

SC-634 Major Themes of the Bible and Qur'an
Thursdays 4:00-6:50 pm, Fall 2023
In-person/Hybrid synchronous

Hartford International University for Religion and Peace
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This course will explore the historical development and reception of the Hebrew, Christian, and Islamic Scriptures. Evaluating and comparing the concepts of Scripture and Revelation, we will examine how the received texts came to be considered as “canon.” We will also explore how these scriptures depict some of the most important shared characters, such as Abraham, Job, Mary, and Jesus, as well as the seminal theological issues that arise from their specific roles in the Scriptures.

Course Objectives: Students will

1. Explore of how the concept of Scripture is utilized for Jews, Christians, and Muslims;
2. Analyze shared Biblical/Quranic characters, their distinctive roles in each of the Scriptures, and the particular theological or religious themes that result from these narratives;
3. Articulate one’s own scriptural/theological position on Scripture and the role it plays in one’s religious identity and belief.

These course objectives meet the following **Master of Arts in Interreligious Studies Program Outcomes:**

1. Articulate your own worldview or religious belief system while empathically and respectfully engaging people whose worldviews, religious practices, and religious beliefs differ from your own.
3. At the level needed to take part in substantive dialogue, demonstrate knowledge of the roles of the scriptures and sacred texts of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.
6. Express your ideas and perspectives clearly in oral and written communication.

This course also qualifies as a BTI - Interreligious Leadership Certificate Course.

Teaching and Learning Modalities and Strategies:

This will be an in-person/hybrid course. The instructor will be live in the classroom along with students. Distance students will attend the live class session remotely. The first third of the course will focus on the concepts of Scriptural texts, their role and purpose, and their historical development as “canon.” An essay exam will conclude this section. The class will then explore the diversity of interpretative methods of the Bible and Qur’an. For the remainder of the course, students will be expected to research and develop presentations centered on biblical/qur’anic characters.

Required Reading (also on Reserve):

A copy of the Scriptures: Jewish Publication Society's *Tanakh*, the New Revised Standard Version of *The New Testament* (preferably the Oxford Annotated Study Bible), and an English interpretation of the Qur'an (preferably the *The Study Qur'an* by S.H. Nasr) or the Arabic *muṣḥaf*. Online versions are acceptable.

Hussein, Kamel M. *City of Wrong: A Friday in Jerusalem*. Trans. Kenneth Cragg. Oxford: OneWorld Publishing, 1994.

Kaltner, John. *The Bible and the Qur'an: Biblical Figures in the Islamic Tradition*. T&T Clark: New York, 2018.

Selected chapters will be read from:

Gray, Patrick, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to the New Testament*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2021.

Chapman, Stephen B, and Marvin a. Sweeney, eds. *The Cambridge Companion to the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016.

McAuliffe, Jane Dammen, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to the Qur'an*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Smith, Wilfred Cantwell. *What is Scripture? A Comparative Approach*. Fortress: Minneapolis, 2005. PP. 1-20, 45-91 only.

For students who would like a deeper dive into the interpretation of particular scriptures, see:

Mattson, Ingrid. *The story of the Qur'an: its history and place in Muslim life* 2nd ed. New York: Wiley-Blackwell Press, 2013.

Soulen, Richard N. *Sacred Scripture: A Short History of Interpretation*. Westminster/John Knox: Louisville, 2009.

Wyllen, Stephen M. *The Seventy Faces of Torah*. Paulist Press: New York, 2005.

Assignment	Due Date(s)	Course objective(s) fulfilled by assignment	% of course grade
1. Weekly Class preparation (required reading)	Each weekly session, questions by 4 pm	Course Objective #1 and #2	30%
3. "Take Home" Mid-Term Essay	Due 19 October, 7 pm	Course Objective #3	20%
4. Presentation on Biblical/Qur'anic character	Proposals for authors are due by 28 September; Outline of research: TBD; Presentations TBD	Course Objective #2	30%
5. Final paper and discussion on <i>City of Wrong</i>	Final submission of paper is 14 Dec. by 4 pm	Course Objective #1 and #2	20%

Course Assignments:

1. Read the assigned **required reading** and actively participate in the class. Students will be required to submit 1 new concept or idea and 1 question garnered from the required reading. Questions should be posted by **4 pm** of the day of the class (30%). If you know you will be unable to attend a class session, please inform the professor in advance. In the case of an

absence the professor will reserve the right to ask the student for a 250-500 word written assignment on the required.

2. Mid-Term “Take Home” exam (25% of the grade)

Students will have a Mid-Term “Take Home”, in which they will have five days to submit their exam on ten terms and one of three questions that will be posed by the instructor. The terms and questions will be posted on **Sunday, 15 October** and have until **Thursday, 19 October at 7 pm** to submit the essay. Students will be graded on demonstration of engagement with both the assigned reading and awareness of the concepts and terminology covered in the first weeks of class.

3. Presentation on Biblical/Qur'anic character and themes

Students should select one of the characters outlined in Kaltner's *The Bible and the Qur'an: Biblical Figures in the Islamic Tradition*.

The presentation should be 15-20 minutes in length (plus 15-20 minutes discussion) and cover:

- a) an overview of Kaltner's material on the character;
- b) a thorough analysis of the character and their role as presented in the scriptures (and extra-canonical material);
- c) provide religious and theological questions for discussion;
- d) provide a bibliography (credible articles, books and websites) for further reading.

In preparation for the presentation, in addition to the scriptural sources, students should consult a tertiary source such as *The Cambridge Companion to the Qur'an*, *Encyclopedia of Islam* (2nd or 3rd ed.), *Encyclopedia of the Qur'an*, *The Cambridge companion to the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament*, *The Cambridge companion to biblical interpretation*, etc.

Students will email their list of top three choices of characters in Kaltner by the end of class by **28 September at 4 pm**. Final assignments will be made the following week.

Students are required to send an outline and working bibliography to the instructor **one week prior to their presentation** for review.

Final papers and presentations should be posted by **Wednesday, 7 pm of the week of their presentation**. (25% of grade)

4. Students will read Kamel M. Hussein's *City of Wrong* and write a **1500-2000 word paper** discussing the following points:

- a. What is the purpose of Hussein's novel?
- b. What character, if any, do you identify with in the book? Why?
- c. What theological issues come into play between the Christian and Muslim perspectives of Good Friday?

The Final Examination will be a small and large group discussion on the book. Papers should be posted on the course site prior to the class **Thursday, 14 December, by 4 pm**. (20% of the grade.)

Class Schedule:

September 7: What is Scripture?

Required Reading: Smith, 1-20, 45-91

September 14: *Qur'ān* and the *mushaf* (Guest presenter: Prof. Mona Siddiqui)

Required Reading: McAuliffe, 1-75

September 21: The New Testament and the Christian Canon

Required Reading: Gray, 333-400

September 28: *TaNaKh*, Oral and Written Torah (Guest presenter: Dr. Deena Grant)

Required Reading: Chapman and Sweeney, 1-54

Students should email their instructor their top three choices for presentation topics are due by 4 pm.

October 5: Translations and Publications of Scripture

Required Reading: Chapman and Sweeney, 9-27; Ellerton, "New Testament Manuscripts, Textual Families, and Variants" [Canvas]; Nasr, *The Study Qur'an*, 1601-6

October 12: Classical interpretation: the Rabbis, the Christian "Old Testament," and the Torat in the Qur'ān

Required Reading: Chapman and Sweeney, 375-425; Nasr, *The Study Qur'an*, 1765-1784

October 19: Mid-Term Exam Due (No Class)

Students will have access to the Mid-Term Exam on the Canvas Site beginning **Sunday, 15 October** and have until **Thursday, 19 October, at 7 pm** to submit the exam.

There will be ten definitions. In addition, three essay questions will be provided and students will pick one essay question from which they can respond. Notes and readings from class can be used and quoted (properly).

October 26: Contemporary interpretations: paying attention to power

Required Reading: Gray, 369-381; Robert Allen Warrior, 'A Native American Perspective: Canaanites, Cowboys, and Indians,' in *Voices From the Margin: Interpreting the Bible in the Third World*. R. S. Sugirtharajah, 25th anniversary ed., Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Press, 2016), 235-41. [On canvas]

November 2: Contemporary interpretations: paying attention to ethnicity and gender

Required Reading: Chapman and Sweeney, 163-183; McAuliffe, 255-272

November 9: Student Presentations on Biblical/Qur'anic characters and themes

Students are required to send an outline and working bibliography to the instructor **one week prior to their presentation** for review.

November 16: Student Presentations

November 23: Thanksgiving Break (NO CLASS)

November 30: Student Presentations

December 7: Student Presentations

December 14: Final Exam: Discussion of *City of Wrong*

Papers are to be posted to the Canvas site by **4 pm**, prior to the class final class session.

Be sure to bring or have access to a study Bible and Qur'an for each class.

For additional information on format, proper footnotes, acknowledgments, etc., students are directed to consult the HIU [General Guidelines for a Research Paper](#). Students may also consult Kate L. Turabian's, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations* (at least the 8th Ed., 2013). The Seminary research paper guide can be found at: <http://www.hartsem.edu/current-students/student-writing-resources/>.

Grading Scale

A (95-100) Demonstrates excellent mastery of the subject matter, a superior ability to articulate this, and provides helpful connections to daily life or contemporary issues. Exceeds expectations of the course.

A- (90-94) Demonstrates mastery of the subject matter, ability to articulate this well, and makes connections to daily life or contemporary issues. Exceeds expectations of the course.

B+(87-89) Demonstrates a very good understanding of the subject matter, able to articulate lessons learned in the assignment well. Meets expectations of the course.

B (83-86) Demonstrates an understanding of the subject matter and the ability to articulate lessons learned. Meets expectations of the course.

B-(80-82) Demonstrates an understanding of the material at hand, has some difficulty articulating this, and basic connection of the material to daily life or contemporary issues/life. Meets basic expectations for the course.

C+(77-79) Demonstrates a basic comprehension of the subject matter, weak articulation and connections. Does not meet expectations for the course.

C (70-76) Demonstrates a minimal comprehension of the subject matter and has difficulty making connections. Does not meet expectations of the course.

F (below 70) Unable to meet the basic requirements of the course.

Email Policy: The instructor will use the official HIU student email addresses for all communications. Please check your HIU email account regularly.

Extensions: Extensions for assignments will be given only in consultation with the instructor.

Inclusive Language: HIU is committed to a policy of inclusion in its academic life and mission. All members of the community are expected to communicate in language that reflects the equality of genders, openness to diverse cultural and theological perspectives, and sensitivity to one another's images of God.

Plagiarism and Academic Integrity: Academic honesty and integrity are expected of all students. Plagiarism exists when: a) the work submitted was done, in whole or in part, by anyone other than the one submitting the work, b) parts of the work, whether direct quotations, ideas, or data, are taken from another source without acknowledgement, c) the whole work is copied from another source [especially a web based source], or d) significant portions of one's own previous work used in another course. See ["Plagiarism."](#)

Student Handbooks: For all other questions you might have regarding policies or procedures, please check the [student handbook](#) and other academic policies are listed at <https://www.hartfordinternational.edu/student-affairs/academics/academic-policies>.