 24 hours. It may take longer to respond during the weekend. Feel free to send any questions you may have about the course, although I rather discuss substantive issues in person rather than via e-mail. uo
- Breaches of academic integrity will result in an official disciplinary process guided by the Dean's office. If you have questions about the Academic Honesty policy, the College's Academic Honesty policy is located in the Student Handbook available online [[link](#)]. The College expects that students are aware of and meet the expectations of this policy. Assignments in this course are not collaborative. If you have any questions, please see me before you turn in your work.
- The College supports students' efforts to meet both class obligations and religious ones. If you plan to observe religious holidays that coincide with class meetings or assignment due dates, please meet with me during the first two weeks of classes so that we may reach a mutual understanding of how you can meet these obligations.
- I strive to create a fully inclusive classroom, thus I welcome individual students to approach me about distinctive learning needs. In particular, I encourage students with disabilities to have a conversation with me and disclose how our classroom or course activities could impact the disability and what accommodations would be essential to you. You will also need to have a conversation about and provide documentation of your disability to the [Coordinator for Disability Resources](#), located on the ground level of Steiner Hall (641-269-3124).

### Textbooks

- John Arnold, *History: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000)
- Sarah Maza, *Thinking about History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017)
- Ma'mar ibn Rashid, *The Expeditions*, trans. Sean Anthony (New York: New York University Press, 2015). — **OPTIONAL**

### Class Schedule:

Note: Readings are written on the day they are due. For instance, John Arnold's *History: A Very Short Introduction*, 1–14 is to be read for class discuss on January 26<sup>th</sup>.

### Class 1: Jan 24

- Greetings, Introductions, Logistics.

## Class 2: Jan 26

- John Arnold, *History: A Very Short Introduction*, 1–14.
- Sarah Maza, *Thinking about History*, 1–9.
- Lauren Michele Jackson, “The 1619 Project and the Demands of Public History: *The New Yorker*, Dec. 8, 2021. [[link](#)]

## Class 3: Jan 28

- John Arnold, *History: A Very Short Introduction*, 15–34.

## Class 4: Jan 31

- Sarah Maza, *Thinking about History*, 10–44.

## Class 5: Feb 2

- Sean Anthony, *Muḥammad and the Empires of Faith*, “Introduction: The Making of the Historical Muḥammad,” 1–22. [[link](#)]

## Class 6: Feb 4

- Peters, F. E. “The Quest of the Historical Muhammad.” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 23 (1991): 291–315. [[link](#)]

## Class 7: Feb 7

Working, but different.  
**Assignment One Due**

## Class 8: Feb 9

- Kecia Ali “Historical Muhammad” in *Lives of Muhammad*.

## Class 9: Feb 11

- Ma‘mar ibn Rāshid, *The Expeditions: An Early Biography of Muḥammad*, trans. Sean Anthony (New York: New York University Press, 2015), 3–59. [[link](#)]

## Class 10: Feb 14

- Ma‘mar ibn Rāshid, *The Expeditions: An Early Biography of Muḥammad*, trans. Sean Anthony (New York: New York University Press, 2015), 60–108. [[link](#)]

## Class 11: Feb 16

- Ma‘mar ibn Rāshid, *The Expeditions: An Early Biography of Muḥammad*, trans. Sean Anthony (New York: New York University Press, 2015), 109–66. [[link](#)]

## Class 12: Feb 18

- Library Session 1 @ HSSC N2323

## Class 13: Feb 21

- John Arnold, *History: A Very Short Introduction*, 35–57.

## Class 14: Feb 23

- Sarah Maza, *Thinking about History*, 45–82.

Class 15: Feb 25

- Sarah Maza, *Thinking about History*, 83–117.

Class 16: Feb 28

- “Hadith” in Norman Calder, Jawid Mojaddedi, and Andrew Rippin, *Classical Islam: A Sourcebook of Religious Literature* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 55–86. [[link](#)]

Class 17: Mar 2

- “The Life of Muḥammad” in Norman Calder, Jawid Mojaddedi, and Andrew Rippin, *Classical Islam: A Sourcebook of Religious Literature* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 23–55. [[link](#)]

Class 18: Mar 4

- “A Tradition Invented: The Female Companions” in Asma Sayeed, *Women and the Transmission of Religious Knowledge in Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 19–62. [[link](#)]

Class 19: Mar 7

- Michael Lecker, “Glimpses of Muhammad’s Medinan Decade” in *Cambridge Companions to Muḥammad*, 61–79. (p-web)

Class 20: Mar 9

- Presentations on Primary Sources

Class 21: Mar 11

- Presentations on Primary Sources

Class 22: Mar 14

- John Arnold, *History: A Very Short Introduction*, Arnold, 58–79.
- *A Midwife’s Tale* [[link](#)]

Class 23: Mar 16

- Sarah Maza, *Thinking about History*, 118–156.

Class 24: Mar 18

- Library Session 2 @ Burling

Class 25: Apr 4

- “The Qur’ān.” in Norman Calder, Jawid Mojaddedi, and Andrew Rippin, *Classical Islam: A Sourcebook of Religious Literature* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 3–23. [[link](#)]

Class 26: Apr 6

- Visit to Special Collections to see Qurans. (@ Burling Basement)

· Assignment Two Due

Class 27: Apr 8

· “Letters: Isho‘ayb III,” “Apocalypse of Pseudo-Ephrem,” “Khuzistan Chronicle,” “Account ad 637,” “Chronicle ad 640,” and “Letter: Athanasius of Balad” in Michael Philip Penn, ed. and trans., *When Christians First Met Muslims: A Sourcebook of the Earliest Syriac Writings on Islam* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015) [\[link\]](#)

Class 28: Apr 11

· Stephen J. Shoemaker, *A Prophet Has Appeared: The Rise of Islam through Christian and Jewish Eyes: A Sourcebook* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2021): 47–51, 63–66, 85–87, 105–112, 139–40. (p-web)

Class 29: Apr 13

· “Muhammad and the Believers’ Movement” in Fred Donner, trans. “Muhammad and the Believer’s Movement” in *Muhammad and the Believers* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), 39–90. (p-web)

Class 30: Apr 15

· John Arnold, *History: A Very Short Introduction*, Arnold, 80–109.

Class 31: Apr 18

· Hayden White, “Historical Text as Literary Artifact” *Clio* (1974) 3.3: 277–303. [\[link\]](#)  
 · John Arnold, *History: A Very Short Introduction*, 110–123.

Class 32: Apr 20

· Sarah Maza, *Thinking about History*, 157–198.

Class 33: Apr 22

· Sarah Maza, *Thinking about History*, 199–234.

Class 34: Apr 25

· “Muhammad’s Heart: The Modified Body” in Michael Muhammad Knight, *Muhammad’s Body* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2021), 51-70. [\[link\]](#)

Class 35: Apr 27

Catching up and regrouping, a.k.a. working differently.

**Assignment Three Due**

Class 36: Apr 29

· Ma‘mar ibn Rāshid, *The Expeditions: An Early Biography of Muḥammad*, trans. Sean Anthony (New York: New York University Press, 2015), 3–59. [\[link\]](#)

Class 37: May 2

- Ma‘mar ibn Rāshid, *The Expeditions: An Early Biography of Muḥammad*, trans. Sean Anthony (New York: New York University Press, 2015), 60–108. [[link](#)]

Class 38: May 4

- Ma‘mar ibn Rāshid, *The Expeditions: An Early Biography of Muḥammad*, trans. Sean Anthony (New York: New York University Press, 2015), 109–66. [[link](#)]

Class 39: May 6

- Sean Anthony, *Muḥammad and the Empires of Faith*, “Muḥammad and Cædmon,” 204–234. [[link](#)]

Class 40: May 9

- Patricia Crone, “The Rise of Islam” in *Meccan Trade and the Rise of Islam*, 231–252. [[link](#)]

Class 41: May 11

- Markus Gross, “Early Islam: An Alternative Scenario of its Emergence” in *Routledge Handbook of Early Islam* (London: Routledge, 2017). [[link](#)]

Class 42: May 13

- W. Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad: Prophet and Statesman* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), 229–240. (p-web)
- **Annotated Bibliographies Due**

THURSDAY MAY 19, 2:00-5:00pm: FINAL PRESENTATIONS