WS 304-4: Women and Religion: Women in Islam

In this course we will study feminist and cross-cultural approaches to religion, and apply them to the example of women in Islam. Our consideration of this topic will include historical, anthropological, textual and experiential approaches, with emphasis on the voices of Muslim women in several cultures.

One of our main goals will be to become aware of the great diversity of women’s experience within this one religious tradition. In Islamic and non-Islamic societies throughout the world there are women of difference races and socio-economic classes practising different streams of Islam, and/or being affected by Islamic influences in their families and communities. We will also examine the diversity of viewpoints among Muslim women concerning issues of women’s rights and equality; and we will observe that the Islamic faith, like other great religious traditions, is always “in process”.

The last part of the course will be concerned with Muslim women in non-Muslim societies including Canada, and with events and issues involving Muslim women during the last year or so that have figures prominently in the international news media.

Required readings:
Ahmed, L. Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate. Yale University Press. 1993
Custom courseware – available at the university bookstore
On-line readings- list will be provided in class

Course requirements and Grading Structure:
15% - Attendance and participation
20% - Journal (free-style, based on readings, 1-2 pages x 10 installments)
  5% - Group presentation
20% - Literature reviews (about 3 pages each, 2 x 10%)
20% - In-class quizzes (multiple choice, 2 x 10%)
20% - Final take-home exam (short essay questions, approximately 6 pages)

Prerequisites: 6 credit hours in Women’s Studies including WS 101 and/or 102

The Department of Women’s Studies encourages clarity of thought and expression and good writing. Students will be evaluated on these skills in all courses given by the Department.