The Islamic conquests that swept across the Near East, North Africa, and Central Asia in the seventh and eighth centuries CE remain one of history’s most transformative events. But what was it like to witness, experience, and participate in the early Islamic conquests? How did the Muslim conquerors justify their newfound dominion and how did their imperial ambitions shape the trajectory of early Islamic religion and its diverse expressions? Utilizing new historical methods for reading and interpreting the sparse contemporary and near-contemporary testimonies for this historical period, this course explore how these testimonies, both Muslim and non-Muslim, continue to challenge historians to revise the history of the Islamic conquests. Strong focus is placed on reading primary source materials in English translation; no prior background is required.

INSTRUCTOR  SEAN ANTHONY
Office: 309 McKenzie Hall
Office Hours: MW 1-3pm; or by appointment
Email: swanthon@uoregon.edu

Course Website. Please consult the course website regularly for announcements. The website is accessible via UofO’s Blackboard system (see http://blackboard.uoregon.edu). The site contains general course information, reading assignments, research guides, lecture handouts, study questions for discussion, paper assignments, visual images, links to other sites, etc.

Requirements and Grading
Books Required for Purchase (available at the Duck Store):

- Fred M. Donner, Muhammad and the Believers at the Origins of Islam (Cambridge, Mass., 2010)
- Andrew Palmer, The Seventh Century in the West-Syrian Chronicles (Liverpool, 1993)

Readings, Assignments, and Class Participation: Please consult this syllabus frequently throughout the quarter. It will serve as your guide for the readings and assignments necessary for you to participate in and benefit from class time to maximum extent possible. As is necessary, I will continue to update the content of the syllabus as needed, particularly the class schedule, as the quarter progresses.

Readings.
Much of the basic work you will be doing outside of class will focus on your readings. For most days, there are two types of readings present on the syllabus: primary source readings and supplemental readings. It is particularly important in this class to focus on the primary source readings—when you come to class at the beginning of the week, I expect that you will have read and taken notes for in-class discussion and questions on these assigned texts. Before each session, you must email to swanthon@uoregon.edu at least 3 questions about the primary source reading assignment.
Assignments:
The bulk of your grade for this course will be evaluated based on three assignments: an in-class presentation, a mid-term essay and a final essay written in response to prompts based off your readings, presentations, and lectures.

Your in-class presentations will be on primary sources readings in translation assigned in class and consists of two components. The first is the completion of the Textual Analysis Handout due the day of your in-class participation and to be distributed to your classmates and me. The second is a 15-20 minute, in-class presentation on the source and its historical significance to the modern study and understanding of the Islamic conquests.

All written work will serve as your attempt to express your own ideas in a medium-length essay (5 to 7 pages in length, 1.5 spaced, standard font such as Times New Roman or Garamond) on an assigned topic. These topics will require you to draw extensively upon the assigned readings and the ideas discussed in class and will be scrutinized and evaluated on the basis of the criteria of academic writing. Essays should be emailed to islamc.history.papers@gmail.com as a Word file by 5:00pm Pacific Standard Time on the due date.

Developing and mastering the ability to write critically and to engage historical events and persons with critical acumen is a difficult, but worthwhile, task. Even if you never revisit the topic of this course again, the skills you acquire in writing and improving your essays will serve you well for the rest of your life. I therefore beseech you to take time to write your essays well. Further instructions on class paper assignments can be found on the assignment handouts and course Grading Rubric.

Class Participation:
“80% of success is showing up.”
-Woody Allen

This class depends on you to function fully. If you do not participate in class discussions, do not present assigned articles, and fail to communicate to me any indication that you’ve read the texts (and such indications could be in the form of insightful observations or cantankerous bewilderment), then I will be compelled to give you a low-grade.

Grading Scheme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>15 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>25 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay 1</td>
<td>30 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay 2</td>
<td>30 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Learning Objectives

- Identify and employ historical methods and terminologies to understand societal and cultural change
• Develop an historical understanding of the Islamic conquest and the relevance of the transformations they inspired to the modern world
• Synthesize arguments from historical evidence and express them in formal prose.

Other class policies
Computers, cellphones, etc. Please, no texting, no email checking, no laptop/ipad/netbook usage in class. All of the readings you’ll need for class will be available in your course packet, and I’d much prefer you interact with your classmates and me rather than a machine.

Academic Honesty. All of the regular rules of the university apply. If you are unfamiliar with these, please do consult the Student Conduct and Community Standards at the Office of Student Life:
http://studentlife.uoregon.edu/StudentConductandCommunityStandards/tabid/68/Default.aspx

All the work and ideas that you hand in must be your own, and my policy towards plagiarism is one of absolute zero tolerance. If you are unsure of what plagiarism is, an excellent guide exists here at UO:
http://libweb.uoregon.edu/guides/plagiarism/students/

Attendance. This class is taught for your sake and your peers’ sake, so for Pete’s sake, please attend class! The quality of your classroom experience and those of your classmates depends on your commitment. Your grade will suffer if you do not attend, guaranteed.

Reference Works
A selection of basic reference dealing with Islamic history and civilization be found at the Knight Library and accessed via the library’s online resources. Below is a list of the most authoritative and useful:
• Encyclopaedia of Islam, 2nd edition; the gold standard of Islamic studies and abbreviated as EI. It is easily accessed online at: http://referenceworks.brillonline.com.libproxy.uoregon.edu
• Encyclopaedia of Islam THREE; the third edition of EI is underway but still in its infancy, most including articles falling under the letter ‘A’.
• Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History, ed. D. Thomas et al. (Leiden, 2009-2013)
• JSTOR: useful for essentially any class you’ll take here at Oregon, by logging into jstor.org via Oregon’s proxy server and/or at the library, you have access to a wealth of scholarly articles on Islamic history and civilization. If you’re looking for a place to find sources on the Internet, this should be one of your first stops (Wikipedia, while useful in some respects, tends to be VERY unreliable and/or ideological for early Islamic history).
CLASS SCHEDULE

Part I: Introducing the Islamic Conquests

Week 1
Tues Apr 01 Course Introduction and Organization
Thurs Apr 03 The Islamic Conquests and the Collision of Empires

READINGS:

Donner, 1-37.


Part II: The Conquered

Week 2
Tues Apr 08 First Impressions?

READINGS:


Thomas the Prebyter (wr. circa 640 CE) in Palmer, 5-24.

The Doctrine of Jacob the Recently Baptized


Thurs Apr 10 Pseudo-Sebeos and John of Nikiû

READINGS:


Week 3

---


2 [https://www.academia.edu/3187911/Sebeos_the_Jews_and_the_Rise_of_Islam](https://www.academia.edu/3187911/Sebeos_the_Jews_and_the_Rise_of_Islam)
Tues Apr 15  *Chronica Minora*: First Drafts of Seventh-Century History

READINGS:


*Maronite Chronicle* in Palmer, 29-35.

*Jacob of Edessa, Charts* in Palmer, 36-42.


Thurs Apr 17  Syriac Chroniclers’ response to the Islamic Conquests


Week 4

Tues Apr 22  Introduction to Christian-Muslim Dialogue Literature in the 7th-8th Centuries CE

READINGS:


*John Damascene, De Haeresibus*, trans. J. Sahas


G. J. Reinink, “The Beginning of Syriac Apologetic Literature in Response to Islam,” *Oriens* ⁴

³ [https://www.academia.edu/6304830/Can_Christians_do_dialogue](https://www.academia.edu/6304830/Can_Christians_doDialogue)
Thurs Apr 24 Three Disputations

READINGS:

*Disputation of the Monk from Bēt Ḥālē*, trans. David Taylor

*The Leo III - 'Umar II Correspondence*, trans. A. Jeffery


Week 5

Tues Apr 29 Introduction to Apocalyptic Literature

READINGS:

Daniel (NRSV)


Thurs May 01 Christian Apocalyptic Responses to the Islamic Conquests

READINGS:


Excerpt from *The Apocalypse of the Twelve Apostles*, ed. and trans. J. Rendel Harris (Cambridge 1900)

*Sermon of Pseudo-Ephrem on the End of the World*, trans. J. Reeves


---

Week 6

Tues May 06 Apocalyptic Responses to Muhammad’s Prophethood

READINGS:

*The Secrets of Rabbi Shimon b. Yoḥai*, trans. J. Reeves

*The Bahirā Apocalypse (East-Syriac Recension)*, trans. B. Rogemma


Part II: The Conquerors

Thurs May 08 The Succession to Muḥammad

READINGS:

Donner, 39-89.


Week 7

Tues May 13 The Early Conquest State

READINGS:

Donner, 90-144.


---

5 https://www.academia.edu/264837/Who_was_the_Shepherd_of_Damascus_The_Enigma_of_Jewish_and_Messianist_Responses_to_the_Islamic_Conquests_in_Marwanid_Syria_and_Mesopotamia

6 https://www.academia.edu/2940939/Muhammad_and_the_Monk_The_Making_of_the_Christian_Bahirā_Legend
Thurs  May 15       ‘Ali and Mu’awiya

READINGS:


Crone, *God’s Rule*, 17-34 “The First Civil War and Sect Formation”

Week 8

Tues  May 20      Mu’awiya and the Umayyads

READINGS:


Thurs  May 22      The Second Civil War: ‘Abdallāh ibn al-Zubayr and al-Mukhtār al-Thaqafi

READINGS:

Donner, 145-93.

Robinson, *ʿAbd al-Malik*, 11-48

Crone, *God’s Rule*, 70-86 “Shi’ites of the Umayyad Period”

Week 9

Tues  May 27      ‘Abd al-Malik and the Dome of the Rock

READINGS:


The Isrāʾ and Miʿrāj of the Prophet Muḥammad from Ibn Isḥāq, The Life of Muhammad, trans. A. Guillaume (Karachi, 1978), 181-7

Thurs May 29 God’s Caliphs, Arabization, and the Islamic State

READINGS:

Walīd II on the Caliphate, tr. P. Crone and M. Hinds

Stefan Heidemann, “The Evolving Representation of the Early Islamic Empire and its Religion on Coin Imagery,” in The Qurʾān in Context: Historical and Literary Investigations into the Qurʾānic Milieu, eds. A. Neuwirth, N. Sinai, and M. Marx (Leiden, 2010), 149-198,


Week 10

Tues June 3 Mawālī and the Problem of Islamization

READINGS:


Thurs June 5 The Fall of the ‘Arab’ Empire: The Hāshimite (or Abbasid?) Revolution

READINGS:

