WS 304-4: Women and Religion - Islam

In this course we will interrogate popular and predominantly western conceptions of oppressed, victimised and inferior Muslim women from a feminist viewpoint. We will explore the 'woman question' in Islam from transnational and postcolonial perspectives in order to destabilize assumptions of binary opposites such as 'Islam versus the West', 'good versus evil' or 'active versus passive'. Furthermore, an overarching aim of this course will be to problematize notions of Muslim women's oppressions within a homogenous, unvarying, static Islamic culture/tradition.

By approaching issues regarding women and Islam from perspectives as explained above, we will undermine conventional, national and discrete boundaries in order to understand the complex subjectivities of Muslim women. We will explore emerging Islamic feminist approaches to these issues, as well as Muslim women's lived experiences and struggles. Thus, as we try to unpack the elements that constitute stereotypes of Muslim women, we will focus on the diverse and complicated acts of resistance and negotiation undertaken by Muslim women in Islamic and other societies. Weekly topics and readings will focus on varied issues of significance and concern, including the role of women in early Islam, their struggles with and within Islamic discourses, their role in contemporary times, especially in relation to the media, to society, state and family. This course is based on interdisciplinary interests and formulations incorporating the social sciences and humanities. It thus encourages students to draw on and pursue different disciplinary and research interests and goals.

Required Readings:
- A custom courseware will be available at the bookstore

Course requirements and Grading Structure
15% - attendance & participation
30% - three critical response papers: (10% for each paper of 1-2 pages)
15% - class presentation (4-6 minutes)
15% - mid term essay (2 -3 page short essay to be written in class)
25% - major essay (2000- 2500 words: a choice of topics will be provided by the Instructor)

Prerequisites: Six credits in Women’s Studies including WS 101 and/or WS 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.