

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, RIVERSIDE
DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES

RLST 151
READING THE QUR'AN
Winter 2019

TR: 09:40 a.m.- 11:00 a.m. BOYHL 1471
Dr. Muhamad Ali
Office Hours: Tuesday 13:30- 15:30 p.m.

Course Description

This upper-division course deals with the important aspects of the Qur'an: history, content, approaches and the various ways of Muslims' interaction with it. It focuses on contexts in which the Qur'anic text originated, combining Muslim and non-Muslim studies of the Qur'an, and on the roles the Qur'an plays in the religious, cultural, and political experiences of Muslim societies. It highlights issues of multiple levels upon which the Qur'an conveys its meaning to its readers.

The course seeks not only to familiarize the students with historical and doctrinal dimensions of the Qur'an but also to engage them in critical discussion and in writing on various aspects of the Scripture. It will give them with some analytical tools for understanding and explaining the text, context, and for approaching of the Qur'an, as well as for a comparative approach in a dialogue with other scriptural traditions and scholarships.

Course Requirements and Grading

- **Class attendance and participation.** Regular attendance, asking questions, making comments, answering questions, participation in weekly discussions and participation will be considered as "active class participation". The discussions are intended to assist the students to thoughtfully analyze topics and issues pertaining to the Qur'an. It accounts for 15% of the total grade. Every absence beyond family and health emergency is a reduction of 2 points of the attendance grade.
- **A short personal essay** on "what I know, what I don't know about the Qur'an, and what I want to learn from this course," 2 pages and double-spaced. A hard copy is due on Thursday, January 10th in the classroom. No safe assignment. It accounts for 2.5 % of the total grade.
- **2 (two) academic essays** accounts for 15 % each of the total grade. Each student will write a paper in a topic or issue based on the lectures and readings. Each paper is between 4-5 pages and double-spaced. Topics will be suggested, but students may choose a topic related to the Qur'an after consulting to the

instructor. The first essay will be on Thursday, January 24th, and the second essay will be due on Thursday, February 14th. Graduate students will write 6-7 pages.

- **A take-home exam** will be due on Thursday, February 28th. It accounts for 20 % of the final grade.
- **A group (2-4 students) project and its report** related to the Qur'an, its interpretation and impact in society, will be due in class on Thursday, March 14th, and accounts for 10 % of the total grade. It can be a short essay on interpretation of the passage of the Qur'an, a video recording of Qur'anic recitation and its translation or interpretation, a Qur'anic calligraphy with translation and interpretation, or other forms of work, a project that will be further discussed in the classroom. Presentations of students work will take place in the classroom on March 14th, 2019. The report is due on March 19th.
- **A final essay** accounts for 20 % of the final grade. The final paper is 6-7 pages, typed and double-spaced, and a hard copy and a safe assignment will be due on Tuesday, March 19th, 5:00 p.m. in the instructor's office INTN 2018. Graduate students will write 9-10 pages.
- **A short essay**, about "what I have learned about the Qur'an and what I expect to do next", accounting for 2.5%. A hard copy will be due on Tuesday, March 19th, 5 p.m., in the instructor's office INTN 2018: 2 pages, double-spaced, and typed. No Safe Assignment.

Academic Honesty and Plagiarism: please familiarize yourself with the UCR guidelines on academic integrity and the rules concerning cheating and plagiarism. The links are:

<http://library.ucr.edu/?view=help/plagiarism.html>

<http://senate.ucr.edu/bylaws/PDF%20Files/P3%20Ch6.pdf>

Required Textbooks (available at UCR Bookstore and reserves)

- **The Qur'an, A New Translation** by M.A.S. Abdel Haleem or **Any Translation of the Qur'an**
- **Understanding the Qur'an: Themes and Style** by M.A.S. Abdel Haleem

Other English translations of the Qur'an:

Majid Fakhri, *An Interpretation of the Qur'an: English Translations of the Meanings*
Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Qur'an*

Ahmed Ali, *Al-Qur'an: A Contemporary Translation*
M.A.S. Abdel Haleem, *The Qur'an: A New translation*

Suggested Readings for your Essays and Project

- Michael Cook, *The Koran: A Very Short Introduction*
- W. Montgomery Watt and Richard Bell, *Introduction to the Qur'an*
- Michael Sells, *Approaching the Qur'an: the Early Revelations*
- Mahmoud M. Ayoub, *the Qur'an and Its Interpreters*
- Anna M. Gade, *the Qur'an: An Introduction*
- Fazlur Rahman, *Major Themes of the Qur'an*
- Jane Dammen McAuliffe (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Qur'an*
- Fazlur Rahman, *Islam*, chapters on Muhammad and the Qur'an,
- Anton Wessels, *Understanding the Qur'an*
- Ahmad von Denffer, *Ulum al-Qur'an: Introduction to the Sciences of the Qur'an*
- Neal Robinson, *Discovering the Qur'an: A Contemporary Approach to a Veiled Text*
- John Wansbrough, *Qur'anic Studies: Sources and Methods of Scriptural Interpretation*
- Kenneth Cragg, *the Qur'an & the West*
- Toshihiko Izutsu, *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qur'an*
- Farid Esack, *The Qur'an: A User's Guide*
- Farid Esack, *Qur'an, Liberation & Pluralism*
- Amina Wadud, *Qur'an and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective*
- Asma Afsaruddin, *Striving in the Path of God: Jihad and Martyrdom in Islamic Thought*
- Muhammad Ghazali, *A Thematic Commentary on the Qur'an*
- Sayyid Qutb, *In the Shade of the Qur'an*
- Feras Hamza et al, *An Anthology of Qur'anic Commentaries: On the Nature of the Divine*
- Kristin Sand, *Sufi Commentaries on the Qur'an in Classical Islam*
- Ibn 'Ajiba, *the Immense Ocean*
- Denise A. Spellberg, *Thomas Jefferson's Qur'an: Islam and the Founders*
- Safi Kaskas, *The Qur'an: A Contemporary Understanding*
- Michael Birkel, *Qur'an in Conversation*
- Jacques Jomier, *the Bible and the Qur'an*
- M. Brett Wilson, *Translating the Qur'an in an Age of Nationalism: Print Culture and Modern Islam in Turkey*
- Carl Ernst, *How to Read the Qur'an: A New Guide*
- Rudolph Ware, *the Walking Qur'an: Islamic Education, Embodied Knowledge and History in West Africa*
- Mun'im A. Sirri, *Scriptural Polemics: The Qur'an and Other Religions*
- Raymond Farrin, *Structure and Qur'anic Interpretation: A Study of Symmetry and Coherence in Islam's Holy Text*

- Barbara Hampton, *Reading Scripture Together: A Comparative Qur'an and Bible Study Guide*
- Jane Dammen McAuliffe, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to the Qur'an*

Useful Websites:

www.globalquran.com

www.quranexplorer.com

<http://quranix.org>

<http://altafsir.com>

<http://www.al-islam.org/library/qur'-commentaries>

<http://www.ahmadiyya.org/english-quran/quran.htm>

Schedule of Lectures and Group Discussion

PART ONE: CONTEXT AND TEXT

Tuesday, January 8th, 2019: Introduction to Course and to the Qur'an

Haleem, Introduction, pp. ix-x

Haleem, 'the Qur'an'

Chapter The Beginning/1: verses 1-7.

Chapter 16:12-14;30:46; 6:104-6; 16:10-20; 7:57; 43:46; 3:49; 3:13; 8:2; 8:31; 12:3; 10:61; 7:204; 17:106; 50:1: 15:87; 56:77; 15:1; 17:78; 10:37; 26:196; 20:133; 2:1-5; 32:2; 7:63; 69:48; 3:3

Thursday, January 10th: the Life of Muhammad & the Historical Background

Haleem, the Life of Muhammad and the Historical Background

Chapter 47/Muhammad;

Chapter 105/the Elephant

Chapter 106/Quraisy

Chapter 30:1-4; 7:157-158: 2:78

[A short personal essay is due on January 10th.](#)

Tuesday, January 15th: The Revelation in Arabic, Writing Down, and Compilation of the Qur'an

Haleem, The Revelation of the Qur'an

Haleem, The Compilation of the Qur'an

Chapter 42:51; 2:97; 19:11; 16: 68; 75: 16-19; 18:110; 41:6; 7:144; 52:3; 6:7, 91; 20:133; 80:13; 98:2; 31:27; 12:2; 46:12; 96:1-5; 31:27; 2:282;

Chapter 10:15; 69:44-47; 17:73-75; 87:6; 2:106; 22:52;

Thursday, January 17th: The Structure and Stylistic Features of the Qur'an and Issues of Interpretation

Haleem, the Structure of the Qur'an: Suras and Ayas

Haleem, Stylistic Features

Haleem, Issues of Interpretation

Haleem, A Short History of English Translation

Haleem, This Translation

Haleem, "the Face, Divine and Human, in the Qur'an"

Tuesday, January 22nd: Beliefs: Belief in God

Chapter 112/Purity of Faith

Chapter 55/The Lord of Mercy

Chapter: 28:30; 27:9; 50:38; 112:1-4; 42:13; 59:22-4; 2:255; 24:35; 7:156;

Thursday, January 24th: Beliefs: Angels, Prophets (Joseph, Moses, Jesus, Muhammad), Scriptures

Chapter 7:158; 19:51-54; 40:78; 4:164; 14:4; 2:252-3; 2:285; 5:48; 6:35; 10:99; 64:10; 9:25; 9:27; 6:84; 40:34; 3:45-7; 4:171-172; 3:47 & 110; 3:55; 33:40; 81:19; 88:21; 33:1; 66:1; Chapter Joseph, Chapter Noah,

[The first 4-5 page essay is due on January 24th.](#)

Tuesday, January 29th: Day of Judgment, Paradise and Hell (Eschatology)

Chapter 75/Resurrection

Chapter 99/the Earthquake

Chapter 1:4; 32:14; 15:85; 23:115-116; 38:27-8; 75:1-4; 56:47; 45:25-6; 45:24; 3:185; 17:14; 39:69-70; 7:32; 6:127;

Chapter 35:45; 42:30; 3:165; 52:17-28; 41:30; 89:29-30; 15:46; 25:15; 25:66-76; 35:34-5; 78:35; 3:133; 76:5; 56:20-110:62

96:8; 2:156; 28:88; 55:26-27; 29:20;

Thursday, January 31st: Human Beings; Adam and Eve in the Qur'an; Satan and Evil

Chapter 96/The Clinging Form

Chapter 76/Man

Chapter 2/the Cow

Chapter 72/the Jinn

15:26-29; 23:12-14; 23:115; 12:53; 75:02; 89:27; 82:5-9; 2:37; 22:52; 7:200; 7:11; 15:29; 95:5; 2:59; 13:11; 29:12; 91:7-10; 70:19-21;

Tuesday, February 5th: Ritual: Prayer and Giving Alms (and the Economy)

Chapter 62/The Day of Congregation

Chapter 84:7-9; 69:19, 20, 25; 52:21; 21:47; 2:245; 2:207; 102:1-4; 62:10; 106:1-4; 107:1-7;

Thursday, February 7th: Ritual: Fasting and Performing the Pilgrimage

Chapter 2: 183-186.

Chapter 22/The Pilgrimage

Tuesday, February 12th: Ethics (Goodness, Justice, Forgiveness)

Chapter 107/Common Kindness

Chapter 83/Those Who Give Short Measure

Chapter 2:83-84; 3:110-114; 3:39; 2:177; 60:8; 5:42; 5:8; 4:135; 16:67; 21:107; 9:60; 10:90-91; 3:134;

Thursday, February 14th: Nature

Chapter 21:30; 35:12; 30:48; 56:68-70; 15:22; 25:48-49; 6:99; 80:24-32; 5:6; 35:12; 17:70; 27:60; 7:30; 30:41; 36:38-40; 2:117; 7:54; 41:9-12; 10:3; 3:83; 57:1; 17:44; 30:41

Chapter 29/The Spider

The second 4-5 page essay is due on February 14th.

Tuesday, February 19th: Life and Beyond

Chapter: 30:40; 20:55; 50:43; 67:2; 2:233; 36:83; 40:3; 53:25; 2:29; 28:77; 87:17;

Thursday, February 21st: Guest lecturer Dr. Kelly J. Clark, “Diverse ways of reading the Qur’an”, a chapter by Aziz Abu Sarah.

Tuesday, February 26th: Family, Marriage, Sexuality, Gender

Chapter 4/Women; Chapter 19/Mary

Chapter 30:21; 2:188; 25:54; 16:72; 13:23; 4:11-13; 2:231-232; 2:223; 25:74; 4:1-4; 4:24; 4:35; 4:34-5; 4:19; 33:5; 30:21; 2:228-231; 2:221; 5:5; 2:177; 4:135; 17:23; 6:151; 17:31;

33: 32-33; 24:30-31

Thursday, February 28th: Knowledge/Science

Chapter 68/the Pen

Chapter 51:47; 55:33; 87:2-3; 13:2; 55:5; 4:82; 21:30; 21:30-31; 2:117; 35:16-17; 55:6; 6:99; 39:6; 27: 88; 78:7; 16:15; 57:25; 2:30-32; 36:38-40; 3:83;

The take-home exam is due on February 28th.

Tuesday, March 5th: Politics

Chapter 4:54; 12:101; 2:251; 24:55; 4:58; 5:45
Chapter 5:44-47; 6:109; 8:72; 9:16; 2:216-218; 8:72; 5: 35;

Thursday, March 7th: War and Peace

Chapter 49:13; 5:91; 6:65; 2:216; 24:55; 2:251; 22:39-41; 28:83; 25:52; 22:39-41;
2:190-195; 8:61-2; 76:8-9; 22:39-41; 9:36; 3:156; 5:2; 60:8; 49:9; 9:5; 9:122-123; 4:75

Tuesday, March 12th: Tolerance and Pluralism

Chapter 98/Clear Evidence

Chapter 109/the Disbelievers

Chapter 2/the Cow:62

Chapter 49/the Private Rooms

Chapter 2:256; 11:118; 5:48; 12:103; 17:70; 2:136; 3:144; 3:113-115; 3:75; 4:123-4;
29:46; 3:64; 5:48; 60:8; 49:13; 109:6; 10-41; 11:118-119; 10:99; 5:47; 18:29;

Thursday, March 14th: Presentation of Group Projects and Conclusion

[Presentations of group project will take place on March 14th.](#)

[The final essay, a group project report, and a short personal essay are due on March 19th, 5 p.m. in the instructor's office INTN 2018.](#)