

CARLETON UNIVERSITY
College of the Humanities – Religion Program

The Qur'an
RELI 2330A (Winter 2023)

Prof. Ash Geissinger

Email: Ash.Geissinger@carleton.ca

Office: 2A37 Paterson Hall

Office Hours: Tuesdays 3-4 pm, or by appointment

Course Meetings: Tuesdays 11:35 am–2:25 pm (Southam Hall Room 413)

Course Description

This course is an introduction to the Qur'an, and to some of the academic approaches used to study it. Topics to be covered include: the history of the text, its historical context, the Qur'an's structure and literary style, its major themes, and some of the ways that the Qur'an has functioned as scripture in the lives of Muslims past and present.

NOTE: It is not the purpose of this course to attempt to persuade you to reject or adopt any particular religious viewpoint. This course presupposes that students accept that the Qur'an will be studied using the critical methods that are employed in a modern research university when examining any text, religious or otherwise.

Course Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

- explain what constitutes an academic approach to the study of the Qur'an
- correctly use the categories and terms employed by Quranic Studies scholars
- give an introductory overview of key debates in Quranic Studies today
- describe the structure, literary features, and main themes of the Qur'an
- discuss ways that different historical, socio-political and cultural contexts shape the meanings of scriptures for religious communities

Course Evaluation

Your final grade will be determined by the following:

- In-class quizzes and short essays (worth 12% each): 60%
- Final exam: 40%

Three quizzes and three short essays will be completed during class on the dates specified in the schedule below. The best five out of six grades on these will count towards your final mark

in the course. As regular and punctual attendance is obligatory, there is no make-up for any quizzes or essays missed, except in exceptional circumstances. Note that in order to pass this course, students must write the final exam and achieve a passing grade.

Course Evaluation Schedule

In-class Quiz #1: Jan. 24
In-class Essay #1: Feb. 7
In-class Quiz #2: Feb 14
In-class Essay #2: March 7
In-class Quiz #3: March 14
In-class Essay #3: April 4
Final Exam: Date TBD by Examination Services

Readings and Lectures

The following translation of the Qur'an is the one that we will use in this course:

The Qur'an: A New Translation, trans. M.A.S. Abdel Haleem (Oxford University Press, any edition).

It can be purchased online in paperback fairly inexpensively. While MacOdrum Library has a couple of electronic copies, acquiring your own hard copy is highly recommended.

Please bring this translation with you to every class—you are going to need it.

Links to all other assigned readings are posted on Brightspace. In order to access most of these, you will need to either be on campus or signed in to the library website.

Your ability to follow the lecture and participate constructively in class discussion depends on doing the readings before class. Both the readings and the lectures are essential components of this course. **The lectures cannot substitute for the readings—and vice versa.** The quizzes, short essays, and final exam questions are based on both the readings and materials discussed in class.

Electronic Devices

In order to help maintain a respectful environment that is conducive to learning, laptops and other electronic devices are only to be used in class for matters directly related to the course.

No photography, audio or video recording, or livestreaming of any kind is allowed in the classroom without the explicit permission of the instructor.

Intellectual Property

All course materials (including lectures, outlines, PowerPoint presentations, assignments, handouts, and similar materials) are protected by copyright. I am the exclusive holder of copyright and other intellectual property rights for all course materials. Students may take notes and make copies of course materials for their own educational use, but may not

reproduce or distribute lecture notes and/or course materials publicly for any purpose, commercial or otherwise, without my express written consent. Student work in this course remains the exclusive intellectual property of the student(s) who produced it, and will not be shared with anybody without their permission, except in accordance with Carleton University policies.

Email Policy

The Carleton communications policy states that faculty must conduct email communications with students only through Carleton email accounts. Therefore, be sure to send any emails to me through your Carleton email. I cannot respond to messages sent through any other account. Please be advised that students can typically expect a response to an email within 24-48 hours during the week, especially during high volume times (e.g. before tests).

University Statement Regarding Public Health:

It is important to remember that COVID is still present in Ottawa. The situation can change at any time and the risks of new variants and outbreaks are very real. There are [a number of actions you can take](#) to lower your risk and the risk you pose to those around you including being vaccinated, wearing a mask, staying home when you're sick, washing your hands and maintaining proper respiratory and cough etiquette.

Feeling sick? Remaining vigilant and not attending work or school when sick or with symptoms is critically important. If you feel ill or exhibit COVID-19 symptoms do not come to class or campus. If you feel ill or exhibit symptoms while on campus or in class, please leave campus immediately. In all situations, you must follow Carleton's [symptom reporting protocols](#).

Masks: Carleton has paused the [COVID-19 Mask Policy](#), but continues to strongly recommend masking when indoors, particularly if physical distancing cannot be maintained. It may become necessary to quickly reinstate the mask requirement if pandemic circumstances were to change.

Vaccines: Further, while proof of vaccination is no longer required as of May 1 to attend campus or in-person activity, it may become necessary for the University to bring back proof of vaccination requirements on short notice if the situation and public health advice changes. Students are strongly encouraged to get a full course of vaccination, including booster doses as soon as they are eligible, and submit their booster dose information in [cuScreen](#) as soon as possible. Please note that Carleton cannot guarantee that it will be able to offer virtual or hybrid learning options for those who are unable to attend the campus.

All members of the Carleton community are required to follow requirements and guidelines regarding health and safety which may change from time to time. For the most recent information about Carleton's COVID-19 response and health and safety requirements please see the [University's COVID-19 website](#) and review the [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\)](#). Should you have additional questions after reviewing, please contact covidinfo@carleton.ca.

COURSE SCHEDULE

WEEK 1 (Jan. 10): Introduction to the course

Studying the Qur'an in the discipline of Religious Studies

Historical-critical method

Examining the Qur'an's historical background: Late Antiquity

Readings:

- The Qur'an, Suras 1 and 112
- [Episode 82: What Writing Can Tell Us About the Arabs before Islam \(15minutehistory.org\)](https://www.15minutehistory.org/episode-82-what-writing-can-tell-us-about-the-arabs-before-islam/)

WEEK 2 (Jan. 17): The Qur'an's historical background (cont.)

Pre-Islamic Arabia

Readings:

- Suras 113 and 114
- Izutsu, *Ethico-religious Concepts in the Qur'an*, pp. 55-73.

WEEK 3 (Jan. 24): The Qur'an's textual history *In-class quiz #1

When did the text achieve closure?

Early Qur'an codices

Internal chronology

Readings:

- *Sahih al-Bukhari*, "Virtues of the Qur'an," hadiths 4986, 4987, 4990 and 4993.
- Sadeghi and Goudarzi, "San'a' 1 and the Origins of the Qur'an" (just read pp. 1-15).
- Ernst, *How to Read the Qur'an*, pp. 37-51.

WEEK 4 (Jan. 31): Early Meccan suras

Characteristics and style

Major themes

Readings:

- Suras 96, 73, 74, 53, 68, 80, 83, 84, 90, 92, 93, 94, 95, 97, 99, 101, 102, 103, 107, 108, 109 and 111
- Rustomji, "Early Views of Paradise in Islam," pp. 166-75.

WEEK 5 (Feb. 7): Middle Meccan suras ***In-class essay #1**

Characteristics and style
Major themes
Meccan suras and biblical traditions

Readings:

- Suras 15, 19, 23, 26, 27, 36, 43, 71 and 72
- Ernst, *How to Read the Qur'an*, pp. 105-120.
- I Kings, Chapter 10
- Stowasser, *Women in the Qur'an*, pp. 62-66.

WEEK 6 (Feb 14): Late Meccan suras ***In-class quiz #2**

Characteristics and style
Major themes
Punishment stories and their textual functions

Readings:

- Suras 6, 7, 10, 11, 13 and 14
- Saleh, "End of Hope: Suras 10-15, Despair, and a Way out of Mecca," pp. 105-23.

WEEK 7: Reading Week (no class)

WEEK 8 (Feb. 28): Narrative in the Qur'an

The Qur'an's retelling of the Joseph story

Readings:

- Sura 12
- Mir, "The Qur'anic Story of Joseph," pp. 1-15.
- Stowasser, *Women in the Qur'an*, pp. 50-56.
- Wieringa, "The Story of Yusuf and Indonesia's Islamisation," pp. 444-60.

WEEK 9 (March 7): Medinan suras ***In-class essay #2**

The impact of the *hijra*
Characteristics of Medinan suras
Key themes

Readings:

- Suras 22, 24, 33, 61, 62, 63, 65, and 110

WEEK 10 (March 14): Medinan suras (cont.) ***In-class quiz #3**

Medinan narrative
Prophetic authority
Legal passages

Readings:

- Suras 2 and 4
- Zahniser, "Major Transitions and Thematic Borders in Two Long Suras," pp. 26-55.

WEEK 11 (March 21): Quranic interpretation (tafsir)

Introducing classical tafsir: some key figures and interpretive approaches
Classical interpretation of quranic stories: the example of stories about Moses

Readings:

- Burge, "The Early Commentators of the Qur'an," pp. 223-34.
- Suras 18, 20 and 28
- Wheeler, "Moses," pp. 262-279.
- Stowasser, *Women in the Qur'an*, pp. 57-61.

WEEK 12 (March 28): Contemporary Quranic interpretation

The authority of the past in the present (or not): the case of Ibn Kathir's *Tafsir*
Quranic interpretation and contemporary issues
Interpretive certainty, interpretive ambiguity, or...?

Readings:

- Mirza, "Tafsir Ibn Kathir," pp. 245-52.
- Soage, "Shura and Democracy," pp. 90-103.
- Youssef, *The Perplexity of a Muslim Woman*, pp. 21-22, 47-51, 76-83.
- Bigliardi, "Snakes from Staves?" pp. 793-805.

WEEK 13 (April 4): The Qur'an, art, and ritual ***In-class essay #3**

Qur'an recitation as art and ritual practice
Healing, protection, communal identity

Readings:

- Talmon-Heller, "Reciting the Qur'an and Reading the Torah," pp. 369-80.
- Tirmidhi, Chapter on the Virtues of the Qur'an
- Dugan, "Ayat Al Kursi Round"

WEEK 14 (April 11): Course conclusion and review



Humanities

University Regulations for All College of the Humanities Courses

Academic Dates and Deadlines

This schedule contains the dates prescribed by the University Senate for academic activities. Dates relating to fee payment, cancellation of course selections, late charges, and other fees or charges will be published in the Important Dates and Deadlines section of the Registration Website.

Online Learning Resources

While online courses offer flexibility and convenience, they also present unique challenges that traditional face-to-face courses do not. [On this page](#), you will find resources collected by Carleton Online to help you succeed in your online courses; Learning Strategies and Best Practices, Study Skills, Technology and Online Interaction and Engagement.

Copies of Written Work Submitted

Always retain for yourself a copy of all essays, term papers, written assignments or take-home tests submitted in your courses.

Academic Integrity Policy

The University Academic Integrity Policy defines plagiarism as “*presenting, whether intentionally or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one’s own.*” This includes reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else’s published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one’s own without proper citation or reference to the original source. Examples of sources from which the ideas, expressions of ideas or works of others may be drawn from include but are not limited to: books, articles, papers, literary compositions and phrases, performance compositions, chemical compounds, artworks, laboratory reports, research results, calculations and the results of calculations, diagrams, constructions, computer reports, computer code/software, material on the internet and/or conversations.

Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to:

- any submission prepared in whole or in part, by someone else;
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, paraphrased material, algorithms, formulae, scientific or mathematical concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;
- using another’s data or research findings without appropriate acknowledgement;

- submitting a computer program developed in whole or in part by someone else, with or without modifications, as one's own; and
- failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another's work and/or failing to use quotations marks.

Plagiarism is a serious offence that cannot be resolved directly by the course's instructor. The Associate Dean of the Faculty conducts a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student, when an instructor suspects a piece of work has been plagiarized. Penalties are not trivial. They can include a final grade of "F" for the course.

[Academic Integrity Process](#)

Academic Accommodation Policy

Carleton University is committed to providing access to the educational experience in order to promote academic accessibility for all individuals.

Academic accommodation refers to educational practices, systems and support mechanisms designed to accommodate diversity and difference. The purpose of accommodation is to enable students to perform the essential requirements of their academic programs. At no time does academic accommodation undermine or compromise the learning objectives that are established by the academic authorities of the University.

Addressing Human Rights Concerns

The University and all members of the University community share responsibility for ensuring that the University's educational, work and living environments are free from discrimination and harassment. Should you have concerns about harassment or discrimination relating to your age, ancestry, citizenship, colour, creed (religion), disability, ethnic origin, family status, gender expression, gender identity, marital status, place of origin, race, sex (including pregnancy), or sexual orientation, please contact the [Department of Equity and Inclusive Communities](#).

Requests for Academic Accommodation

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request the processes are as follows:

Pregnancy obligation: write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For accommodation regarding a formally-scheduled final exam, you must complete the Pregnancy Accommodation Form ([click here](#)).

Religious obligation: write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details [click here](#).

Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: [The Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities \(PMC\)](#) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, contact your PMC coordinator to send me your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (if applicable). After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with me to ensure accommodation arrangements are made.

Please consult the PMC website for the deadline to request accommodations for the formally-scheduled exam (if applicable).

Survivors of Sexual Violence

As a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated, and where survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy. For more information about the services available at the university and to obtain information about sexual violence and/or support, visit:

<https://carleton.ca/equity/sexual-assault-support-services>

Accommodation for Student Activities

Carleton University recognizes the substantial benefits, both to the individual student and for the university, that result from a student participating in activities beyond the classroom experience. Reasonable accommodation will be provided to students who compete or perform at the national or international level. Write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist.

<https://carleton.ca/senate/wp-content/uploads/Accommodation-for-Student-Activities-1.pdf>

Grading System at Carleton University

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor, subject to the approval of the faculty Dean. Standing in courses will be shown by alphabetical grades. The system of grades used, with corresponding grade points and the percentage conversion can be found [here](#). Grade points indicated are for courses with 1.0 credit value. Where the course credit is greater or less than one credit, the grade points are adjusted proportionately.

Course Sharing Websites and Copyright

Classroom teaching and learning activities, including lectures, discussions, presentations, etc., by both instructors and students, are copy protected and remain the intellectual property of their respective author(s). All course materials, including PowerPoint presentations, outlines, and other materials, are also protected by copyright and remain the intellectual property of their respective author(s).

Students registered in the course may take notes and make copies of course materials for their own educational use only. Students are not permitted to reproduce or distribute lecture notes and course materials publicly for commercial or non-commercial purposes without express written consent from the copyright holder(s).

[More information](#)

Student Rights and Responsibilities at Carleton

Carleton University strives to provide a safe environment conducive to personal and intellectual growth, free of injustice and characterized by understanding respect, peace, trust, and fairness.

The [Student Rights and Responsibilities Policy](#) governs the non-academic behaviour of students. Carleton University is committed to building a campus that promotes personal growth through the establishment and promotion of transparent and fair academic and non-academic responsibilities.

Deferred Term Work

In some situations, students are unable to complete term work because of illness or other circumstances beyond their control, which forces them to delay submission of the work.

1. Students who claim illness, injury or other extraordinary circumstances beyond their control as a reason for missed term work are held responsible for immediately informing the **instructor** concerned and for making alternate arrangements with the instructor and in all cases this must occur **no later than three (3) working days after the term work was due**. The alternate arrangement must be made before the last day of classes in the term as published in the academic schedule. Normally, any deferred term work will be completed by the last day of term. In all cases, formative evaluations providing feedback to the student should be replaced with formative evaluations. In the event the altered due date must extend beyond the last day of classes in the term, the instructor will assign a grade of zero for the work not submitted and submit the student's earned grade accordingly; the instructor may submit a change of grade at a later date. Term work cannot be deferred by the Registrar.
2. In cases where a student is not able to complete term work due to illness or injury for a significant period of time/or long term, the instructor and/or student may elect to consult with the Registrar's Office (undergraduate courses) or Graduate Registrar (graduate courses) to determine appropriate action.
3. If a student is concerned the instructor did not respond to the request for academic accommodation or did not provide reasonable accommodation, the student should consult with the department/school/institute chair/director. If a mutually agreeable accommodation to complete course requirements prior to the course grade submission deadline cannot be achieved, the Associate Dean will become involved. If academic accommodation is not granted, and the student receives word **after** the academic withdrawal deadline, the student may submit a petition to the Registrar's Office (undergraduate courses)/Graduate Registrar (graduate courses) for a final grade of WDN (Withdrawn) in the course(s). If academic accommodation is not granted, and the student receives word **prior** to the academic withdrawal deadline, the student may elect to withdraw from the course(s).
4. Furthermore, if academic accommodation is granted, but the student is unable to complete the accommodation according to the terms set out by the instructor as a result of further illness, injury or extraordinary circumstances beyond their control, the student may submit a petition to the Registrar's Office (undergraduate courses)/Graduate Registrar (graduate courses). Please note, however, that the course instructor will be required to submit an earned final grade and further consideration will only be reviewed according to established precedents and deadlines. [More information of deferred Term Work](#)

Deferred Final Exams

Students who are unable to write a final examination because of a serious illness/emergency or other circumstances beyond their control may apply for accommodation. Normally, the accommodation for a missed final examination will be granting the student the opportunity to write a deferred examination. In specific cases when it is not possible to offer a deferred examination, and with the approval of the Dean, an alternate accommodation may be made.

The application for a deferral must:

1. be made in writing to the Registrar's Office **no later than three working days after the original final examination or the due date of the take-home examination**; and,

2. be fully supported by appropriate documentation and, in cases of illness, by a medical certificate dated no later than one working day after the examination, or by appropriate documents in other cases. Medical documents must specify the date of the onset of the illness, the (expected) date of recovery, and the extent to which the student was/is incapacitated during the time of the examination. The University's preferred medical form can be found at the Registrar's Office [here](#).

[More information on Final Exam Deferrals](#)
[Registrar's Office "Defer an Exam" page](#)

Financial vs. Academic Withdrawal

Make sure that you are aware of the separate deadlines for Financial and Academic withdrawal!

Making registration decisions in Carleton Central involves making a financial and academic commitment for the courses you choose, regardless of attendance. If you do not attend, you must withdraw in [Carleton Central](#) within the published deadlines to cancel your registration. A fee adjustment is dependent on registration being canceled within the published [fee deadlines](#) and dependent on your course load. A course dropped after the deadline for financial withdrawal will receive a grade of Withdrawn (WDN), which appears on your official transcript.

Even if you miss the deadline for financial withdrawal, you might decide to drop a course to avoid a failure or a poor grade showing up on your student record and bringing down your CGPA. It is your responsibility to drop the course via Carleton Central within the published [deadlines](#) (see Academic Withdrawal).

If you are considering withdrawing from a course, you may want to talk to an advisor first. Course withdrawal may affect your student status, as well as your eligibility for student funding, immigration status, residence accommodation and participation in varsity sports, etc. Additionally, remember that once you choose your courses, you must use the "Calculate amount to pay" button to determine the correct amount of fees to pay.

Carleton Central is your one-stop shop for registration activities. If you are interested in taking a course, make sure to complete your registration. Simply attending a course does not mean you are registered in it, nor is it grounds for petition or appeal.

Student Mental Health

As a University student you may experience a range of mental health challenges that significantly impact your academic success and overall well-being. If you need help, please speak to someone. There are numerous resources available both on- and off-campus to support you. Here is a list that may be helpful:

Emergency Resources (on and off campus): <https://carleton.ca/health/emergencies-and-crisis/emergency-numbers/>

Carleton Resources:

- Mental Health and Wellbeing: <https://carleton.ca/wellness/>
- Health & Counselling Services: <https://carleton.ca/health/>
- Paul Menton Centre: <https://carleton.ca/pmc/>
- Academic Advising Centre (AAC): <https://carleton.ca/academicadvising/>
- Centre for Student Academic Support (CSAS): <https://carleton.ca/csas/>
- Equity & Inclusivity Communities: <https://carleton.ca/equity/>

Off Campus Resources:

- Distress Centre of Ottawa and Region: (613) 238-3311 or TEXT: 343-306-5550, <https://www.dcottawa.on.ca/>
- Mental Health Crisis Service: (613) 722-6914, 1-866-996-0991, <http://www.crisisline.ca/>
- Empower Me: 1-844-741-6389, <https://students.carleton.ca/services/empower-me-counselling-services/>
- Good2Talk: 1-866-925-5454, <https://good2talk.ca/>
- The Walk-In Counselling Clinic: <https://walkincounselling.com>

Statement on Pandemic Measures

It is important to remember that COVID is still present in Ottawa. The situation can change at any time and the risks of new variants and outbreaks are very real. There are [a number of actions you can take](#) to lower your risk and the risk you pose to those around you including being vaccinated, wearing a mask, staying home when you're sick, washing your hands and maintaining proper respiratory and cough etiquette.

Feeling sick? Remaining vigilant and not attending work or school when sick or with symptoms is critically important. If you feel ill or exhibit COVID-19 symptoms do not come to class or campus. If you feel ill or exhibit symptoms while on campus or in class, please leave campus immediately. In all situations, you should follow Carleton's [symptom reporting protocols](#).

Masks: Masks are no longer mandatory in university buildings and facilities. However, we continue to recommend masking when indoors, particularly if physical distancing cannot be maintained. We are aware that personal preferences regarding optional mask use will vary greatly, and we ask that we all show consideration and care for each other during this transition.

Vaccines: While proof of vaccination is no longer required to access campus or participate in in-person Carleton activities, it may become necessary for the University to bring back proof of vaccination requirements on short notice if the situation and public health advice changes. Students are strongly encouraged to get a full course of vaccination, including booster doses as soon as they are eligible and submit their booster dose information in [cuScreen](#) as soon as possible. Please note that Carleton cannot guarantee that it will be able to offer virtual or hybrid learning options for those who are unable to attend the campus.

All members of the Carleton community are required to follow requirements and guidelines regarding health and safety which may change from time to time. For the most recent information about Carleton's COVID-19 response and health and safety requirements please see the [University's COVID-19 website](#) and review the [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\)](#). Should you have additional questions after reviewing, please contact covidinfo@carleton.ca.

Department Contact Information

Bachelor of the Humanities 300 Paterson Hall
CollegeOfHumanities@cunet.carleton.ca

Greek and Roman Studies 300 Paterson Hall
GreekAndRomanStudies@cunet.carleton.ca

Religion 2A39 Paterson Hall
Religion@cunet.carleton.ca

Digital Humanities (Graduate) 2A39 Paterson Hall
digitalhumanities@carleton.ca

Digital Humanities (Undergraduate Minor) 300 Paterson Hall
digitalhumanities@carleton.ca

MEMS (Undergraduate Minor) 300 Paterson Hall
CollegeOfHumanities@cunet.carleton.ca