

Relg. 248b: *The Qur'ān*

Professor Travis Zadeh

Class Schedule: 1:00-2:30pm TTh

Location: Hall 112

Office Hours: Wed. 4-5:00pm or by appointment

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course seeks to introduce students to the Qur'ān. Emphasis will be placed on the rhetoric and literary dimensions of the Qur'ān, such as form, content, and structure, as understood by Muslims, past and present, particularly through the doctrine of divine inimitability (*i'jāz*). We will contextualize our readings from the Qur'ān by exploring the various branches of Qur'ānic studies (*'ulūm al-Qur'ān*) as they developed over time. Topics include the collection and transmission of the Qur'ān; the relationship to Jewish and Christian traditions; the nature of divine speech; the debates concerning the translation of the Qur'ānic; ritual intersections with scripture; material culture; the development of exegetical traditions; gender and the Qur'ān; and contemporary approaches by both Muslims and non-Muslims to the study of the Qur'ān. In addition to primary and secondary literature, this course will also explore various artistic means of venerating the Qur'ān through such forms as recitation (*tajwīd*) and calligraphy (*khatt*).



COURSE OBJECTIVES

This course offers a detailed presentation of the Qur'ān as text, exploring how it has been used and interpreted over time. Students will acquire a broader understanding of problems related to the study of religion, while developing analytical skills applicable to other fields of inquiry.

COURSE DESIGN

In addition to lectures, this course serves as a forum to discuss issues raised by the material. Participation consists not only of attendance and completing the required readings, but also active involvement in discussion. Required are weekly written responses to the readings (1-2 paragraphs), addressing questions assigned by the professor, to be posted on Blackboard and due each Wednesday by 5pm. There will be one graded paper (5-7 pages), on the topic of translation and the doctrine of Qur'ānic inimitability. The mid-term exam will test key terms and concepts. The final exam will cover the cumulative work of the course.

GRADING

Class participation	15%
Blackboard responses	20%
Midterm exam	15%
Paper	20%
Final exam	30%

TEXTS FOR PURCHASE

The Qur'ān, translated by Abel Haleem
Farid, Esack, *The Qur'an, A User's Guide*
Amina Wadud, *Qur'an and Woman*
Michael Sells, *Approaching the Qur'an*
Fazlur Rahman, *Major Themes of the Qur'an*

Additional readings will be provided online and as handouts. Articles from the *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'an (EQ)*, along with selected other readings are to be found on Blackboard, and are marked in the syllabus with an asterisk (*).

BLACKBOARD WEBSITE

The course website contains images and sound recordings which will be drawn on for discussion and lecture, including links to important resources for the study of the Qur'ān. On the website is a link for posting weekly discussion responses to the readings.

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UNIT ONE: METHODOLOGIES

WEEK 1: Background

8/30 Introduction

9/1 Preconceptions

Crone, "What do We Actually know about Muhammad," pp. 1-7.
Zadeh, *The Vernacular Qur'an*, pp. 1-38.

WEEK 2: Orientalism and the Study of the Qur'an

9/5 Polemical Engagements

Norman Daniel, *Islam and the West: the Making of an Image*, pp. 33-34, 57-67.*
Watt, *Introduction*, pp. 173-86.*
Thomas Burman, *Reading the Qur'an in Latin Christendom, 1140-1560*, pp. 1-35.*

9/8 Concepts of Scripture

Watt, *Introduction*, pp. 1-16, pp. 57-68.*
Sells, *Approaching*, pp. 1-28.

UNIT TWO: EARLY REVELATIONS

WEEK 3: Prophecy and Revelation

9/13 "Recite!" The First Revelations and Aural Dimensions of the Book

Al-Fatiḥa (the opening chapter)

Q. 1, the Fāṭiḥa "the Opening,"

Listen to: Sells, Tracks 2, 23.

Was the Prophet Illiterate? The term *ummī* "illiterate?/gentile?"

Q: 2:78; 3:20, 75; 7:157-8; 6:2.

The verb *qara'a*, "to read/recite"

Q. 7:204; 10:94; 16: 98; 17:14, 45, 71, 93, 106; 26:

199; 69:19; 73:20; 84:21; 96.

Fazlur Rahman, *Major Themes of the Qur'an*, pp. 80-105.

Background: Read over Ayoub, *The Qur'an and its Interpreters*, pp. 41-54.*

9/15 The Terms *sūra*, *kitāb*, *qur'ān*

Reading:

Q. 2:23; 9:64, 86, 124, 127; 19:38; 11:13; 24:1, 47:20.

Kitāb (Book, Scripture): Q. 2:1-2, 185; 4:82; 6:19, 92, 114; 7:204; 10:15, 37, 61; 12:3; 15:91,

17:78-89; 25:30-32; 27:76, 92; 30:58.

Daniel Madigan, "The Qur'an's Rejection of Some Common Conceptions of *Kitab*," *The Qur'an's Self-Image*, pp. 53-77.*

WEEK 4: Meccan Verses

9/20 **Divine unity, divine signs, divine judgment, *kufr/imān***

Reading:

Q. 53; 81-114.

Listen to: Sells, Tracks 3, 4, 6-9, 11, 12, and 14-17.

Sells, *Approaching*, pp. 44-141.

Watt, *Introduction*, pp. 17-39.*

Uri Rubin, "Al-Ṣamad and the High God," pp. 197-217.*

9/22 **Eschatology in the Qur'an**

Reading:

Q. 18

Fazlur Rahman, *Major Themes of the Qur'an*, pp. 106-131.

Brannon Wheeler, "Dhu 'l-Qarnayn and Khidr."

Background: The Book of Revelation, from the New Testament.*



UNIT THREE: PROPHETIC TRADITIONS

WEEK 5: Prophets I

9/27 **Adam and Eve**

Q. 2:30-39, 117; 7:11-36, 54; 10:3-10; 21:16-7; 20:115-23; 23:12-22; 27:64; 29:19-20; 32:4-11; 36:77-83; 50:38; 79:27-33; 57:4-6; all of Sūra 35.

Noah

Q. 10, 11, 23, 29, 71.

Smith and Haddad, "Eve: Islamic Image of Woman," pp. 135-44.*

Brannon Wheeler, "Adam and Eve," and "Noah."

Background: Genesis 1-4; 6-9.*

9/29 **Abraham**

Q. 7:80-4; 11:69-83; 15:51-77; 51:24-37.

Moses

Q. 7:103-62; 20; 28.

Brannon Wheeler, "Abraham," "Moses."

Background: Genesis 18-9; Exodus 1-14, 32.*

WEEK 6: Prophets II

10/4 Joseph

Q. 12.

Brannon Wheeler, "Joseph."

Background: Genesis 37, 39-45.*

Solomon and the Queen of Sheba

Q. 27, 34.

Brannon Wheeler, "Solomon."

10/6 Jesus and Mary

Q. 3, 4, 5, 19.

Geoffrey Parrinder, *Jesus in the Qur'an*, pp. 105-44.*

Barbara Stowasser, *Women in the Qur'an*, "The Chapter of Mary," pp. 67-82.*

Gospel of Matthew; John 1-4.*



WEEK 7: Oct. 7-16

FALL BREAK

WEEK 8: Madinan Revelation and Religious Communities

10/18 Family life and the Madinan Community

Reading:

Q. 2; 4:1-105; 9, 47, 48.

10/20 Relations with non-Muslims

Reading:

Q. 4:105-176; 5.

Baidawi on Q. 2:216 in Helmut Gatje, *The Qur'an and its Exegesis*, pp. 212-4.*

Rahman, *Major Themes*, Appendix I and II, pp. 150-70.

*** MIDTERM EXAM ***

UNIT FOUR: SACRED TONGUES

WEEK 9: Theology and the Qur'ān

10/25 God's Justice and Speech

Reading:

Rahman, *Major Themes of the Qur'an*, pp. 1-16.

Watt, *Introduction*, pp. 148-66.*

Daud Rahbar, *God of Justice*, pp. 31-85.*

10/27 An Arabic Qur'ān

Reading:

Q: 12.2; 20.113; 39.28; 41.3; 42.7; 43.3; 41.44; 46.12.

Josef van Ess, "Verbal Inspiration? Language and revelation in classical Islamic Theology," pp. 177-94.*

Daud Rahbar, *God of Justice*, pp. 86-137.*

WEEK 10: I'jāz al-Qur'ān

11/1 Challenges and Oaths

Reading:

Tahaddī: Q. 2:23-4; 10:38; 11:13; 17:88; 52:33-4; 72:12.

Oaths in openings of Suras: 50, 51, 52, 68, 75, 77, 79, 85-6, 89, 90-3, 5, 100, 103.

Zadeh, "Translation and the Inimitability of the Qur'ān."*

11/3 Oracles and Structure

Read openings of Suras: 69, 78, 81-4, 88, 99, 101.

Kamal Abu Deeb, *al-Jurjānī's Theory of Poetic Imagery*, pp. 24-64.*

Watt, *Introduction*, pp. 69-85.*

WEEK 11: Prayer, Performance and the Charismatic Power of the Qur'ān

11/8 The Material Qur'ān (*mushaf*)

Reading:

Zadeh, "Touching, Burning, Ingesting: Early Debates over the Material Qur'ān," pp. 443-66.*

11/10 Sound, Calligraphy

Reading:

Ghazālī, *Faḍā'il al-Qur'ān* (Excellent Qualities of the Qur'ān), pp. 18-33, 56-85.*

Kristina Nelson, *The Art of Reciting the Qur'ān*, pp. 32-51.

WEEK 12: Text and Context-Exegesis

11/15 Commentary

Reading:

Qurṭubī, *Tafsīr*, pp. 1-40.*

Esack, "Understanding and Interpreting the Qur'an," pp. 121-145.

11/17 ...and More Commentary

Reading:

Qurṭubī, *Tafsīr*, pp. 40-92.

Read over Ayoub, *The Qur'an and its Interpreters*, pp. 123-141.*

UNIT FIVE: MODERNITY AND BEYOND

WEEK 13: Compilations of the Text and Textual Variations

11/22 Collecting the Qur'an

Reading:

Watt, *Introduction*, pp. 40-56.*

Harald Motzki, "Alternative accounts of the Qur'an's formation," pp. 57-78.*

von Denffer, *Ulum al-Qur'an*, pp. 31-66, 111-19, and 158-62.*

11/22 Thanksgiving Break

Reading:

Claude Gilliot, "Creation of a fixed text," pp. 41-57.*

WEEK 14: Feminist Approaches to the Qur'an and Discussions of the Veil

11/29 Hermeneutics of Parity and Equality

Reading:

Q. 24: 30-31; 33:53; and 33:59, then read Q. 24 and Q. 33 in their entirety.

Amina Wadud, *Qur'an and Woman*, pp.

1-43.

Asma Barlas, *Believing Women in Islam*, pp.

93-128.*

12/1 Re-inscription

Amina Wadud, *Qur'an and Woman*, pp.

44-105.

Asma Barlas, *Believing Women in Islam*, pp. 167-202.*

WEEK 15: The Qur'an as Living Text

12/6 Somatic Expressions

Reading:

William Graham, *Beyond the Written Word*, pp. 81-115.*

Esack, "The Qur'an in the Lives of Muslims," pp. 13-29.

12/8 Afterthoughts

Reading:

von Denffer, *Ulum al-Qur'an*, pp. 174-80.*

Esack, "Belief in the Qur'an," pp. 146-192.



FINAL EXAM—TBA