

# Western Civ and Its Diss Contents

by Hugh Fitzgerald



Looking for a teaching job in history? If you turned today to the main website listing such positions – [H-net.org/jobs](http://H-net.org/jobs) – here is what you would have found at about 12 noon:

- *Centre for Contemporary History Potsdam, Head of Department "Communism and Society", posted today*
- *Auburn University, Assistant, Associate, Full Professor African American Literature, posted today*
- *Duke University, Arabic Culture, posted today*
- *University of California – San Diego, Assistant Professor of Critical Muslim Studies, posted today*
- *University of California – Davis, Associate/Full Professor, posted today*

This turns out to be, when you click on the link for further information, a tenure position in African-American studies.

- *University of California – Berkeley, Assistant, Associate, or Full Professor – Modern Middle East/Arab World, posted today*
- *University of Southern California, Assistant Professor of Contemporary Chinese Literature and Media Studies, posted today*
- *Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens, Molina Curator for the History of Medicine & Early Science, posted today*

Not a teaching position.

- *Bradley University, Assistant Professor, African American Politics, posted today*
- *University of California – Riverside, Assistant Professor of Art and Material Culture of the Islamic World, posted today*
- *Cornell University, Islam in the Modern Middle East and North America, posted today*
- *Bowdoin College, Assistant Professor of Anthropology, posted today*

If you click on the Bowdoin College link, you find the *de rigueur* boilerplate of this age:

*We welcome applications from candidates committed to the instruction and support of **a diverse student population** and **those who will enrich and contribute to the College's ethnic and cultural diversity**. We value a **community** in which **students of all backgrounds** are warmly welcomed and encouraged to succeed. In your application materials, **we***

*encourage you to address how your teaching, scholarship, and/or mentorship may support our commitment to diversity and inclusion.*

- *University of California – Davis, Assistant Professor, Black Studies/Critical Race Studies, posted yesterday*
- *History Associates Incorporated, Cataloging Archivist, posted yesterday*

Not a teaching position.

- *Florida State University, Assistant Professor – Religions of South Asia, posted yesterday*

Hindu and/or Buddhist traditions in India.

- *Williams College, Tenure-track Assistant Professor, posted yesterday*

Tenure track Asst. Professor of Arabic Studies.

Here's part of the expanded description of this position at Williams:

*The Arabic Studies program at Williams College seeks to appoint a tenure-track Assistant Professor, beginning July 2018. ... The college and the program value teaching and research equally highly, and will expect the new colleague to contribute to the ongoing process of building our **vibrant** Arabic Studies program.*

*Arabic Studies is especially interested in candidates who are enthusiastic about contributing to the **rich and diverse** intellectual life of a campus made up of colleagues and students **from widely varying backgrounds**. Individuals from **groups that are underrepresented** in academia are particularly encouraged to apply.*

*Applications are due no later than September 20, 2017 and should include a cover letter, CV, and three letters of recommendation, at least one of which addresses the candidate's promise as a teacher. In the letter of application, we ask that **candidates speak to their ability** to work effectively with a student population that is **broadly diverse with regard to gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, sexual orientation, and religion.***

- Pennsylvania State University, Postdoctoral Scholar, African-American History (PSU #73737), posted yesterday*
- Williams College, Visiting Assistant Professor of Chinese, posted yesterday*
- Xavier University of Louisiana, Assistant Professor – African American Literature, posted yesterday*

I have changed nothing. I've simply reprinted the first nineteen announcements of job openings that appear today at [H-net.org/jobs](http://H-net.org/jobs), a site for those seeking college or university employment as a teacher of history.

I included the listings for two non-teaching jobs, the first a Cataloguing Archivist at "History Associates," and the second the "Molina Curator for the History of Medicine & Early Science at the Huntington Library," simply for completeness.

There were also two positions listed that did not include the subject matter to be taught. In both cases, I clicked on the link to find out more, and I've listed the subjects – one was for a tenured position in African-American studies at the University of California, the second for a tenure-track Assistant Professor in Arabic Studies at Williams – below the announcement. In both cases I thought it worthwhile to include a paragraph or two from the fuller descriptions of the jobs, so as to convey the full flavor of current academic life – in all its diverse inclusiveness and inclusive diversity,

until the cows come home.

To sum up: of the nineteen positions listed first today, 17 were for teaching jobs. Of those 17 teaching jobs, six, or more than a third, had to do with Arabs and/or Islam.

Another six had to do with African-American Literature, African-American History, African-American Studies, Black Studies/Critical Race Studies, Black Studies, African-American Politics.

There was one opening for all of India, ancient and modern: an assistant professor focusing on "South Asian Religions," that is, Hindu and Buddhist Studies.

There were two opening for China-related jobs: teaching Chinese language, and Modern Chinese Literature and Media Studies.

There was one opening for an Anthropology position, for the study of Native American or other indigenous peoples. Here is a fuller description, which like all of the jobs listed, is careful to mention the importance of, commitment to, celebration of, diversity and inclusiveness, or words to that effect:

*Bowdoin College's Department of Sociology and Anthropology invites applications for a tenure-track faculty appointment in Anthropology at the Assistant Professor level beginning fall 2018. We seek a cultural anthropologist whose research focuses on issues of **indigeneity**, sovereignty, the environment, and/or media in Native American or other indigenous communities. We are especially interested in candidates whose areas of geographic and topical specialization complement and broaden those now covered in the Department.*

*We welcome applications from candidates committed to the instruction and support of a **diverse student population and***

*those who will enrich and contribute to the College's ethnic and cultural diversity. We value a community in which students of all backgrounds are warmly welcomed and encouraged to succeed. In your application materials, we encourage you to address how your teaching, scholarship, and/or mentorship may **support our commitment to diversity and inclusion.***

While China merits one teacher of the language, and one non-language teaching appointment, and India merits one position on Hindu and Buddhist studies, the only aspect of American history that appears in these announcements is that involving African-Americans. Six positions are listed: African-American Literature, African-American and African Studies, African American Politics, Black Studies/Critical Race Studies, African-American History, African American Literature. Nothing about Colonial America, the Road to Independence, the Revolutionary War, the Constitution, the Westward Expansion, the Era of Good Feelings, the Civil War, Manifest Destiny, the Great Trusts and the Sherman Act, the Immigration From Europe (1880-1925), nothing about the Depression, the New Deal, World War II, America as a World Power, the Cold War, the Vietnam War, and so on.

Completely absent, too, from this sampling, is the history of Europe, from Classical Antiquity to the 21st century. No Greek city-states, no Periclean Athens, no Peloponnesian War, no Roman Empire to both rise and fall, no Dark Ages, no Middle Ages, no Crusades, no Renaissance, no Reformation, no Discovery and Conquest of the New World, no Louis XIV and the French Empire, no British Empire, no French Revolution, no Napoleonic Wars, no Revolutions of 1848, no Industrial Revolution, no Rise of Democracy, no.....well, you get the picture. Europe has fallen, it appears, pretty much off the academic map; its place has been taken by Diversity and Inclusion neither of which appears to include, or is made diverse by, courses about boring old white Europeans, and

Europe itself is in steady retreat as a subject of study in our universities.

Meanwhile, Islamic and Arabic studies appear to be very much in academic fashion. Six of the first seventeen listings for teaching jobs today – listed as of noon– are devoted to Arabic Culture, Critical Muslim Studies, the Modern Middle East, Art and Material Culture of the Islamic World, Islam in the Modern Middle East and North America, and Arabic Studies.

Almost every one of these announcements proclaims the vital importance of “diversity and inclusion” or, just to make things interesting, of “inclusion and diversity.”

A number of questions about all these Islam/Arab studies courses immediately present themselves.

Will those doing the selecting of teachers of Islamic history, or the history of the Middle East, have themselves be Muslims? Or even Arabs? Could candidates include Copts out of Egypt, or Maronites from Lebanon, provided they have a “distinguished scholarly record”? What about the many outstanding Israeli scholars of Islamic history – could they even be considered? Or, *mirabile dictu*, hired? Why does one have the uneasy feeling that the for the Muslims on the hiring committee, “only Muslims can teach about Islam”? Given what we know about Muslim attitudes toward non-Muslims, described in the Qur’an 98:6 as “the most vile of creatures,” and the “loyalty and disavowal for the sake of Allah”’ doctrine (*Al Wala Wal Bara*) how likely is it that, say, a Lebanese Christian would be chosen to teach a course on “Muslim and Non-Muslim In the Middle East,” which would offer a wider view – be more inclusive, stress the region’s historical diversity – than a view that reduces the Middle East, over the past 1400 years, only to its Muslim inhabitants?

Will there be non-Muslims on the hiring committees, who are themselves historians, not necessarily of Islam or of the

Arabs, who may sense the need for teachers who are not apologists? How does one prevent a closed circle, where Muslim apologists hire and promote only other apologists for Islam, both Muslim and, if they are like John Esposito, non-Muslim?

Faculty members and parents might wish to investigate what their college-age children are being taught about Islam. They might, for example, take a look at the course syllabi. What has been assigned, and what has been left out? Will there be any of the studies by the great Western scholars of Islam, such as those by Joseph Schacht and C. Snouck Hurgronje? Or by the great Arab scholars of Islam, such as Majid Khadduri, who wrote the indispensable *War and Peace in the Law of Islam*?

What about, more recently, that noted historian of Islamic peoples, especially of the Arabs and Turks, so feted in Istanbul, Bernard Lewis? Or should he not be assigned in courses because of his celebrated contretemps with Edward Said, which for many Muslims is evidence that Lewis is a neo-colonialist, Zionist, and all-purpose villain? Will, instead, John Esposito, Karen Armstrong, and others of that apologetic ilk be assigned in these courses? Anything is possible in this brave new world that has come into being on our campuses. Will the students studying Islam learn that Jihad is a never-ending duty, until the entire world is subjugated to Islam, and Muslims everywhere rule? Will Jihad itself be presented not as violence for the sake of Allah but, rather, as an “internal struggle,” to be a better Muslim, a claim based on a weak hadith that Muslim apologists are fond of quoting in support of a pacific Islam? Will students read, and study, the complete Qur’an, without tears, or will there be an attempt to divert their attention from the violence and hatred of Infidels with which the Qur’an is so disturbingly full?

I have heard stories of college courses on Islam where the teacher – an artful dodger, avoiding having to lecture by calculated use of videos – routinely takes up quite a few class sessions by showing videos of pilgrims performing the



entire Hajj, from the very start to the finish, with each detail of the journey being shown, and discussed in detail. It begins with shots of Muslims preparing across the globe – we see them, of all races, packing their bags excitedly, in Kuala Lumpur, in London, in Marrakech and Paris and Timbuktu and New York and Tehran and Baghdad and Berlin, and dozens of other places (the point being that Muslims are all over the world, the undeclared theme being Tomorrow-Belongs-To-Me), and then see them settling into their plane seats, their souls in upright position, and then arriving in Jeddah – or possibly Medinah – then it's on by coach to Mecca (where no Infidel is allowed under any circumstances to set foot), and we see the pious pilgrims settling into their lodgings, and then, the next day, suitably rested, starting on their hajj, changing into their white costumes walking widdershins seven times round the magic wonderstone draped in black cloth, and so on, pelting with pebbles the three walls at Mina, all the way to the finish, and the return trip, with scenes of landing where they had begun, beatific smiles on their faces. That's not the problem. The problem is that so much attention is given to the Five Pillars that there no time to discuss, no time even to mention, in some of these courses, the concept, and treatment, of the "dhimmi."

What will those hired to teach these courses on Islam and Arabic studies, or Islam ?"in the Middle East and North America," allow their students to read? Will they include on their syllabi books by the most articulate apostates from Islam, to see how they regard the faith, and what led them to leave it? Wouldn't that contribute to the kind of lively debate universities should welcome? One thinks of Ayaan Hirsi Ali, with *Nomad*, *Infidel*, and, especially, *Heretic: Why Islam Needs a Reformation Now*. Then there is Ibn Warraq, a longtime scholar of early Islam, author of, among many books, *Why I Am Not A Muslim*, *Christmas in the Koran*, and *The Islam In Islamic Terrorism*, who also deserves to be read, not least by devout Muslims who have been discouraged, all their lives, from the

habit of free and skeptical inquiry. Or will these courses be taught from the viewpoint not of a disinterested scholar, but only of the Believer?

This is not an imaginary problem. Some years ago, a Mexican student of my acquaintance complained to me about a course he had just taken, "Introduction to Islam," at a well-known Ivy League school. When he received back his final exam, with a grade he thought was far below what he deserved, he went to discuss it with the professor, a Muslim originally from the Middle East. He couldn't understand why he had received a C. The professor pointed to a sentence in the answer for which he received his lowest grade. That sentence read "Muslims believe that Muhammad went from Mecca to Jerusalem and back within 24 hours, supposedly on a fabulous steed, Al-Buraq." "There," said the professor. "I don't understand" said the student. "What is wrong with that?" "Right here, you write that 'Muslims believe that Muhammad,(pbuh) was carried into Heaven.' Are you questioning that? Do you think he didn't ascend into Heaven, didn't travel from Mecca to Jerusalem and back?" The student was too shocked to reply. "You are essentially saying that this story is a lie. And then you wrote that Muhammad (pbuh) 'supposedly' travelled on Al-Buraq? I almost think you were trying to deliberately offend me, and all Muslims. Under the circumstances I thought I was generous with the grade I gave you."

The student left, he told me, flabbergasted and speechless. I wonder how many similar teachers are now ensconced in tenured chairs.

How will the figure of Muhammad be handled in these courses? Will he be presented as the Model of Conduct and the Perfect Man, that is, as a devout Muslim sees him? And if so, will all the disturbing aspects of his life simply be omitted? What of the role he played in many assassinations, as he did at one remove by prompting his followers to kill those who had either mocked him, such as the 120-year-old Jewish poet Abu 'Afak, or

had defended those who did, such as Asma bint Marwan? Will his taking part in the killing of 600-900 bound members of the Banu Qurayza be mentioned? What about his marriage to little Aisha, consummated when she was nine years old?, Will Muhammad's raid on the inoffensive Jewish farmers in the Khaybar Oasis be mentioned? What about Muhammad's ordering the torture of Kinana, so that he would reveal where some valuables were hidden, and once he had done so, further commanding that he be killed? Will a course on Islam, which must also be a course on Muhammad, the central figure in the faith, include the episode with Saafiiya, the Jewish beauty from Khaybar, whom he raped on the evening of the day he had her father, husband, and brother killed? On what grounds will all this be left out?

And there is much more to cause concern. Will the sectarian split between Sunni and Shi'a be properly covered? What about the thesis, associated with the scholar and apostate Anwar Shaikh, that Islam is "the Arab National Religion"? Could those who maintain, with Shaikh, that Islam has been a vehicle for Arab imperialism, and there are now other non-Arab Muslims, including Berbers and Kurds, who do so, conceivably be hired, or if by some fluke they were hired, wouldn't they be told to not even discuss that damaging, because so obviously true, thesis about Islam? What will be taught about the spread of Islam, through both violence and conversion by many millions who became Muslims in order to avoid having to pay the Jizyah and satisfy other onerous conditions demanded of all dhimmis?

There may be ways to push back against this academic degrading, which does not affect only the teaching of Islam, but of many other subjects. We have to find out, as a civic duty and a matter of homeland security, how Islam, its texts, teachings, and history of conquests and subjugation, are now taught in our colleges. It should be possible for interested parties to monitor these classes – to obtain copies

of what is assigned as reading, to have students (or even parents) who share a justified alarm to sit in on, or even regularly audit, and take notes about, or otherwise record, the lectures given in these classes of Islamic or Arabic studies. If the results reveal deliberate misrepresentation of the texts and teachings of Islam, or either deny, or defend, the existence, easily confirmed, of misogyny, homophobia, and antisemitism in both the Qur'an and Hadith, this should be brought to the attention of other faculty, college administrators, and the wider public. To simply allow this sort of thing to continue, with the offending professors never having to worry about any consequences, would be a colossal dereliction of duty. Those who assume tenure protects them, no matter what meretricious nonsense, easily disproven, they may offer, have another think coming. So, as one example, consider what so satisfyingly happened to tenured "Professor" Ward Churchill. He lost his tenured post when he was discovered to have repeatedly plagiarized, and for other misdeeds.

As for poor neglected Western Civ, perhaps some day it will come back into fashion. You never know. I once had a student visit my office, look with astonished recognition at a copy of Plato's *Republic* on my bookshelf, and exclaim: "You've got that book, too? We had that in Western Civ. I loved Western Civ, but my boyfriend hated it."

In the meantime, if you want to get some sense of how fashionable Islamic and Arabic studies have become, and what kind of faculty members are likely being hired and promoted to teach those subjects, exhibiting the right kind of diversity and inclusion, prepared to teach not in a spirit of disinterested scholarly inquiry but almost certainly one of defender-of-the-faith apologetics, you might begin with this sampling, being nothing more than what was put up, just today, at [H-net.org/jobs](http://H-net.org/jobs).

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