

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

Professor Ash Geissinger

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Office Hours: held online on Wednesdays
2:30-4:30 pm, or by appointment

Course Lectures: Thursdays, 11:35 am-2:25 pm
(blended; students registered in the course will receive an email with the online location and password for the course meetings several days before the first class)

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:

- distinguish between primary and secondary sources and engage with the Qur'an as a primary source
- distinguish among descriptive, explanatory, and prescriptive modes of discourse about 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

- All assigned readings are available through cuLearn. In order to access most of these readings anywhere other than campus, you must be signed in to the off-campus login on the library web page.
- 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:

- Reading responses (8 responses x 5 marks each)—40%
- Film response assignment—15%
- Midterm exam (take-home)—20%
- Final exam (take-home)—25%

NOTE: The assigned readings and the online classes are essential parts of this course. The readings cannot substitute for the online classes—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.

Reading responses

Ten classes in total (Sept. 17 and 24; Oct. 1, 8, 15, and 22; Nov. 12, 19 and 26; Dec. 3) will have reading response questions, which deal with topics drawn from or related to the assigned readings for that class. The response should be no more than 1-2 paragraphs in length. You can choose to answer any 9 of these (the lowest mark will be dropped). These questions will be announced during the online portion of the class, and you will have until 6 pm on that day to upload your answers. **These questions are to be your own individual work, and the wording must be your own** (the point is to demonstrate that you have understood the material; **do not** cut and paste answers from the course readings, or from any other source). No substitutions for the reading responses will be permitted.

The film response assignment

This assignment (4-5 pages max.) is a written response to a documentary film in light of two of the assigned readings. More detailed instructions will be posted on cuLearn and discussed in class. It is due on the date specified in the syllabus.

Exams

Both the midterm and the final exams will contain short answer and essay questions. They are take-home and open book. All answers must be in your own words (**do not** cut and paste from the course readings or from any other source). **Both exams are to be completed on your own.** Exams must be written and uploaded on the day and within the time frame specified.

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>)

The film response is 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.

Electronics policy during online class meetings

In order to help maintain a respectful environment that is conducive to learning, no photography, audio or video recording, or livestreaming of any kind is allowed during online class meetings without the explicit permission of the instructor.

Course materials and copyright

My lectures and course materials (including all PowerPoint presentations, outlines, videos) are protected by copyright. I am the exclusive owner of copyright and intellectual property of all course materials. As a student registered in this course, you may take notes and make copies of course materials for your personal educational use only. You may not copy or distribute lecture notes and/or course materials publicly for commercial or non-commercial purposes or allow others to do so without my express written consent.

Extensions and late assignments

The film response assignment is due on the date specified in the syllabus. Late assignments 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.

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

I. *Introducing the text and its history*

Sept. 10—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; the Qur'an's form and structure

Reading:

- Saeed, "Contextualizing," pp. 43-58.

Sept. 17— Historical questions: Muhammad and the Qur'an; when did the text achieve closure? transmission of the text; early Qur'an codices

Readings:

- Bukhari, “Book of the virtues of the Qur'an,” hadiths # 4986 and 4987
- Shnizer, “Sacrality and collection,” pp. 171-83
- Wild, “Canon,” pp. 136-39

II. *Meccan suras*

Sept. 24— Suras from the Early Meccan period: themes and structure; literary coherence

Readings:

- Suras: 96, 73, 74, 53, 56, 68, 80, 83, 84, 90, 92, 93, 94, 95, 97, 99, 101, 102, 103, 107, 108 and 111

Oct. 1—Early, Middle and Late Meccan suras: debates about historical contextualization; the problem of chronology; the Qur'an and poetry

Readings:

- Suras: 7, 19, 27, 30, 36, 52, 70, 85, 88, 89, 100, 105, 106, 109, 110 and 112
- Kermani, “Poetry and language,” pp. 117-29

Oct. 8—Quranic narrative and biblical traditions in Meccan suras

Readings:

- Suras 12, 71 and 18
- Genesis, Chapters 5-10

III. *Medinan suras*

Oct. 15—Introducing Medinan suras; structure and major themes; narrative

Readings:

- Suras 3, 4, 22, 47, 57, 61 and 65

***Midterm exam on Friday, Oct. 16** (it will be uploaded at 9 am. and you will have until 6 pm to complete it)

Oct. 22—Legal passages in the Qur'an

Readings:

- Suras 5 and 9
- Firestone, “Jihad,” pp. 376-88

Oct. 29—Fall Break (no classes)

Nov. 5—Qur'an recitation

Readings:

- Tirmidhi, "Chapter on the virtues of the Qur'an"
- Gade, "Recitation," pp. 577-90

IV. *The Qur'an as Muslim scripture*

Nov. 12—Introducing classical and contemporary Quran interpretation (*tafsir*)

*film response due today

Readings:

- Sura 49
- Interpretation of Q 49:13 in the *Tafsir al-Jalalayn* (English translation)
- Interpretation of Q 49:13 in the *Tafsir Ibn Kathir* (abridged English translation)
- Kinberg, "Contemporary ethical issues," pp. 543-61

Nov. 19—Contemporary Qur'an interpretation and science: human origins

Readings:

- Kaya, "Can the Quran support Darwin?" pp. 357-70
- Arpagus, "The position of woman in creation: A quranic perspective," pp. 115-32

Nov. 26—Gender and interpretive authority, past and present

Readings:

- Bauer, "'The male is not like the female' (Q 3:36)," pp. 637-54
- Rutner, "Religious authority, gendered recognition," pp. 24-41

Dec. 3—Qur'an interpretation, Islam, and other religions

Readings:

- Sirry, "'Compete with one another in good works,'" pp. 423-38
- Lamptey, "From sexual difference to religious difference," pp. 231-46

Dec. 10—Course conclusion and review

***Take-home Final Exam** (it will be uploaded on Tuesday, Dec. 15 at 9 am. and you will have until 4 pm on Dec. 23 to upload your completed exam)



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 at Carleton

The University Senate defines **plagiarism** as “*presenting, whether intentionally 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 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 Policy](#)

[Academic Integrity Process](#)

Academic Accommodation Policy

Academic Accommodation

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

Parental Leave: The Student Parental Leave Policy is intended to recognize the need for leave at the time of a pregnancy, birth or adoption and to permit a pause in studies in order to provide full-time care in the first year of parenting a child or for health-related parental responsibilities.

Religious obligation: Carleton University accommodates students who, by reason of religious obligation, must miss an examination, test, assignment deadline, laboratory or other compulsory academic event.

Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:

Academic accommodation of students with disabilities is available through the [Paul Menton Centre](#) by evaluations that are carried out on an individual basis, in accordance with human rights legislation and University policy, and with the support of relevant, professional/medical documentation.

Survivors of Sexual Violence

Individuals who disclose that they have experienced sexual violence will be provided support services and will be treated with dignity and respect at all times by the University and its representatives. A person affected by sexual violence is not required to report an incident or make a complaint about sexual violence under the formal complaint process of the Sexual Violence Policy in order to obtain support and services, or in order to receive appropriate accommodation for their needs.

[Supports and services available at the University to obtain information about sexual violence and/or support.](#)

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. [More information.](#)

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. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean."

The [system of grades](#) used, with corresponding grade points and the percentage conversion, is listed below. Grade points indicated are for courses with 1.0 credit value.

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.

[7 Student Rights and 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 (3.0) 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. 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.

[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](#)

Financial vs. Academic Withdrawal

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](#). 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. You can do this via the [MyCarleton Portal](#). A fee adjustment is dependent on registration being canceled within the published [fee deadlines](#) and dependent on your course load.

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

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Digital Humanities (Undergraduate Minor) 300 Paterson Hall
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