Diverse backgrounds affect the multiplicity of human experience in this world. Personal or group identity—defined by economic background, ethnicity, gender, language, race, religion, and sex—determines the parameters of our social, economic, and political relations. As heterogeneity becomes a norm in the societies of a globalized world, modern nation states are devising policies to address the needs of their diverse populations. In this course we will seek to examine questions: how did imperial administrations of the past deal with diversity? What did diversity mean in a historical imperial context?

The Ottoman Empire stretched over vast territories in three continents and ruled over a diverse population between fourteenth and twentieth centuries. Although the governing elite in the Ottoman Empire was Turkish-speaking Muslims, languages spoken in the empire included, but were not limited to, Arabic, Albanian, Armenian, Bulgarian, Kurdish, Ladino, Greek, Romanian, and Serbian. Christian, Muslims, and Jews lived under the banner of Ottoman sultans for centuries. Not everyone was equally privileged and well off. Menial laborers, peasants, slaves, sex workers were all part of the Ottoman society along with wealthy bankers, rich merchants, clergy, high-ranking civil and military officialdom.

Defining diversity broadly this seminar will explore how the Ottomans governed the differences among its diverse population. In addition to broader queries mentioned above, we will explore answers for specific questions such as: what were some of the issues that the Ottomans faced in governing a poly-ethnic and multicultural empire? Was the famous Ottoman millet system successful model for the coexistence of various religious groups? Or was its success simply a myth? By tackling questions of this sort, the seminar aims to shed a light on the historical experience of diversity in the Ottoman Empire.

Requirements and Grading

- 20% Attendance & Participation
- 20% Paper Proposal
- 50% Final Paper
- 10% Paper Presentation

Week 1: The Ottoman Empire
- Halil Inalcik, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age (1300-1600)*
Week 2: Theorizing Tolerance
- Karen Barkey "Aspects of Legal Pluralism in the Ottoman Empire" (pp. 83-108) at *Legal Pluralism and Empires, 1500-1850*, NYU Press (July 2013).

Week 3: Gender and Governance

Week 4: Diverse Sexualities

Week 5: Everyday Life

Week 6: Discussion of Paper Topics & Sources for Research
- Presentation by Mr. David Giovacchini (Middle East Collection, Van Pelt Library)
- Discussion of Research Paper Topics

Week 7: Reform and Equality
Week 7: Jewish Identity

Week 8: Christian Minorities

Week 9: Heterodoxy and Conversion

Week 10: Race

Week 11: A Better off Majority?

Week 12: Languages
- Linda T. Darling, "Ottoman Turkish: Written Language and Scribal Practice, 13th to 20th Centuries" (pp. 171-195) From: *Literacy in the Persianate World*

**Week 13 & 14: Presentation of Final Papers**