

The College of the Humanities
Religion Program: RELI 2330A Winter Term
The Qur'an: An Introduction

Instructor: Professor Mohammed Rustom
Office hours: By appointment

Meetings: Tues. 2:35 pm–5:25 pm
Lectures: Synchronous (via Zoom)

Note: Please send course-related emails to mohammed.rustom@carleton.ca. I will endeavour to reply to inquiries within twenty-four hours of receipt. Emails should be professional and free of solecisms.

Course Description

Although the Quran is one of the world's most widely read books, it is also one of its least understood books. In this course we will attempt to come to terms with the Quran through a careful study of its content, form, style, central themes, and process of canonization. Emphasis will also be placed on the Quran's vast interpretive tradition (*tafsir*), as well as the various ways in which scholars attempt to understand the Quran's textual history and its various stylistic and linguistic features.

Learning Objectives

- ❖ To understand the main aspects of the academic study of scripture
- ❖ To come to a better understanding of how scholars study the Quran
- ❖ To be able to critically analyze a wide variety of Quranic materials, including medieval and modern works concerned with Quranic interpretation
- ❖ To gain a firm grasp of academic writing and citation methods

Required Texts

Ibn 'Ajiba, *The Immense Ocean* (bookstore)
Articles in Quranic Studies = AQS (on course site)
S. H. Nasr et al (eds.), *The Study Quran* (bookstore)
Wills, *What the Qur'an Meant and Why It Matters* (bookstore)

Requirements

/20 Book Report
/40 Research Paper
/40 Take-Home Exam

Schedule of Lectures and Readings

Jan. 11 **The Quran and Religionswissenschaft**
 Readings
 Q 1 and 112 (with commentary)
 Nasr, "General Introduction"
 Izutsu, "The Islamization of Old Arab Virtues" in AQS

- Jan. 18 The “Event” of the Quran**
Readings
 Q 68, 73, 74, 89, 94, 96 (with commentary)
 Abdel Haleem, “Quranic Arabic”
 Donner, “The Historical Context” in *AQS*
- Jan. 25 The Early Revelations: Prophecy and Eschatology**
Readings
 Q 78–114 (excluding 89, 94, 96, 112) (78, 99, 101 with commentary)
 Rustom, “Qur’anic Eschatology” in *AQS*
- Feb. 1 Quranic Structure, Content, Style**
Readings
 Q 67–77 (excluding 68, 73, 74) (67 and 76 with commentary)
 Mattson, “How to Read the Quran”
- Feb. 8 The Textual History of the Quran**
Readings
 Q 40–66 (excluding 53) (36, 48, 54, 55, 59 with commentary)
 al-Azami, “The Islamic View of the Quran”
 Motzki, “Alternative Accounts of the Qur’an’s Formation” in *AQS*
- Feb. 15 The Quran and Islamic Law**
Readings
 Q 5 (with commentary)
 al-Tayyib, “The Quran as Source of Islamic Law”
- Feb. 22 Reading week; no class**
- Mar. 1 Israelite and Arabian Prophets in the Quran**
Readings
 Q 10–12 (12 with commentary)
 Rustom, “What is *Tafsir al-Qur’an bi’l-Qur’an*?” in *AQS*
- Mar. 8 Classical Quranic Exegesis**
Readings
 Q 19–23 (19 and 20 with commentary)
 Saleh, “Quranic Commentaries”
- Mar. 15 Sufi Approaches to the Quran**
Readings
 Q 18 and 53 (2:255, 18:60–82, 33:33, 53:1–18 with commentary)
 Chittick, “The Quran and Sufism”
 Michon, “The Quran and Islamic Art”

- Mar. 22 The Quran and the Islamic Intellectual Tradition**
Readings
 Q 13–17 (15 and 17 with commentary), 24 (24:35 with commentary)
 Damad, “The Quran and Schools of Islamic Theology and Philosophy”
- Mar. 29 Shi’i Approaches to the Quran**
Readings
 Q 33 (with commentary)
 Mayer, “Traditions of Esoteric and Sapiential Quranic Commentary”
- Apr. 5 The Quran and Other Religious Traditions**
Readings
 Q 2 and 4 (2:1–153 with commentary)
 Lombard, “The Quranic View of Sacred History and Other Religions”
- Apr. 12 The Quran in Contemporary Context**
Readings
 Q 3, 6–9 (3 and 9 with commentary), and 34–39 (36 with commentary)
 Dakake, “Quranic Ethics, Human Rights, and Society”
 Dagli, “Conquest and Conversion, War and Peace in the Quran”
- Book Report Guidelines**

Instructions

Carefully read Gary Wills’ book, *What the Qur’an Meant and Why It Matters*. The first part of the report must thoroughly summarize the book’s content (but not chapter-by-chapter). The second part must offer an analysis of the author’s underlying argument. This assignment is designed to provide you with an opportunity to think critically about this important book. It will also help you hone your academic writings skills. Moreover, close study of this text will prove to be very beneficial in preparing for the research paper and the take-home exam.

Method of Evaluation

The report is out of 20, and is worth 20% of the total course mark. For a “good” mark, you have to (1) follow the format guidelines to a tee; (2) offer an effective summary of the text; (3) demonstrate to me, through your analysis of the work in question, that you have given considerable thought to the material.

Due Date

Papers are due via email submission at **8 am on February 1st**.

Penalties

Reports not handed in on the due date will receive a mark of zero. Absolutely no exceptions will be made to this rule. In cases of illness, students must submit their self-

declaration within twenty-four hours of the termination of their illness, along with the missed assignment. Plagiarized papers will be handled by the Dean's office.

Format

1. Your report should be **six** full pages in length, double spaced, and written in Times New Roman font (size 12). It must use the normal page layout which comes standard on all Word programs, and page numbers must be on the bottom right corner of the page.
2. Diction is to be formal, and each piece is to be written in Canadian English. Grammar, syntax, spelling, and style must be impeccable. You may write in the first person.
3. At the top right of the first page of your report, include the course code, your full name, and the assignment's due date. This should be in Times New Roman font (size 12).
4. All paragraphs—except the first paragraph of your piece—must be indented. Every paragraph of the paper—including isolated quotations—must be justified. This can easily be done by using the “paragraph” function on your Word program.
5. There are to be no title pages, footnotes, endnotes, or bibliographies. If you want to directly cite the book or article in your report, provide the passages in quotation marks, and then, in brackets directly following the quoted passage, include the page number, preceded by a “p.” For example, (p. 29).
6. If you cite from the book or article, do not put your quotations in italics, bold, or a combination of the two. Sentences which are more than 3 lines long are to be isolated, single spaced, and reduced to font size 11 with their margins indented to 1 inch on both the right and the left. This can easily be done by using the “paragraph” function on your Word program.

Research Paper Guidelines

Sufi Qur'anic Exegesis

Instructions

1. Carefully read Ibn 'Ajiba's *The Immense Ocean*, which contains an English translation of a small part of his monumental commentary upon the Qur'an, as well as his general introduction to the work. The translation runs from pages 1-126, and this is the section upon which you are meant to focus. The text comes with the translators' introduction and notes. These should be consulted in order to make sense of the book's content.
2. After you have read this book, write an essay which addresses the following question: **What is the difference between Sufi Qur'anic exegesis and non-Sufi Qur'anic exegesis?** In order to answer this question adequately, you must be able to distinguish between Sufi Qur'anic commentary and the more common, exoteric type of scriptural exegesis. *The Immense Ocean* contains both types of approaches, and will thus provide you with all of the material that you will need in order to understand the difference between these two types of scriptural interpretation.
3. In addition to *The Immense Ocean*, you must also consult the commentary and essays in *The Study Quran* as well as other academic books and articles essential for your research. Essays based solely on *The Immense Ocean* will not be accepted. Thus, although your paper will offer a close reading and analysis of *The Immense Ocean*, you must also draw on the vast body of scholarship in Islamic studies in order to help you formulate your ideas and substantiate your thesis. Of course, you are expected to cite all materials (see citation guidelines below) where appropriate.

Evaluation

Essays are graded out of 40, and are worth 40% of the total course mark. Each essay will be evaluated in terms of (1) the quality of its language, including grammar, spelling, and style; (2) the clarity of its thesis, (3) the coherence of its argument(s), (4) evidence of original research and its careful integration into the fabric of the essay, and (5) faithful adherence to the content and formatting guidelines mentioned below.

Content

The paper must have a clear thesis which is defended consistently throughout. An essay without a thesis cannot receive more than a C+. A thesis essentially summarizes, in one or several sentences, the entire point of your essay. It is simply not enough to say "This essay is going to talk about x, y, and z"; you must be more specific than that. A good

thesis should be concise and straightforward, and must endeavour to prove a point: “In this essay, it shall be demonstrated that, because of x, y and z obtain.” You may not use the wording of this example in your essay.

Due Date

Essays are due via email submission at **8 am on March 22nd**.

Penalties

Reports not handed in on the due date will receive a mark of zero. Absolutely no exceptions will be made to this rule. In cases of illness, students must submit their self-declaration within twenty-four hours of the termination of their illness, along with the missed assignment. Plagiarized papers will be handled by the Dean’s office.

Form

1. Essays are to be ten full pages in length (excluding the title page and bibliography), double spaced, and written in Times New Roman font (size twelve).
2. Diction is to be formal, and the essay is to be written in Canadian English. Grammar, syntax, spelling, and style must be impeccable.
3. All paragraphs—except the first paragraph of your essay—must be indented. Every paragraph in your essay—including isolated quotations and footnotes—must be justified.
4. Use footnotes as opposed to endnotes and/or internal citations. Footnotes are to be single spaced and written in Times New Roman font (size ten). A bibliography must be appended to the essay. Your method of citation must follow the rules laid out in the *Chicago Manual of Style*.
5. When citing from the translation in *The Study Quran*, an internal citation as follows will suffice: Q 18:5. If citing from any part of the commentary on this verse, for example, simply insert a “c” in the internal citation: Q 18:5c.
8. Do not put your quotations in italics, bold, or a combination of the two. Sentences which are more than three lines long are to be isolated, single spaced, and reduced to font size eleven with their margins indented to one inch on both the right and the left. This can easily be done by using the “paragraph” function on your Word program.
9. Your essay must have a title page. All pages—excluding the title page and bibliography—are to be numbered at the bottom right corner of the page.

Take-Home Exam Guidelines

Content

The take-home exam will cover all of the course's lectures and assigned readings, from the first lecture to the last.

Dates

The exam questions will be made available on the course website on **April 5th**. The completed exam will be due via email submission at **8 am on April 26th**.

Structure

The exam is divided into two parts. The entire exam is out of 40, and is worth 40% of the total course mark.

Part I will consist of one question which must be answered and Part II consists of three questions, one of which must be answered. Each section is out of 20, and is worth 20% of the total course mark. The answers in both parts are response-type questions. This means that responses do not have to be in essay format. They simply have to address the questions asked in as thorough and thoughtful a manner as possible. Answers must be both descriptive and analytical.

Take-Home Exam Guidelines

Content

Test 2 will cover all of the course's lectures and assigned readings up to and including the class before the day the test is due.

Date and Test Length

The test questions are available on the course site. The test will be due via email submission at **8 am on March 8th**.

Structure

The test consists of two questions, both of which must be answered. The first question is out of twenty and the second question is out of twenty. The entire test, therefore, is out of 40, and is worth 40% of the total course mark. The test is comprised of response-type questions. This means that responses do not have to be in essay format. They simply have to address the question asked in as thorough and thoughtful a manner as possible. Answers must be both descriptive and analytical.