

Instructor: Dr. Yasir Yilmaz

Course title:

Islam and the West

Content and objectives

The presence of Muslims in Europe as permanent residents was unimaginable for Europeans until the recent past. However, the third and fourth generations of Muslims are born and raised across the old continent today. According to census reports of local governments, 14% of the population in Amsterdam are Muslims, while the number in Antwerp is 16,9% and in Berlin 9%. The quarter of populations in Birmingham and Bradford in England are also Muslim according to numbers provided by local authorities. Rotterdam and London have Muslim mayors since 2009 and 2016 respectively. Many other cities across Europe has remarkably high numbers of Muslim population. Many Muslims in Europe are permanent residents or citizens of their countries and most stay in their country of residence for a lifetime.

In light of these data, this course will have roughly two halves and two aims:

- The first half of the course (first six/seven weeks) tells the story of the relations between Muslim societies and Europe. Chronologically, this first half provides an overview of the interactions and exchanges between the two worlds from the birth of Islam in the seventh century to the Ottoman modernization in the nineteenth century. The aim of the first half is to show students that the history of Muslim-European encounters is not simply a history of conflict. In fact, just as twenty-first-century Europe is a safe home for millions of Muslims, the pre-modern Islamic empires were once homes for Christians and Jews.
- The second half of the course (second six/seven-week period) focuses on the present-day issues in Europe: In light of the most recent data and figures and with frequent references to the individual stories of many European Muslims, the second half of the course is designed to be a discussion platform about the circumstances and challenges surrounding Muslim lives in a modern and secular Europe.

The following are some of the questions that are broadly discussed during the semester:

- Are we today witnessing an unprecedented era in the relations between Islam and Europe?
- To what extent are the recent globally influential encounters and interactions between Europe and a large variety of Muslim actors a continuation of the past?
- Is the history of the relations between Europe worlds a story of conflict?
- In what areas did the two parties influence or contribute to each other's development?
- Are the Muslim refugees who flooded Europe in recent years a new phenomenon in the Old Continent?
- Does Turkey belong to Europe?
- How come London and Rotterdam have Muslim mayors, while non-Muslim mayors in Istanbul, Cairo, or Islamabad are inconceivable today?

I strongly encourage all students registered in the class to actively participate in the class and bring forward their personal perspectives on present-day issues regarding the Muslim presence in their country of origin and in the broader Western world.