Islamophobia Is Racism

Resource for Teaching & Learning about anti-Muslim Racism in the United States

#IslamophobiaIsRacism Syllabus

Preface
Inspired by the #FergusonSyllabus, the #StandingRockSyllabus, the #BlackIslamSyllabus and others, this reading list provides resources for teaching and learning about anti-Muslim racism in the United States. Although “Islamophobia” is the term most recognizable in public discourse, it does not accurately convey the making of racial and religious “others” that fuels the forms of discrimination Muslims face in the United States. The term Islamophobia frames these forms of discrimination and their roots solely as a problem of religious discrimination. Calling this a “phobia” suggests that this discrimination is solely a problem of individual bias, which obscures the structural and systemic production of anti-Muslim racism.

This syllabus reframes “Islamophobia” as “anti-Muslim racism” to more accurately reflect the intersection of race and religion as a reality of structural inequality and violence rooted in the longer history of US (and European) empire building. Conceptually, a focus on anti-Muslim racism is connected to an analysis of history and forms of dominance – from white supremacy, slavery and settler colonialism, to multiculturalism and the security logics of war and imperialism – that produce various forms of racial exclusion as well as incorporation into racist structures. Our primary focus is on the manifestation and impact of anti-Muslim racism in the United States. At the same time, this syllabus insists on thinking about anti-Muslim racism as a global project that overlaps and intersects with the exclusion of other marginalized groups (e.g. Black, queer, Latinx, immigrant, indigenous, etc). It also connects the histories of various racial logics that reinforce one another, including anti-Muslim racism, anti-Black racism, anti-Latinx racism, anti-Arab racism, and anti-South Asian racism.

By focusing on understanding Islamophobia as anti-Muslim racism, this syllabus challenges the idea that the problem is one of individual bias and that simply knowing more about Islam will necessarily lead to a decrease in anti-Muslim racism. Instead, it suggests that learning more about how structures of violence, inequality, and war have produced anti-Muslim racism and discrimination and its wide-ranging impact on everyday life is essential in order to challenge its assumptions, logics, and practices. While the readings include pieces that address recent events like the 2017 “Muslim ban” executive order, they also show that similar policies extend to both earlier moments and other communities.
This is an interdisciplinary syllabus with social justice education as its objective. It is not meant to be an exhaustive or comprehensive list of resources or readings, but instead provides one possible curated list of teachable texts and materials that provide a good introduction to each section.

**Goals of Syllabus:**

1. Define anti-Muslim racism as an alternative to the concept of Islamophobia
2. Understand the relationship of race and religion to white supremacy through the racialized figure of the Muslim
3. Provide an intersectional and comparative analysis to anti-Muslim racism
4. Strategize ways to challenge anti-Muslim racism and resist white supremacy

The syllabus is organized by the following themes and topics, which move from broader framing issues to more specific examples. Later readings may benefit from the contextualization provided by earlier sections.

I. Race, Empire and Islam
II. The Production and Reproduction of Anti-Muslim Racism
III. The Impact of Anti-Muslim Racism
IV. Policing, Security and Anti-Muslim Racism
V. Resisting Anti-Muslim Racism
VI. Further Reading and Resources

This syllabus was built by Su'ad Abdul Khabeer, Arshad Ali, Evelyn Alsultany, Sohail Daulatzai, Lara Deeb, Carol Fadda, Zareena Grewal, Juliane Hammer, Nadine Naber, and Junaid Rana.

Thank you to Catherine Besteman, Louise Cainkar, Edward Curtis IV, Maryam Kashani, Zayn Kassam, Sherene Razack, Ihsan Sarfraz, Stephen Sheehi, Najeeba Syeed, Jessica Winegar for their contributions and feedback.

For comments please contact: IslamophobiaIsRacism@gmail.com

**PLEASE SHARE WIDELY.**
The #IslamophobiaIsRacism Syllabus

I. Race, Empire, Islam

What is the difference between Islamophobia and anti-Muslim racism? What are the historical roots of anti-Muslim racism? How can we understand anti-Muslim racism, anti-Black racism, and US empire-building together?

Orientalism

➢ Edward Said, On Orientalism (video).

The Long History of Anti-Muslim Racism


Chris Allen, “Towards a New Definition of Islamophobia,” in *Islamophobia* (Routledge, 2010).


*Malcolm X: Make it Plain* (PBS documentary).

**Race and Racialization**


“Islamophobia” by Rudy Francisco, Natasha Hooper, and Amen Ra, 2016 National Poetry Slam Finals (video).

**Anti-Black racism and anti-Muslim racism in the US**


“For Black Muslim students, a two pronged fight for solidarity,” PBS News Hour (video).

Yasiin Bey (aka Mos Def) force fed under standard Guantánamo Bay procedure (video).

**Anti-Muslim Racism as part of the War on Terror and US empire building**


Hisham Aidi, “‘Let Us Be Moors’: Islam, Race, and ‘Connected Histories,’” *Middle East Report*.


Sohail Daulatzai, *Perpetual War and Permanent Unrest: The Battle of Algiers After 9/11*


*Taxi to the Dark Side*, Alex Gibney, 2007 (film).

**II. Things that produce anti-Muslim racism**

This section examines the different institutions, policies, and discourses that produce anti-Muslim racism, including U.S. government policies and rhetoric, media practices, and liberal feminist, homonationalist, and right-wing Zionist discourses. How do each of these forms of practice or discourse contribute to anti-Muslim racism in the United States?

**The Islamophobia Industry/Funding/Govt Policies/State**

*Islamophobia Reports,* The Council on American-Islamic Relations.


➢ Stephen Sheehi, “Islamophobia as an Ideological Formation of US Empire” and “The Elite Foreign Policy Networks: How Islamophobia is not Just Prejudice,” In Islamophobia: The Ideological Campaign against Muslims (Clarity Press, 2011).

➢ Fear, Inc, Center for American Progress website that lays out funders and organizations.


➢ (T)error (film).

The Media and anti-Muslim racism

○ Pair with: “Reel Bad Arabs” documentary film (Jack Shaheen)


➢ Mohja Kahf, “The Pity Committee and the Careful Reader: How Not to Buy Stereotypes about Muslim Women,” in Arab and Arab American Feminisms, 2010, 111-123.


How feminism contributes to anti-Muslim racism


How homonationalism and pinkwashing contribute to anti-Muslim racism


Christian theology and anti-Muslim racism
➢ Kelly Baker, “‘Passing the Torch’: The Klan’s Brand in America,” in Gospel According to the Klan: The KKK’s Appeal to Protestant America, 1915-1930 (University of Kansas Press, 2011).

How right-wing Zionism contributes to anti-Muslim racism
➢ JVP’s Network Against Islamophobia “FAQ on U.S. Islamophobia and Israel Politics.”
➢ Palestine Legal’s report “The Palestine Exception to Free Speech.”

How panic around refugees contributes to anti-Muslim racism
➢ Nadia El-Shaarawi, “The Stories We Tell about Resettlement: Refugees, Asylum and the #MuslimBan,” Savage Minds.
  ○ paired with “The Racist Gift of Immigration and Citizenship Bans, Again” Savage Minds.
➢ “Donald Trump’s #Muslim Ban Sparks Outrage and Fear,” Al-Jazeera.
A Stray, Musa Syeed, 2016 (film).

III. The Impact of Anti-Muslim Racism

This section describes the impact and repercussions of anti-Muslim and anti-Arab racism and the specific examples of shari’a law panics and the so-called “ground zero mosque” in New York City. How has culture been used as a tool of systematic oppression and racialization of Muslims? What is the impact on Islam as a faith practice and Muslims as an identity in the United States?

General Impact
➢ Moustafa Bayoumi, “How Does It Feel To Be A Problem? Preface” in How Does it Feel to Be a Problem?: Being Young and Arab in America (Penguin, 2009).
➢ Nadine Naber, “Muslim First, Arab Second.” In Arab America: Gender, Cultural Politics, and Activism. (New York University Press, 2012).

Shari’a law panics
➢ Setting the Record Straight on Sharia: An Interview with Dr. Intisar Rabb, Sapelo Square.

“Ground Zero Mosque”

IV. Policing, Security, Surveillance, and Anti-Muslim Racism
As a broad rubric of law enforcement, policing refers to the tactics and policies used to administer security logics, including everyday police practices, surveillance, entrapment, and specific targeting of individuals and communities. How do these forms of policing change the contours of everyday life? What new boundaries are created and what are the kinds of shifts that happen in social structures? This section addresses these issues specifically in relation to the intersection of policing practices with anti-Muslim racism and their impact on Muslim communities in the United States.

General
➢ “Islam on Trial” Forum in the Boston Review of Books (2017) (a set of recent pieces that address many of the issues in this section in the context of the Trump presidency).

Policing and Prisons
➢ Hishaam Aidi, “Jihadis in the Hood: Race, Urban Islam and the War on Terror,” Middle East Report.

Calls for registration/NSEERS/ current exec order
➢ “The #MuslimBan Primer: Key Terms and Timeline,” Ajam Media Collective.
➢ National Teach-in on the Jan 2017 Executive Order (video).

CVE
➢ “Fact sheet on CVE,” Brennan Center for Justice, NYU School of Law.

FBI-law enforcement surveillance

➢ Moustafa Bayoumi, “Introduction: My Muslim American Life,” In This Muslim American Life: Dispatches from the War on Terror (New York University Press, 2015).
➢ Naz and Maalik (film).

Individual cases that highlight a range of issues

➢ “Reflections on Imam Jamil al-Amin” (H Rap Brown),” Sapelo Square.
  ○ Pair with: Black Muslim Politics: Hip Hop for Consciousness – The Imam Jamil Al-Amin Benefit Concert (video).
➢ Hatem Bazian, “Fighting for Palestine” (on Sami Al-Arian).
  ○ Pair with: USA vs. Al-Arian (film).
➢ Marc Lamont Hill, “Why Every Black Activist Should Stand With Rasmea Odeh.”
  ○ Pair with film “By the Dawn’s Early Light” and updated coverage “The Revival of Mahmoud Abdul Rauf” on ESPN.

V. Challenges to Anti-Muslim Racism and Resistance to White Supremacy

This section provides a non-exhaustive selection of examples of intersectional challenges to anti-Muslim racism, from a range of positions and media from cultural production to political organizing. Taken together, these pieces begin to answer the question: How are people resisting anti-Muslim racism? And how can we participate in that resistance?

Essays

➢ Mona El Ghobashy, “Quandaries of Representation” in Arab and Arab American Feminisms


Humera Afridi, “Terrorist Chic” in *Shattering the Stereotypes*.


**Comedy, Poetry, and Hip-hop**

Suheir Hammad, “First Writing Since,” in *Motion Magazine* and [DefPoetry reading](video).


Tina Zaman, “the str8 path: a coming out sequence.” In *Voices of Resistance: Muslim Women on War, Faith, and Sexuality*, ed. Sarah Husain (Seal Press, 2006).


Alia Sharrief feat. Aminah Bell "Black Heros" (video).

“Shugs and Fats” (video).

[Return of the Mecca: The Art of Islam and Hip-Hop](exhibition and catalog), curated by Sohail Daulatzai.

**Connections to Palestine**


“Free the P,” co-produced by Omar Offendum and Ragtop, compilation of spoken word and hip hop, featuring 24 different artists (audio).

[Voices of Exile: Immigrants and the First Amendment](film).

**Additional resources for resisting anti-Muslim racism**

"Speak Up: Responding to Everyday Bigotry," The Southern Poverty Law Center.

“What to do if you are witnessing Islamophobic harassment,” Maeril art blog.

“Anti-militarism organizing resources,” INCITE!

➢ “Hate Free Zone,” DRUM - Desis Rising Up and Moving.
➢ “The Sky is Ours: A Self-Care Primer for Black Muslims,” Muslim Wellness Foundation.

VI. Related syllabi/ collections of useful resources
➢ #BlackIslam syllabus
➢ Islamophobia Studies Journal (project of the Islamophobia Research and Documentation Project)
➢ JVP Network Against Islamophobia curricula