

The Qur'an
RELI 2330-A (Winter 2012)

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 4:05-5:25 pm

Professor A. Geissinger

Office: Paterson Hall 2A41

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Course Description

This course is an introduction to the Qur'an, the sacred scripture of the Islamic religious tradition. Topics to be covered include: the history of the written text, major themes of the Qur'an, the idea of revelation, the Qur'an's structure and literary style, and quranic interpretation (*tafsir*), as well as the roles of the Qur'an in the lives of Muslims past and present. No previous knowledge of the Qur'an is assumed.

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

Course Textbooks

The following textbooks are required:

- 1 - Anna Gade, *The Qur'an: An Introduction* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2010).
- 2 - Jane Dammen McAuliffe, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to the Qur'an* (Cambridge University Press, 2008). [CCQ]
- 3 - *The Qur'an: A New Translation*, trans. M.A.S. Abdel Haleem (Oxford University Press, 2008).

- Links to the online readings are posted on WebCT. Please print out these readings and bring them with you to class.

Course Requirements

Your final grade will be determined by the following:

- In-class pop quizzes—20%
- Midterm exam—35%
- Written assignment—10%
- Final Exam—35%

NOTE: Both the readings and the lectures are essential components of this course. The readings cannot substitute for the lectures—or *vice versa*. It is expected that all students will come to class regularly, having already done the readings

The questions asked for in-class pop quizzes are drawn from the readings. They are my way of marking class preparation (meaning, whether you are doing the readings) as well as attendance. Students may choose to substitute up to three (3) of the pop quizzes with written responses to the assigned reading(s) for the day on which a given quiz is held (1½- 2 double-spaced, typed pages in length). Written responses must be submitted to the professor in hard copy by noon the next day in order to be counted for credit. Aside from these 3 written responses, no make-up tests or other substitutions for the in-class quizzes will be permitted under any circumstances.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1

Jan. 5—Introduction to the course; approaches to the study of the Qur'an

Reading: Rippin, "Western scholarship and the Qur'an," 235-251 [CCQ]

As you read: What is "Western scholarship" today? What is polemic? What is apologetic? What does taking a scholarly approach to the Qur'an involve? What are the differences between polemic and scholarship?

I. History and structure of the quranic text

Week 2

Jan. 10—The structure of the Qur'an; the Qur'an and the early Muslim community

Readings: Gade, 1-29; Surahs 1 (al-Fatiha, "The Opening"), Sura 113 ("Daybreak") and Sura 114 ("People")

As you read: How is the Qur'an arranged? What is a surah? What is an *ayah*? What is the *basmalah*? What is a *juz*? What is a *hizb*? What does "*dhu wujuh*" mean, and why is the Qur'an described in this way? According to Muslim tradition, where did the Qur'an come from, and how was it intertwined with Muhammad's career?

Jan. 12—The transmission and collection of the Qur'an: traditional accounts

Readings: Gade, 56-73; Bukhari, "Book of the virtues of the Qur'an," hadiths # 4702-4703 (link on WebCT)

As you read: According to Muslim tradition, how did the Qur'an come to be written down? Who is Zaid bin Thabit? Who is 'Uthman bin 'Affan, and what did he do? What is a *mushaf*? What are the *qira'at*? Who are the Seven Readers? Compare hadiths 4702 and 4703—what similarities and differences do you see?

Week 3

Jan. 17—The transmission and collection of the Qur'an: historical questions

Readings: Gilliot, "Creation of a fixed text," 41-57; Motzki, "Alternative accounts of the Qur'an's formation," 59-75 [both in CCQ]

As you read: What does Gilliot mean by a "prehistory of the Qur'an"? What questions does he raise about the traditions discussing early Muslims who collected the Qur'an? What are Companion codices? How do the alternative theories outlined in Motzki's article attempt to account for the Qur'an's origins and development?

II. The Qur'an's contents

Jan. 19—Major themes of the Qur'an

Reading: Madigan, "Themes and topics," 79-95 (CCQ); Surah 112 ("Purity of faith")

As you read: What are the major themes of the Qur'an? How does the Qur'an describe God? What is *iman*? What is *kufr*? What is *shirk*? According to the Qur'an, why does God send guidance to humanity, and by what means? How does Surah 112 conceptualize God?

Week 4

Jan. 24—Key themes in the early Meccan suras

Readings: Suras 78 ("The Announcement") to 111 ("Palm Fibre")

As you read: Look for the themes discussed in Madigan's article in these surahs, and give examples of each. What kinds of beings (on earth, in the supernatural realm) are mentioned? According to these surahs, where did human beings come from, and what is their purpose on earth? How should human beings behave? What examples of good and bad behaviour are given, and what is said to be the long-term consequences of each?

Jan. 26—Major themes: prophets and revelation

Readings: Gade, 29-55; Surahs 10 ("Jonah"), 14 ("Abraham"), 21 ("The Prophets"), 27 ("The Ants"), 46 ("The Sand Dunes")

As you read: According to the Qur'an, what is a prophet, and why are prophets necessary? What is *wahy*? What is *ilham*? Who is Gabriel, and what is his function? List the prophets named in the surahs assigned for today; what roles are they said to have played, and how did their communities treat them? What written revelations are they believed to have brought? Why are prophets and revelation major themes of the Qur'an?

Week 5

Jan. 31—Major themes: “signs” and “guidance”

Readings: Gade, 217-229; Surahs 30 (“The Byzantines”), 31 (“Luqman”), 34 (“Sheba”), 54 (“The Moon”) and 55 (“The Lord of Mercy”).

As you read: What does the Qur'an speak of as “signs”? What are humans supposed to do when confronted with signs? What kinds of imagery are used in describing signs in the Qur'an? Find examples in the surahs assigned for today. How do signs give guidance, and what does the Qur'an mean by “guidance”? How are people to act in accordance with it? What role might sound play in conveying these ideas?

Feb. 2—Major themes: eschatology

Readings: Gade, 239-267; Surahs 36 (“YaSin”), 39 (“The Throngs”), 40 (“The Forgiver”), 41 (“[Verses] Made Clear”), 51 (“Scattering [winds]”), 52 (“The Mountain”), 56 (“That Which is Coming”), 69 (“The Inevitable Hour”) and 76 (“Man”)

As you read: What is eschatology? How does the Qur'an describe the end of the world, and what are the images used? Why does the Qur'an give this topic such central importance? How does this theme relate to the ways that the quranic text describes God? How does the Qur'an describe the Hereafter? What are the main themes in Surah YaSin? Why do you think it would be recited for the dead?

Week 6

Feb. 7— *Mid-term exam

Feb. 9—Qur'anic language and style; Introducing quranic stories

Readings: Gade, 73-82, 229-239; Surahs 71 (“Noah”), 11 (“Hud”) and 7 (“The Heights”)

As you read: What are the main features of the Qur'an's language and style? How does the Qur'an tell stories? Why does it tell them? What does the way that the Qur'an tells stories suggest about its original audience? What is a “punishment story”? How do each of the surahs assigned for today tell the story of Noah? What similarities and differences do you see? What functions do these differences appear to have?

Week 7

Feb. 14—Quranic narrative: the story of Joseph in the Qur'an

Readings: Surah 12 (“Joseph”); Mustansir Mir, “The Qur'anic Story of Joseph: Plot, Themes, and Characters,” *The Muslim World* 76.1 (Jan. 1986), 1-15 (library resource: link on WebCT)

As you read: First, read Surah 12. Who are the main characters in the story? What happens? What are its main themes? Then, read Mir's article. What aspects of the surah does he draw attention to, and why?

Feb. 16—Quranic narrative: Abraham, Moses, Mary and Jesus in the Qur'an

Readings: Surahs 37 ("Ranged in Rows"), 18 ("The Cave"), 20 ("TaHa"), 28 ("The Story"), 19 ("Mary") and 3 ("The Family of 'Imran")

As you read: How does the Qur'an tell the story of Moses in Surahs 18, 20 and 28? What aspects of his story are highlighted in these passages? Why is Moses presented as a key figure in the Qur'an? How is Abraham presented? What do Surahs 19 and 3 say about Mary and Jesus? How are their stories told?

Week 8

Feb. 21—Winter Break

Feb. 23—Winter Break

Week 9

Feb. 28—Examining the structure of a Medinan surah

Reading: A.H. Matthias Zahniser, "The Word of God and the Apostleship of 'Isa: A Narrative Analysis of Al 'Imran (3):33-62," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 37.1 (Spring 1991), 77-112. (library resource: link on WebCT)

As you read: What is Zahniser trying to do in this article? Could his methodology be extended to cover the rest of the surah? Why or why not?

March 1—Introducing legal passages in the Qur'an

Readings: Surahs 22 ("The Pilgrimage"), 24 ("Light"), 4 ("Women"), 58 ("The Dispute") and 65 ("Divorce")

As you read: What are the legal concerns addressed in these surahs? How are these legal concerns linked in to other themes we have already examined (God, eschatology, prophecy/revelation, signs and guidance) in these passages? What aspects of life do these legal questions address?

Week 10

March 6—Legal passages in the Qur'an (cont.)

Readings: Surahs 2 ("The Cow"), 5 ("The Feast") and 9 ("Repentance")

As you read: What aspects of life do the legal passages in these surahs attempt to regulate? What do they suggest about the social, economic and political conditions of the addressees? How do these legal passages relate to the Qur'an's major themes? How is Surah 2 structured? Why do you think that it is placed near the beginning of the Qur'an?

III. Quranic interpretation

March 8—Qur'anic interpretation (*tafsir*)

Readings: Gade, 82-108; McAuliffe, "The tasks and traditions of interpretation," 181-209 [CCQ]

As you read: What types of issues did medieval Qur'an commentators seek to address? Who were their assumed audiences? What kinds of sources did they use for their interpretations? Who was Tabari? What is *ta'wil*? What is *tafsir bi'l-ishara*? What are *muhkamat* and *mutashabihat*? Who was Ibn al-Jawzi?

Week 11

March 13—Deriving law from the Qur'an

Readings: Gade, 109-159; Selections from al-Wahidi, *Asbab al-Nuzul* (link on WebCT)

As you read: What is an "occasion of revelation" tradition? What are they used for? What are "Meccan" and "Medinan" suras? Why does this distinction matter in traditional Muslim interpretation of the Qur'an? What is abrogation (*naskh*)?

March 15—Contemporary interpretations: pluralism

Reading: Sachedina, "The Qur'an and other religions," 291-309 [CCQ]

As you read: What is pluralism? What is exclusivism? What quranic verses does Sachedina highlight in the article, and what interpretations does he draw from them? What methods/sources is he using—and not using? Why?

Week 12

March 20—Contemporary interpretations: Muslim feminist rereadings

Reading: Barlas, "Women's readings of the Qur'an," 255-271 [CCQ]

As you read: Which feminist interpreters of the Qur'an are discussed in this article? What particular quranic verses does this article focus on, and why? What methods/sources do these authors use in their reinterpretations? What methods/sources do they not make use of, and why?

IV. The Quran in Muslim ritual, piety and artistic expression

March 22—Quranic recitation

Readings: Graham and Kermani, "Recitation and aesthetic reception," 115-141. [CCQ]

As you read: Why have Muslims memorized and recited the Qur'an, to the extent that its recitation became an art form as well as a field of specialized study? What is *tajwid*? What is an "aesthetic miracle," and why does the article describe the Qur'an in this way? What is *i'jaz*?

Week 13

March 27—The Qur'an and ritual

Readings: Gade, 171-216; Murad, "What the Prophet said about the excellent merits" (link on WebCT)

As you read: What roles does the Qur'an play in Muslim ritual? What is a *hafiz*? Why do Muslims memorize the Qur'an, and what challenges are involved in committing the Qur'an to memory? How is the Qur'an used in order to address mundane problems (such as illness)? According to the hadiths about the merits of various parts of the Qur'an, what are some of the benefits that these are said to provide?

March 29—Calligraphy

Readings: Blair and Bloom, "Inscriptions in art and architecture," 163-178 [CCQ]

As you read: What are quranic inscriptions? What types of buildings, sites and articles typically have them, and why? What quranic verses tend to be used for these purposes, and why? Which of the four possible explanations for the inscription in the mosque in Varamin seems most likely to you?

Week 14

April 3—The Qur'an and Muslim literatures

Reading: Knysh, "Multiple areas of influence," 211-233; Leemhuis, "From palm leaves to the internet," 145-161 [both in CCQ]

As you read: How has the Qur'an influenced different types of literature authored by Muslims (or by others living in Muslim-majority regions)? How has technology shaped how Muslims access the Qur'an down through the centuries? Why have Muslims translated the quranic text into other languages, and what issues are involved in so doing? How do you think that the internet might affect the ways that Muslims read and interpret the Qur'an in future?

April 5—conclusion of the course; review

***Written assignment due**

COURSE EXPECTATIONS AND POLICIES

Getting the most out of this course (and increasing your chances of doing well)

- **Do the assigned readings before coming to class.** That way, you will get a lot more out of the lecture, find it easier to take notes, and can contribute to the class discussion. Do not put off doing the readings until just before an exam.
- **Attend class regularly.** Classes often provide information and viewpoints not found in the assigned readings, and exams are based on the lectures as well as the readings. Any changes to the course schedule will be announced in class. Also, areas to focus on in your readings of primary sources will be identified and discussed.
- **Take an active part in class discussion.** Ask questions, and relate the readings to the lecture materials.
- **Take notes.** I usually give a brief outline of the lecture at the beginning of the class; use that as a guide to your note-taking. Pay special attention to information and ideas that relate to the major themes of the course. For tips on taking lecture notes, see: <http://www.csbsju.edu/academicadvising/help/lec-note.htm>
- **Note key terms.** The lectures will regularly call attention to key terms, which I usually write on the board; key terms also appear in the readings. Keep a list of such terms, making a note of their meaning and significance in the context of this course. On the exams, you will be asked to define and explain the significance of key terms.
- **Make use of the library.** In particular, make use of standard reference works, such as the *Encyclopedia of the Qur'an* and the *Encyclopedia of Islam*.

Exams

The mid-term and final exams will be made up of short-answer (i.e. define and explain the significance of...) and essay questions.

Please note that **there will be no make-up examination for the midterm**. If you must miss the midterm, you must choose whether to add the 35% value of this exam to your final exam, or to your written assignment. In order to qualify for either of these options, you must (1) provide adequate documentation which shows why you missed the midterm, and (2) fill out a form (available in my office) asking to have the normal grade distribution changed.

The Written Assignment

More detailed instructions for this assignment will be provided in class.

- Ensure that you know what **plagiarism** is, and how to avoid it. For details, see: <http://www2.carleton.ca/studentaffairs/academic-integrity/>
If you are in any doubt about what constitutes plagiarism, ask.
- **Assignments are due** in hard copy, at the beginning of class, on April 5. Late papers will be penalized by the deduction of 2% per day or partial day (including weekends), unless an extension has been arranged before the due date. Retroactive extensions will be granted only according to the rules of the university—personal and family emergencies (documentation must be provided). **Extensions will not be granted because of exam or essay conflicts, jobs, busy schedules, etc.**
- **Late papers** can be submitted to me in my office, or put in the drop box at the Religion and Classics Department (a large locked wooden box on the wall outside 2A39 Paterson Hall). Do not put them under my (or anyone else's) door; the cleaning staff may pick them up and throw them out.
- **Papers that do not follow** the directions outlined above and given in class (in content, methodology, appearance, length) may be returned ungraded for resubmission. In such a case, late penalties will accrue from the due date, regardless of when the problem was discovered.
- Be sure to **keep a hard copy** of your paper, and do a computer/disk back-up as well. Please submit the original for marking, not a photo-copy.
- **If you have never written a paper like this** before, you are strongly urged to contact the Student Academic Success Centre:
<http://www2.carleton.ca/sasc/writing-tutorial-service/writing-resources/>

Email communication

Please be aware that in order to ensure compliance with the federal privacy act known as FIPPA, Carleton communications policy states that faculty may only communicate with students through their Carleton Connect accounts.

REGULATIONS COMMON TO ALL HUMANITIES COURSES

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.

PLAGIARISM

The University Senate defines plagiarism as “*presenting, whether intentional or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one’s own.*” This can include:

- 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;
- submitting a take-home examination, essay, laboratory report or other assignment written, in whole or in part, by someone else;
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, or paraphrased material, concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;
- using another’s data or research findings;
- failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another’s works and/or failing to use quotation marks;
- handing in “*substantially the same piece of work for academic credit more than once without prior written permission of the course instructor in which the submission occurs.*”

Plagiarism is a serious offence which cannot be resolved directly with the course’s instructor. The Associate Deans of the Faculty conduct 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

GRADING SYSTEM

Letter grades assigned in this course will have the following percentage equivalents:

A+ = 90-100 (12)	B = 73-76 (8)	C - = 60-62 (4)
A = 85-89 (11)	B- = 70-72 (7)	D+ = 57-59 (3)
A- = 80-84 (10)	C+ = 67-69 (6)	D = 53-56 (2)
B+ = 77-79 (9)	C = 63-66 (5)	D - = 50-52 (1)

F	Failure. Assigned 0.0 grade points
ABS	Absent from final examination, equivalent to F
DEF	Official deferral (see “Petitions to Defer”)
FND	Failure with no deferred exam allowed -- assigned only when the student has failed the course on the basis of inadequate term work as specified in the course outline.

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean.

WITHDRAWAL WITHOUT ACADEMIC PENALTY

The last date to withdraw from **FALL TERM** courses is **DEC. 5, 2011**. The last day to withdraw from **FALL/WINTER (Full Term)** and **WINTER** term courses is **APRIL 5, 2012**.

REQUESTS FOR ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term because of disability, pregnancy or religious obligations. Please review the course outline promptly and 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. You can visit the Equity Services website to view the policies and to obtain more detailed information on academic accommodation at: carleton.ca/equity/accommodation/

Students with disabilities requiring academic accommodations in this course must register with the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) for a formal evaluation of disability-related needs. Documented disabilities could include but not limited to mobility/physical impairments, specific Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/psychological disabilities, sensory disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and chronic medical conditions. Registered PMC students are required to contact the PMC, 613-520-6608, every term to ensure that your Instructor receives your Letter of Accommodation, no later than two weeks before the first assignment is due or the first in-class test/midterm requiring accommodations. If you only require accommodations for your formally scheduled exam(s) in this course, please submit your request for accommodations to PMC by Nov.11, 2011 for the Fall term and March 7, 2012 for the Winter term. For more details visit the Equity Services website: carleton.ca/equity/accommodation/

PETITIONS TO DEFER

If you miss a final examination and/or fail to submit a **FINAL** assignment by the due date because of circumstances beyond your control, you may apply a deferral of examination/assignment. If you are applying for a deferral due to illness you will be required to see a physician in order to confirm illness and obtain a medical certificate dated no later than one working day after the examination or assignment deadline. This supporting documentation must specify the date of onset of the illness, the degree of incapacitation, and the expected date of recovery.

If you are applying for a deferral for reasons other than personal illness, please **contact** the Registrar’s Office directly for information on other forms of documentation that we accept.

Deferrals of assignments must be supported by confirmation of the assignment due date, for example a copy of the course outline specifying the due date and any documented extensions from the course instructor.

Deferral applications for examination or assignments must be submitted within **5 working days** of the original final exam.

ADDRESSES: (Area Code 613)

College of the Humanities 520-2809	300 Paterson
Greek and Roman Studies Office 520-2809	300 Paterson
Religion Office 520-2100	2A39 Paterson
Registrar's Office 520-3500	300 Tory
Student Academic Success Centre 520-7850	302 Tory
Paul Menton Centre 520-6608/TTY 520-3937	501 Uni-Centre
Writing Tutorial Service 520-2600 Ext. 1125	4 th Floor Library
Learning Support Service 520-2600 Ext 1125	4 th Floor Library