

JEWISH-MUSLIM CULTURAL ENCOUNTERS
June 3 – July 1, 2021 • Thursdays 9:30-11:00 a.m.

Instructor: Sarah Levin

Course Description:

Although perceptions and politics of recent history often reduce Muslim-Jewish relations to one of conflict, Muslims and Jews have interacted and influenced each other for centuries. This course provides a sampling of the rich diversity of cultural interactions between Jews and Muslims, particularly in the Middle East and North Africa. Through a mix of texts, lectures, films, and music, we will explore (and sometimes blur!) boundaries of culture and religion. What are the possibilities of multifaceted identities, and how are identities defined not just in opposition but also in relation to each other, each informing the other in the process?

My hope is that this class will pique your curiosity to explore more, whether during the course of the class or beyond it. I will provide plenty of optional materials, so that you may choose your own adventures.

COURSE SCHEDULE & MATERIALS

(PDFs or links to be provided for all materials; syllabus subject to change upon instructor's discretion)

Week 1 JUNE 3: INTRODUCTION & OVERVIEW

READ for CLASS:

READ FOR FIRST CLASS:

Cohen, Mark. "The Origins of Sephardic Jewry in the Medieval Arab World," *Sephardic & Mizrahi Jewry: From the Golden Age of Spain to Modern Times*. Zion Zohar, ed. 2005.

SUPPLEMENTARY READINGS:

Josef (Yousef) Meri, "Historical themes: Muslim–Jewish Relations in the Medieval Middle East & North Africa," *The Routledge Handbook of Muslim-Jewish Relations*, 2016.

Orit Bashkin & Daniel J. Schroeter, "Historical themes: Muslim–Jewish Relations in the Modern Middle East & North Africa," *The Routledge Handbook of Muslim-Jewish Relations*, 2016.

Week 2 JUNE 10: LITERARY EXCHANGES

READ for CLASS:

Masha Itzhaki & Sobhi Boustani, "Modern Literature: Common Themes & Intersections," *The Routledge Handbook of Muslim-Jewish Relations*. 2016.

RECOMMENDED VIEWING:

Film: *Forget Baghdad: Arabs & Jews – the Iraqi Connection*, Samir, director. 2002.

On Vimeo, \$5 rental: <https://vimeo.com/ondemand/forget>

SUPPLEMENTARY READINGS & LISTENINGS:

Prose authors:

Almog Behar, "*Anā min al-Yahūdi*" (Arabic, "I Am of the Jews").

Short story translated by Vivian Eden & Reuben Snir.

Anton Shammas. Interview with the Palestinian author, explaining his choice to write in Hebrew and reading excerpts from his novel *Arabesques*:

<https://www.tvo.org/video/archive/anton-shammas>

OR transcript: <https://www.tvo.org/transcript/351107/ANTON-Shammas>

More on the languages & literatures:

Lital Levy. "Exchanging Words: Arabic Writing in Israel & the Poetics of Misunderstanding," in *Poetic Trespass: Writing between Hebrew & Arabic in Israel/Palestine*.

Yuval Evri, "Translating the Arab-Jewish Tradition: From Al-Andalus to Palestine/Land of Israel," *Essays of the Forum Transregionale Studien*, 2016.

Week 3 JUNE 17: MUSIC: CLOSE ENCOUNTERS

READ for CLASS:

Amnon Shiloah, "Encounters between Jewish & Muslim Musicians Throughout the Ages," *The Convergence of Judaism & Islam*.

RECOMMENDED VIEWING (& LISTENING):

Taqasim, Duki Dror, director, 1999. On Vimeo \$2 rental: <https://vimeo.com/ondemand/509>

El Gusto: Algeria Chaabi Musique, Safinez Bousbia, director, 2011

This is a fabulous film (so-called "Algerian Buena Vista Social Club" of Muslim & Jewish musicians), but unfortunately, I could only find it with automatic English subtitles, which aren't very good. If anyone finds a better version, let me know!

(You have to go to "auto-translate" in the subtitles/settings, and then select "English"):

https://video.search.yahoo.com/yhs/search?fr=yhs-ima-st_mig&ei=UTF-8&hsimp=yhs-st_mig&hspart=ima&p=%22El+Gusto%22+algeria&type=ff_q3000_A2CII_set_bfrq#id=1&vid=1edbd02ebff35b8839d7328151119aaa&action=click

You can also check out some of the short video clips in English on that page (or just listen to some of the music ones), such as this :

https://video.search.yahoo.com/yhs/search?fr=yhs-ima-st_mig&ei=UTF-8&hsimp=yhs-st_mig&hspart=ima&p=%22El+Gusto%22+algeria&type=ff_q3000_A2CII_set_bfrq#id=12&vid=3f77ac5239dc1f449279d96329f083a8&action=view

ZOOM CONCERT: SUNDAY JUNE 13, 9am (PDT).

Performance & conversation with Ziv Yehezkel, an acclaimed Israeli singer & composer who performs classical Arabic music (& sings in both Arabic & Hebrew). Register:

<https://jewish-israel-studies-center.northwestern.edu/events/arab-jewish-culture-series.html>

SUPPLEMENTARY READING:

Dwight Reynolds, "The Music of al-Andalus: Meeting Place of Three Cultures,"
The Handbook of Jewish-Muslim Relations. 2016.

Week 4: FOLKLORE: HUMOR, STEREOTYPES, CONFLICT & COOPERATION

READ for CLASS:

Sarah Levin, "Wit, Ruse, Rivalry, & Other Keys to Coexistence: Reflections of Jewish-Muslim Relations in Berber Oral Traditions," *North African Mosaic: A Cultural Reappraisal of Ethnic & Religious Minorities*, 2007.

SUPPLEMENTARY READINGS:

Matilda Koén-Sarano, *Folktales of Joha, Jewish Trickster*. 2003.

"Preface," "Introduction" by Tamar Alexander, and two tales.

Juha, Muslim versions: John Waterbury, *North for the Trade*, 1972. Excerpt.

A.V., "Juha, The Middle East's Heroic Everyman," *The Economist*, 2017.

<https://www.economist.com/prospero/2017/08/15/juha-the-middle-east-s-heroic-everyman>

Week 5: CINEMA: CONTACTS & BOUNDARIES

READ for CLASS:

Dinah Assouline Stillman & Aomar Boum, "Cinema: Muslim-Jewish Relations on Screen,"
The Routledge Handbook of Muslim-Jewish Relations. 2016.

RECOMMENDED FILMS:

Wedding Song, Karin Albou, director. Amazon Rental \$6:

<https://www.amazon.com/Wedding-Song-English-Subtitled/dp/B004I6CNOC>

Summer in La Goulette, Férid Boughedir, director.

Available for free on Kanopy.com (free to sign up on Kanopy through public library).

GENERAL SUPPLEMENTARY READINGS

Ibtissam Bouachrine & Judith L. Goldstein. "Muslim & Jewish Women: Historical & Cultural Contexts," in *The Routledge Handbook of Muslim-Jewish Relations*. 2016.

Mark Cohen, *Under Crescent & Cross: The Jews in the Middle Ages*.

Abdelwahab Meddeb, Benjamin Stora, eds., *A History of Jewish-Muslim Relations. From the Origins to the Present Day*.

Menachem Klein, *Lives in Common: Arabs & Jews in Jerusalem, Jaffa, & Hebron*.

Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, *Intertwined Worlds: Medieval Islam & Bible Criticism*.

Bernard Dov Cooperman & Zvi Zohar, eds., *Jews & Muslims in the Islamic World*.