

**Course convenor:**

Professor Jonas Otterbeck

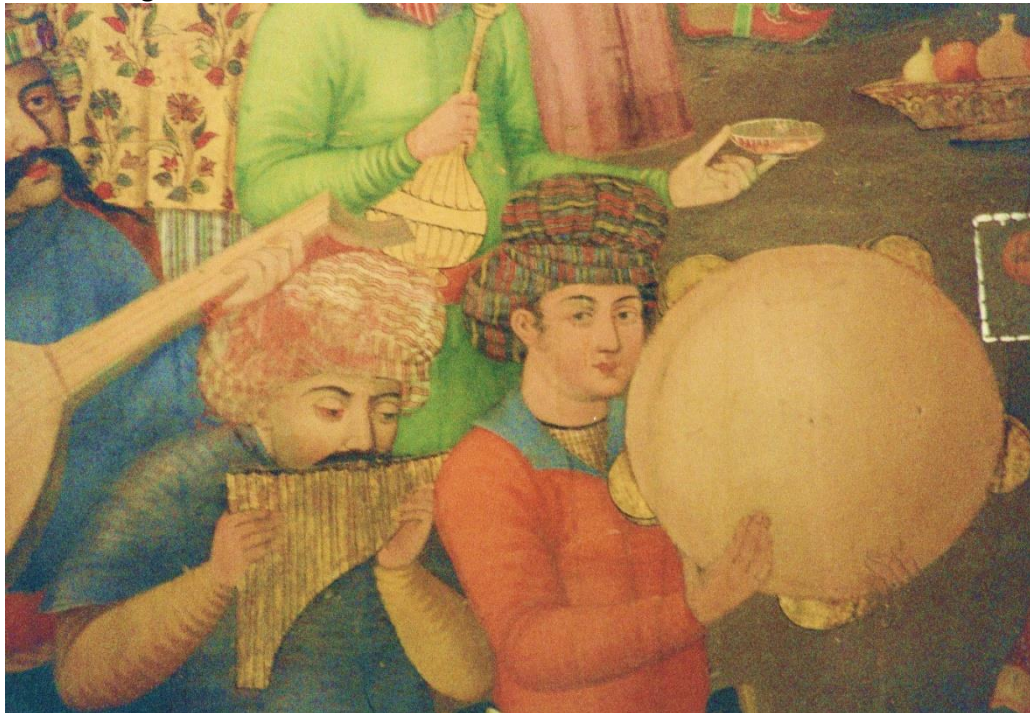
**Co-convenor (if applicable):** N/A

**Description of course convenor:**

Professor Jonas Otterbeck is a specialist in contemporary Islam. The three main topics of his research are Islamic views on music, Muslims in Europe and Contemporary Islamic ideas. Theoretically, he has worked within gender, culture and religious studies. In August 2021, Otterbeck's new book *The Awakening of Islamic Pop Music* will be printed by Edinburgh University Press. His current research is on Creativity and Islam.

**Course title:**

Music in Islamic Contexts

**Course image:**

Esfahan, Iran. Photo: Jonas Otterbeck

**Course date:**

20<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup>, 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> September 2021

**Course timing:**

13:00 PM till 15:30 PM BST each day

**Course description:**

The status of music in Islamic contexts is a hot topic that has produced a stream of books, articles, fatwas, lectures, online discussions, and concerns amongst families and individuals. Simultaneously, reactionary thinkers attempt to ban most music and encourage violence against musicians, whilst others are open to most musical expressions and are willing to discuss what they dislike. At the same time, music flourishes in all Muslim contexts, in both traditional and more contemporary forms.

This course offers a thorough contextualisation of the situation. It is divided into four main topics:

- The historical discussion about music in relation to Islam
- The contemporary discussion: From affirmative ethics to violence and censorship
- Contemporary music in relation to Islam: The world music stage
- Contemporary music in relation to Islam: From hip hop to metal

Each topic will be developed during a 2.5-hour session which includes a lecture and seminar, where all participants will get to discuss and voice their experiences for the benefit of the collective learning experience.

At the end of the course you will be:

- able to differentiate between the major trends in how music has been understood by Islamic intellectuals in history and in contemporary times
- aware of the names and book titles of the major contributors and contributions to the discussion
- able to illustrate and discuss the situation for musicians in Muslim contexts worldwide
- aware of many regional music styles and artists in relation to Sufi music, pop, rock, and hip hop
- able to analyse the use of Islam in contemporary music,
- aware of the importance of music in politics and identity construction.

**Academic resources required:**

*Literature*

Levine, Mark and Jonas Otterbeck (2021). "Muslim Popular Music: An Enchanted Century" in R. Lukens-Bull, M. Woodward (eds), *Handbook of Contemporary Islam and Muslim Lives*. Cham: Springer, 24p.

Otterbeck, Jonas (2021) *The Awakening of Islamic Pop Music*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Otterbeck, Jonas (2012). "Wahhabi ideology of social control versus a new publicness in Saudi Arabia", *Contemporary Islam*, 6 (3), 341–353.

Otterbeck, Jonas (2008). "Battling over the Public Sphere: Islamic Reactions on the Music of Today", *Contemporary Islam*, 2 (2), 211–228.

*Internet (recommended for browsing)*

Freemuse is an organisation working against the censorship of arts and music in particular

<https://freemuse.org/>

Muslim hip-hop is a longstanding portal to North American Islamic-themed music worth exploring <https://muslimhiphop.com/>

IslamQ&A is one of the oldest Sunni Salafi websites gathering fatwas. You will find several on music. IslamQ&A has a very forbidding attitude to music: <https://islamqa.info/en>

#### *Further readings*

Ackfeldt, Anders (2019). *Islamic Semiotic Resources in US Hip-Hop Culture*. Lund: Lund University.

Aidi, Hisham D. (2014). *Rebel Music: Race, Empire, and the New Muslim Youth Culture*. New York: Vintage Books.

Alagha, Joseph (2016). 'Shi'a Discourses on Performing Arts: Maslaha and Cultural Politics in Lebanon', in K. van Nieuwkerk, M. LeVine & M. Stokes (eds), *Islam and Popular Culture*, 151–168. Austin: University of Texas Press.

al-Faruqi, Lois Ibsen (1985). 'Music, Musicians and Muslim Law', *Asian Music* 17(1): 3–36.

Frishkopf, Michael (2002). 'Inshad Dini: Islamic Hymnody in Egypt', in *Garland Encyclopedia of World Music*, vol. 6. New York and London: Routledge.

al-Ghazali, Abu Hamid Muhammad ibn Muhammad (2002). *On listening to Music*. Translation from Persian by M. N. Abdus Salam. Great Books of the Islamic World, Chicago.

Ikhwan al-Safa' (2010). *Epistles of the Brethren of Purity: On Music. An Arabic Critical Edition and English Translation of Epistle 5*. Edited and Translated by Owen Wright. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

al-Isfahani, Abu al-Faraj (2008). *Kitab al-Aghani*. Vol. VIII. Beirut: Dar Sader.

Al Judai', Abdallah bin Yusif (2007). *al-Musiqa wa-l-Ghina'a fi Mizana l-Islam*. Beirut: Mu'assasatu l-Riyyan.

Kapchan, Deborah (2007). *Traveling Spirit Masters: Moroccan Gnawa Trance and Music in the Global Marketplace*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press.

Kirkegaard, Annemette, Helmi Järviluoma, Jan Sverre Knudsen & Jonas Otterbeck (eds), (2017). *Researching Music Censorship*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Lahoud, Nelly (2017). 'A Cappella Songs (*anashid*) in Jihadi Culture', in T. Heghammer (ed.), *Jihadi Culture: The Art and Social Practices of Militant Islamists*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

LeVine, Mark (2008a). *Heavy Metal Islam: Rock, Resistance, and the Struggle for the Soul of Islam*. New York: Three Rivers Press.

Nasr, Seyyed Hossein (1990). *Islamic Art and Spirituality*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Shehadi, Fadlou (1995). *Philosophies of Music in Medieval Islam*. Leiden: Brill.

Shiloah, Amnon (1995). *Music in the World of Islam: A Socio-Cultural Study*. Aldershot: Scolar Press.

Siamdoust, Nahid (2017). *Soundtrack of the Revolution: The Politics of Music in Iran*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

#### **Length of course:**

4 x 2.5 hour sessions

#### **Prerequisites:**

Participants should preferably have an awareness of the politics of some Muslim majority societies and a general awareness of global geography. A basic requirement of Islamic key concepts is preferable. For example, to know what a fatwa or an ahadith is would be an advantage.

**Course structure:** (the text below is an example)

*Day 1:*

- *Lecture 13:00 – 14:15*
- *15-minute Break*
- *Seminar 14:30 -15:30*

*Day 2:*

- *Lecture 13:00 – 14:15*
- *15-minute Break*
- *Seminar 14:30 -15:30*

*Day 3:*

- *Lecture 13:00 – 14:15*
- *15-minute Break*
- *Seminar 14:30 -15:30*

*Day 4:*

- *Lecture 13:00 – 14:15*
- *15-minute Break*
- *Seminar 14:30 -15:30*

**Course details:**

- Day 1: The historical discussion about music in relation to Islam

The lecture part will take you on a guided tour where all key arguments about the legality of music will be contextualized. During the seminar, we will examine some specific texts to learn even more about how the discussions are conducted. We will look into the writings of Ikhwan al-Safa, al-Ghazali and a contemporary scholar called Abdullahi Al Juda’I’. Texts will be provided for the seminar.

Day 2: The contemporary discussion: From affirmative ethics to violence and censorship

Beginning in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the context for music started to change with the introduction of recorded music and concert venues in many Muslim majority contexts. This has led to new discussions about music which includes both the rehearsal of prior arguments, but also new writing taking on new challenges. The lecture will present this, but also look at the political consequences of censorship laws, violence and political music. During the seminar, we will discuss the issue of politics and music in relation to contemporary and historical discussions on music.

Day 3: Contemporary music in relation to Islam: The world music stage

This time, the focus will be on musical expressions generally categorised as 'world music'. We will look into what is meant by that, analyse examples of regional world music, and discuss the role of Sufism in world music. During the discussion, we will discuss Sufi world music and hopefully be able to discuss other related topics, such as lyrics, aesthetics and individual careers. As our short courses generally engage people from many different cultural backgrounds, we hope that participants will be able to contribute and share their own rich examples.

Day 4: Contemporary music in relation to Islam: From hip hop to metal

The final lecture will be devoted to popular culture styles and how they have spread over the world and been adopted by musicians from all cultures. This has led to interesting phenomena, such as Islamic pop music and Islamic reggae but also other music genres that target Islam in their lyrics or imagery; made in both Muslim majority contexts and beyond. The discussion will be centred on contributions and conflicts, and we hope that participants will bring their own personal experiences and knowledge to the seminar.

**Further comments:** Tickets will cost £45 per student and £75 per professional participant