

**College of The Humanities: Religion
RELI 2330A: The Qur'an**

Professor A. Geissinger
Office Hours: Wednesdays 10:30-12:30 pm
or by appointment

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Office phone: (613) 520-2600, ext. 3108

Course Lectures: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 4:05-5:25 am (129 Paterson Hall)

Course Description

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

NOTE: It is not the purpose of this course to attempt to persuade you to adopt or reject any 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.

Learning Objectives

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

Required Course Readings

The following textbook is required:

- Nicolai Sinai, *The Qur'an: A Historical-Critical Introduction* (Edinburgh University Press, 2017).

This book is available through Haven Books (43 Seneca Street, Ottawa, www.havenbooks.ca). All other assigned readings are available through cuLearn.

The following translation of the Qur'an is highly recommended:

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

Course Evaluation

Your final grade will be determined by the following:

- In-class written responses—20%
- Translation comparison assignment—15%
- Mid-term exam—25%
- Report—15%
- Final exam—25%

NOTE: Both the readings and the lectures are essential components of this course. The readings cannot substitute for the lectures—or *vice versa*. Some course materials will only be covered in class. It is expected that all students will attend class regularly, having already done the readings and prepared to discuss them.

In-class written responses

The written responses deal with topics drawn from or related to the assigned readings. As one of the functions of these responses is to mark class preparation (meaning, whether you are doing the readings) as well as attendance, no make-up tests or other substitutions for them will be permitted under any circumstances.

The translation comparison assignment

For this assignment (2-3 pages max.), you will compare among several different English translations of a quranic verse or short passage, using the course readings as well as the *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'an* (available in MacOdrum Library) to assist you in analyzing your results. No knowledge of Arabic is expected. A selection of possible verses/passages will be posted on cuLearn, as well as more detailed instructions. It is due at the beginning of class on the date specified in the syllabus.

Exams

Please note that there will be no make-up examination. If you must miss the mid-term, you must choose whether to add its value to the written assignment, or to the final exam. 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 report

A list of possible topics for the written report (4-5 pages in length) will be posted on cuLearn, along with more detailed instructions. Reports must follow directions given. The assignment is due in hard copy at the beginning of class on the date specified in the syllabus.

COURSE POLICIES

Academic Integrity

“The integrity of a student’s academic work is critical to enabling student success. Students who violate the principles of academic integrity undermine the quality of their education and the value of a Carleton University degree.” (<https://carleton.ca/secretariat/wp-content/uploads/Academic-Integrity-Policy.pdf>)

All assignments are to be written in your own words, and you must acknowledge any idea or quotation that you take from another author by properly citing it, as well as by using quotation marks where appropriate. It is every student’s responsibility to know what plagiarism is and how to avoid it, which includes how to properly cite sources.

Laptops and other 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.

Extensions and late assignments

The written assignments are due in hard copy on the dates specified in the syllabus, at the beginning of class. Late papers will be penalized by the deduction of 5 marks per day or partial day (including weekends), unless an extension has been arranged before the due date. Retroactive extensions will only be granted personal and family emergencies (documentation must be provided).

Late papers can be submitted through 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.

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.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1

Sept. 6—Introduction to the course; studying the Qur'an in the discipline of Religious Studies; historical-critical method; issues involved in studying the Qur'an through translations

I. The history of the text

Week 2

Sept. 11—The Qur'an's form and structure

Readings: Sinai, 11-30; Suras: 1, 113, 114.

Sept. 13— Historical questions: Muhammad and the Qur'an; When did the text achieve closure?

Reading: Sinai, 40-54; Bukhari, "Book of the virtues of the Qur'an" [cuLearn].

Week 3

Sept. 18—Qur'an codices

Readings: Sinai, 30-34; Zadeh, "Touching and Ingesting" [cuLearn]

II. Meccan suras

Sept. 20—Suras from the Early Meccan period: themes and structure

Readings: Suras: 96, 73, 74, 53, 68, 80, 83, 84, 90, 92, 93, 94, 95, 97, 99, 101, 102, 103, 107, 108 and 111.

Week 4

Sept. 25—Literary coherence in Meccan suras

Readings: Suras 75, 55, 56, 19 and 37; Sinai, 81-97.

Sept. 27—Meccan suras: debates about historical contextualization

Readings: Sinai, 59-72; Suras: 100, 105, 106, 109, 85, 88, 89, 51.

Week 5

Oct. 2—The problem of chronology

Readings: Sinai, 111-132; Suras: 52, 70, 98, 109, 110, 112.

Oct. 4—Quranic narrative

Readings: Sura 12; Mir, "The Quranic Story of Joseph: Plot, Themes, and Characters" [cuLearn].

Week 6

Oct. 9—Meccan suras and biblical traditions

Readings: Genesis, Chapters 5-10 [cuLearn]; Suras 71 and 18.

Oct. 11—Structure and themes of suras from the Middle Meccan period

Readings: Suras 15, 23, 26, 36, 43, 50, 72.

Week 7

Oct. 16— Structure and themes of suras from the Late Meccan period

Readings: Suras 6, 7, 11, 14, 30, 32, 40.

Oct. 18 ***Midterm exam** (in class)

Week 8

Oct. 23 and 25—Fall Break (no classes)

III. Medinan suras

Week 9

Oct. 30—Introducing Medinan suras

Readings: Suras 22, 47, 57, 61, 62, 63, 65.

Nov. 1—Major themes of Medinan suras

Readings: Sinai, 188-209; Suras 4 and 9.

Week 10

Nov. 6—Structure in Medinan suras

Readings: Sinai, 97-104, Sura 2.

Nov. 8—Medinan suras and biblical traditions * **translation comparison assignment due**

Readings: Sura 3; Sinai 138-153.

Week 11

Nov. 13—Legal passages in the Qur'an

Readings: Suras 5 and 24.

I. The Qur'an as Muslim scripture

Nov. 15—Introducing classical Quranic interpretation (*tafsir*)

Reading: “Tafsir selections” [cuLearn]

Week 12

Nov. 20—Contemporary quranic interpretations

Reading: Ohlander, “Modern Qur’anic hermeneutics” [cuLearn]

Nov. 22—Gender and interpretive authority

Readings: Rutner, “Religious authority, gendered recognition”; Bauer, “‘The male is not like the female’ (Q 3:36)” [cuLearn]

Week 13

Nov. 27— Contemporary quranic interpretations: Muslim feminist rereadings

Readings: Scott, “A contextual approach to women’s right in the Qur’an: Readings of 4:34” [cuLearn]

Nov. 29—Science and contemporary quranic interpretation

Reading: Kaya, “Can the Quran support Darwin?” [cuLearn]

Week 14

Dec. 4—Qur’an recitation

Readings: Talmon-Heller, “Reciting the Qur’an and reading the Torah” [cuLearn]; Tirmidhi, “Chapter on the virtues of the Qur’an” [cuLearn]

Dec. 6 ***research report due** (in class)

Course conclusion and review



University Regulations for 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.

Academic Integrity at Carleton

Plagiarism is presenting, whether intentionally or not, the ideas, expression of ideas, or work of others as one's own. Plagiarism 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, art works, laboratory reports, research results, calculations and the results of calculations, diagrams, constructions, computer reports, computer code/software, and material on the internet. More information can be found [here](#).

Academic Accommodation Policy

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 the instructor 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 see the [Student Guide](#)

Religious obligation: write to the instructor 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 see the [Student Guide](#)

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).

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 is below. 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.

[Grading System](#)

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).

Statement on Class Conduct

The Carleton University Human Rights Policies and Procedures affirm that all members of the University community share a responsibility to:

- promote equity and fairness,
- respect and value diversity,
- prevent discrimination and harassment, and preserve the freedom of its members to carry out responsibly their scholarly work without threat of interference.

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.

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 (3.0) 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. More information is available [in the calendar](#).

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. [More information.](#)

The application for a [deferral](#) must:

1. be made in writing or online 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 [forms and fees page](#).

Any questions related to deferring a Final Exam or Final Assignment/Take Home Examination should be directed to the [Registrar's Office](#).

Withdrawal From Courses

Withdrawn. No academic credit, no impact on the CGPA. WDN is a permanent notation that appears on the official transcript for students who withdraw after the full fee adjustment date in each term (noted in the Academic Year section of the Calendar each term). Students may withdraw on or before the last day of classes.

Important dates can be found [here](#):

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. [More information](#)

Department Contact Information

College of the Humanities 300 Paterson Hall (613)520-2809

CollegeOfHumanities@cunet.carleton.ca

Drop box for CLCV, HUMS LATN GREK Term Papers and assignments is outside 300 P.A.

Greek and Roman Studies 300 Paterson Hall (613)520-2809

GreekAndRomanStudies@cunet.carleton.ca

Drop Box is outside of 300 P.A.

Religion 2A39 Paterson Hall (613)520-2100

Religion@cunet.carleton.ca

Drop box for RELI Term Papers and assignments is outside of 2A39 P.A.

Registrar's Office 300 Tory (613)520-3500

<https://carleton.ca/registrar/>

Student Resources on Campus

[CUKnowHow Website](#)

[Academics: From registration to graduation, the tools for your success.](#)