Introduction to Islam, SW Asia & North Africa

May 20, 2008
GEOG 1982

Lecture Outline

• Islam
  – History & Facts
  – Distribution
  – Veiling
  – Political Islam
• History of SW Asia
  – 20th century
  – Arab Israeli Conflict
• Northern Africa
History of Islam

- Founded by the prophet Muhammad in 622 C.E.
- Islam is understood as an outgrowth of Judaism and Christianity (the 3 have a similar early history)
- Islam was dispersed
  - by Islamic empires 630-750 C.E.
  - by armies and traders 750-1700 C.E.
  - to Southeast Asia 1200-1600 C.E.
- Rules of conduct shaped country laws
Facts of Islam

• Holy book: Qur’an (Koran)
• 5 pillars of Islamic practice: One God, Daily prayer, Ramadan fast, Zakat (almmsgiving), Hajj (pilgrimage)
• Islamic religious law: shari‘a
• Sunni Muslims (85%)
• Shi‘ite (Shi’a) Muslims (Iran, Iraq, Lebanon)
• Extremely Diverse!!!!

More Facts of Islam

• No religious hierarchy or central administration
• Wide variety of interpretations
• Historically tolerant of other religions
• seclusion and veiling of women predate Islam
• Population of adherents: about 1.3 billion
Cartogram

http://www.worldmapper.org/images/largepng/1.png

Distribution of Islamic Population

30% of Islamic people live in SW Asia & N. Africa

http://www.worldmapper.org/display_religion.php?selected=564
Veiling
Seclusion in public space
Anonymity & privacy
Symbol of devout Muslim women
Fashion
Feminist choice?

Political Islam

- Religious leaders’ attempt to gain political power
  - E.g. Iran 1979 secular (authoritarian) government overthrown by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini
- Sometimes associated with Islamic Fundamentalism
- Sometimes peaceful, popular movements
- Often suppressed, causing violent response
- Radical Islamic fundamentalism thrives in chaotic conditions
  - forced relocation
  - rapid urbanization
  - poverty

20th Century History

- Divided up between France and Britain post-WWI (except Turkey)
- Bedouin tribes consolidated under Sheik Ibn Saud in 1932 – later became Saudi Arabia
- European & U.S. oil companies worked with local elites
- 1947 Israel was created
  - Zionists
  - Balfour Declaration - British support for Jewish national home in SW Asia
- Struggles over land and water
Arab-Israeli Conflict

- 1947 Partition
- 1949 Israel’s, Jordan’s, Egypt’s expansion
- Expansion of Israel
  - 1967 Six Day War
  - 1973 Yom Kippur War
  - Settlements
- UN resolution 242 (land for peace)
  - 1979 Camp David Accords
  - 1991 Madrid Peace Talks
  - 1993 Oslo Accords: Palestinian Authority gains some autonomy in West Bank, Gaza Strip
Arab-Israeli Conflict

- Fatah – party created by Yasser Arafat
- HAMAS – Islamic Resistance Movement
  - Won Jan. 2006 elections in Palestinian parliament
  - Labeled a terrorist organization by U.S.
- Gaza Strip – high levels of violence
- West Bank – water access conflicts

http://video.on.nytimes.com/?fr_story=33e167de3b2da40095a55a503ea2600d3faa3121
Lebanon

- Sunni – in power (backed by Saudi Arabia, U.S.)
- Hezbollah party (Shiite, majority, urban; backed by Iran, Syria)
  - [Link](http://video.on.nytimes.com/?fr_story=212bda606295550a1c277719bb6e67f7278)
- Last week: battles in Beirut
  - [Link](http://video.on.nytimes.com/?fr_story=7fa5b75d9a1b5e60865c34479744499ed27610d)
Northeast Africa (The Nile)

- Nile River, Lake Nasser
- Aswan High Dam (1970)
- Sudan
  - desert north, Muslim (Khartoum)
  - steppe middle, (SW) Darfur, Arab-speaking Muslim
  - swampy south, Christian & indigenous
- 1983 Muslim law enforced in Sudan, civil wars –
  - South 1983
  - Darfur 2003 [http://www.savedarfur.org/]

Northwest Africa (The Maghreb)

- Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, Western Sahara
  - Atlas Mountains (trigger rainfall on coast)
  - Sahara Desert (south)
- Algeria:
  - 1962 Independence
  - 1990s Structural adjustment programs
  - 1990s Civil war – targeted media, women
  - 1997 Moderate Islam party won election
- Oil: Algeria & Libya supply ¼ of EU’s oil
Terms from the book (ch. 6)

- Al Jazeera
- desertification
- Diaspora
- economic diversification
- Gulf War
- haj
- intifada
- Islam
- Islamic fundamentalism
- Israeli-Palestinian conflict
- Judaism
- OPEC (Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries)
- protectorate
- public spaces (in relation to veiling)
- Qur'an (or Koran)
- salinization
- seclusion
- secular states
- shari'a
- Shi'ite (or Shi'a)
- Sunni
- Zionists
- Gender roles & spaces (237-241)
- Western Domination & State Formation (230-231)