American University of Beirut
Department of History and Archaeology
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Learning outcomes
This course is a survey of the Abbasid caliphate from its establishment in 750 to the Seljuk take-over of Baghdad in 1055.
Upon completion of this course you can expect to have acquired knowledge of:
The origins, interpretation and results of the Abbasid revolution, the militarization of the state, the emergence of specific institutions, the process of political decentralization, and the flourishing of cultural and scientific achievements.

In addition you will be expected to improve your skills in:
* Gaining a sense of historical change and methodologies.
* Analyzing primary texts and documents.
* Improve through class discussions constructive oral skills.
* Improve your writing skills.
* Improve your critical reasoning skills.

Resources Available to Students
Reading packet to be purchased from the AUB bookstore.
Web resources: http://www.fordham.edu/halsalls/book1k.html

Grading
Class participation contributes to 15 % of your final grade
The students are required to write a mid-term exam 35%
And a final exam: 50%

Grading for History majors who are required to write a 5-7 book-review, due at the beginning of the reading period.
A mid-term exam: 25%
A final exam: 35%
Book-Review: 25%
Class participation: 15%

Course Policy
This course has a lecture-discussion format. Regular and informed participation in class is essential. All students must come to class having read and reflected on the readings and are expected to participate actively in class discussion.
This course, in line with the university policy regarding academic honesty, considers any form of cheating a serious offense.
**Schedule**

*February 12*
Introduction

**Week I: The Abbasid Revolution**

*February 17* Historical and Geographical Context

*February 19* Origins of the Abbasid revolution: discussion of Frye’s article.

**Readings**


**Week II: The Abbasid Revolution and the Founding of a New Capital**

*February 24* The Success of the Abbasid Revolution

*February 26* The Founding of Baghdad: Discussion of the Topography of the City

**Readings**


**Week III: The Establishment of the State**

*March 3* Mansur and the Establishment of the Abbasid State
*March 5* The Barmakids

**Reading**


**Week IV: Golden Age**

*March 10* Harun al-Rashid
*March 12* The Abbasid Civil War: Discussion of El-Hibri’s Article

**Readings**


**Week V: Al-Ma’mun**

*March 17* Al-Ma’mun: Profile of a Statesman
*March 19* Al-Ma’mun: Cultural Achievements: Discussion of Cooperson

**Readings**

**Week VI The Caliphate of Samarra’**
March 24  Al-Mutasim and the Founding of Samarra
March 26  The Archaeology of Samarra’

Readings

**Week VII: Early Abbasid Culture**
March 31  Al-Jahiz, A Renaissance Man : Discussion of Risalat al-Qiyan
April 2  Poetry at the Early Abbasid Court

Readings
Hugh Kennedy, *The Court of the Caliphs*, 112-129.

April 7 ___________________________________________________MID-TERM

**Week VIII The Weakening of the Caliphate**
April 9  *The Anarchy of Samarra’ and the Revolt of the Zanj*
April 14  Internal Crisis and Revival : Discussion of Waines’ article

Readings

**Week IX The Islam of the Religious Elites**
April 21  The Formations of Sunni traditionalism
April 23  Sufism: Islamic Mysticism

Readings

**Week X Shiism**
April 28  The Origins and Early Development of Early Shiism
April 30  The Elaboration of Shii Doctrine

Reading
Week XI The Rise of Local Autonomies: The Buyids and the Hamdanids
May 5 The Buyids and the Renaissance of Islam
May 7 The Hamdanids, Byzantium and al-Mutanabbi

Readings

Week XII Where are Abbasid Women?
May 12 Women’s History
May 14 Abbasid discourse on Women and Gender

Readings

Week XIII Abbasid Institutions
May 19 Viziers and Chamberlains
May 121 The Muhtasib

Readings

Week XIV Revision
May 26 Revision