

Hartford International University

**SC-630 - Foundations of Qur'anic Studies :
The History, Form, and Content of Islam's Holy Book**

Fall 2025
M 5:00pm – 6:50pm
Hybrid Synchronous

DRAFT SYLLABUS (9/2/2025)

Instructor: Suheil Laher

Email: slaher@hartfordinternational.edu

Office Hours: By Appointment

Course Description

This course introduces students to the Qur'an, the book (or 'recitation') that is believed by Muslims to have been divinely revealed to the Prophet Muhammad in 7th century C.E. Arabia. We discuss the history of the Qur'an's text and transmission, and examine its central themes, with reference to traditional Muslim scholarship as well as Western academic research. Throughout the course, we read pertinent selections from the Qur'an (in translation). Since 'Qur'an' originally means 'a recitation,' we also engage with and discuss the oral dimension of the Qur'an. Topics explored include the following: How and was the Qur'an collected, transmitted and preserved? What is the nature and origin of the variant readings? What does the Qur'an say about Moses and Jesus, heaven and hell, men and women? What is abrogation, and were some verses of the Qur'an abrogated? What are the different approaches to exegesis (tafsir) of the Qur'an, and how are these reflected in the major tafsir books? In what sense do Muslim theologians consider the Qur'an to be a 'miracle'?

Course Objectives

Course fulfills the following curricular requirements:

- MAIRS - Interreligious Studies Elective
- MAIRS - Islamic Studies: Beliefs and Practices
- MAIRS - Islamic Studies: Foundational Fields
- MAIRS - Islamic Studies Elective
- MAC - Islamic Studies Pathway Elective
- MAC - Chaplaincy elective

Assessment

Attendance & Participation	10%
Presentations	20%
Forum Discussions	20%
Quizzes	20%
Final Examination / Paper	30%

- **Attendance:** You must attend class regularly and promptly. More than two absences will reduce your grade in the course, unless there are extenuating circumstances.
- **Presentations:** Two presentations of 15min, each on a section (1 or more chapters, totalling at least 20 pages) of Ghazali's *Thematic Commentary on the Quran*. A sign-up sheet will be made available. Presentations should be uploaded as videos, and students are required to watch their classmates' video and offer brief feedback.
- **Forum Discussions:** Each student will post THREE reflections per week, to the Online Forums:
 - A reflection of 75-100 words on the assigned Quranic verses for that week,
 - A reflection of 100-200 words in response to one of the prompts provided, and/or showing that the student has read and thought about the assigned readings(s) for that week.
 - A reflection of 50-100 words in response to another student's posts.**Please note that postings that are too long, or too short, will lose points.**
- **Quizzes:** will consist of multiple choice and/or short-answer questions
- **Final Exam** will consist of essay questions. If a final paper is written instead, the topic must be approved by the instructor, and the paper should be 10-15 pages long.

Additional Requirements for Doctoral Students (D.Min/Ph.D)

- A book report (details will be provided in due course).
- Final Paper should be longer (15-20 pages).

Books

Required

- Ingrid Mattson, *The Story of the Qur'an*, Second Edition, Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013.
 - Available on [DTL](#)
- Muhammad Abdel Haleem, *Understanding the Qur'an: Themes and Style*, Tauris, 2010
 - Available on [DTL](#)
- Muhammad al-Ghazali, *A Thematic Commentary on the Quran*, IIIT: 2000
 - Available on [Web](#)
- Jane Dammen McAuliffe, *The Cambridge Companion to the Qur'an*, Cambridge, 2006
 - Available on [DTL](#)

Further Readings (Not required to get)

- ## CLASS OUTLINE

CLASS#	DATE	TOPIC & READINGS	QUR'ANIC VERSES
1	09/08	<p>Introduction <i>What is the Quran? Understanding 'Revelation' and 'God's Words.'</i> <i>Context of the Quran.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Miriam Levering, "Introduction: Rethinking Scripture," Rethinking Scripture</i> (SUNY, 1988), p. 1-17. • Mattson, p. 1-26. • (Ingrid Mattson, "How to Read the Qur'an," <i>The Study Quran</i>.) • (WC Smith, "Scripture as Form and Concept: Their Emergence for the Western World" in Levering (ed.) <i>Rethinking Scripture</i>) 	<p>96:1-8 73:1-10</p>
2	09/15	<p>History of the Text Quran in the Prophet's Lifetime; Chronology and Contexts of Revelation; Compilation, Transmission and Reliability; Companions' Codices, Quranic Manuscripts; Variant Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mattson, p. 79-108, • Graham, "Muslim Scripture as Spoken Word", <i>Beyond the Written Word</i>, p. 96-109 	<p>1:1-7 74:1-16</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (Whelan, Estelle. "Forgotten Witness: Evidence for the early Codification of the Qur'ān." <i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i> (1998): 1-14.) (Mattson, p. 109-135) 	
3	09/22	God in the Quran <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mattson, p. 37-46 Draz, <i>Introduction to the Qur'an</i> (Tauris, 2011), ch. 4 (p. 48-59) Madigan, "Themes and Topics," in <i>Cambridge Companion</i>, 79-94 	59:21-24 2:255 6:59-61 (13:8-15)
4	09/29	Prophethood and Afterlife <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mattson, p. 46-55 AbdelHaleem, ch. 7 & 8 (p. 84-109) Abdel Haleem (2017), ch. 4 (p. 75-92) Fazlur Rahman, <i>Major Themes</i>, p. 80-106 (Camilla Adang, "Reading the Quran with Ibn Hazm: the question of the sinlessness of the prophets," <i>Controverses sur les Écritures Canoniques de l'Islam</i>, 269-92) 	51:8-31 21:69-93 (36:33-83)
5	10/06	Good, Evil, and Theodicy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draz, ch. 5 (p. 61-88) Optional: p. 89-96. Fazlur Rahman, <i>Major Themes</i>, p. 121-131 Izutsu, <i>Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Quran</i> (2002), 184-202 	57:17-24 25:63-77
	10/13	NO CLASS	
6	10/20	History and Techniques of Exegesis Introduction to <i>Tafsir</i> and its Principles and Types; Early History of Tafsir (in Prophet's era, subsequent schools); 'Transmitted' and 'Deductive' Tafsir; Abrogation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mattson, 185-214, McAuliffe, "The Tasks and Traditions of Interpretation," in <i>Cambridge Companion</i>, 181-210 (`Uthaymin, <i>Explanation of Ibn Taymiyyah's Principles of Tafsir</i>, 189-197.) (Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj, "The Book of Commentary," in McAuliffe (ed.), <i>The Quran: Norton Critical Editions</i> (Norton, 2017), 533-537.) 	2:85, 3:7, 4:105, 12:1-2, 16:64, 39:23, 50:37
7	10/27	Exegesis (continued): Sufi and Shiah Tafsir, Translating the Quran <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ibn `Ajibah, <i>The Immense Ocean</i> (Fons Vitae, 2007), p.7-37. McAuliffe (ed.), <i>The Quran: Norton Critical Editions</i> (Norton, 2017), <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 417-420 (al-Qummi) 495-499 (Imami Methods of Exegesis) Kifayat Allah, <i>Al-Kashshaf</i> (De Gruyter, 2017), 144-149 Fp. 381-410 (Abdel Haleem (2017), ch. 12 (p.243-272)) 	Surah 55
8	11/03	Structure and Style <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mustansir Mir, "The Surah as a Unity: A 20th-Century Development in Qur'an Exegesis," in <i>Approaches to the Qur'an</i>, ed. Gerald Hawting 	

		<p>and Abdelkader A. Shereef (London: Routledge, 1993), 211–224</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abdel Haleem, ch. 13, p. 187-214. • Abdel Haleem (2017), • Abdel Haleem, MAS. "How to Read the Qur'an: Sūrat al-Ḥadīd (Q. 57)." <i>Journal of Qur'anic Studies</i> 10.2 (2008): 124-130. • Neal Robinson, <i>Discovering the Quran</i> (Georgetown, 2003), 162-167 • Toorawa, Shawkat M. "Toward an english rhymed prose translation of surat al-rahman." <i>al-'Arabiyya</i> 38 (2005): 129-135. • (Angelika Neuwirth, "Some Remarks on the Special Linguistic and Literary Character of the Quran," in McAuliffe (ed.), <i>The Quran: Norton Critical Editions</i> (Norton, 2017), 533-537.) • (Abdel Haleem, 161-186) 	
9	11/10	<p>Nature & Science; The Quran as Miracle: <i>l'jaz al-Quran</i>; 'Sectarian' Tafsirs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mattson, 141-146 • Abdel Haleem, ch. 3 (p. 31-44) <p>Yazicioglu, Isra. "Perhaps Their Harmony is not that Simple: Bediuzzaman Said Nursi on the Qur'an and Modern Science." <i>Theology and Science</i> 11.4 (2013): 339-355</p>	13:1-13
10	11/17	<p>Interfaith Issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AbdelHaleem, 126-140 (Adam and Eve) • AbdelHaleem, 141-160 (Joseph) • Adelman, Howard Tzvi. "A Rabbi reads the Qur'an in the Venetian ghetto." <i>Jewish History</i> 26.1-2 (2012): 125-137. • Brannon Wheeler, "Moses," <i>The Quran in Context</i>, 262-278 • Neal Robinson, <i>Christ in Islam and Christianity</i>, 3-7 and 78-89. 	2:40-60 19:1-35
11	11/24	NO CLASS	
12	12/01	<p>Gender</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mattson, 226-242 • Mubarak, Hadia. "Breaking the Interpretive Monopoly: A Re-Examination of Verse 4: 34." <i>Hawwa</i> 2.3 (2004): 261-289. • Asma Barlas, "Women's Readings of the Quran," in <i>Cambridge Companion</i>, 255-269 • Carla Power, <i>If the Oceans Were Ink</i> 128-137 • (Roded, Ruth. "Islamic and Jewish Religious Feminism: Similarities, Parallels and Interactions." <i>Religion compass</i> 6.4 (2012): 213-224.) • (Barlas, Asma, "The Qur'an and Hermeneutics: Reading the Qur'an's Opposition to Patriarchy ." <i>Journal of Qur'anic Studies</i> 3.2 (2001): 15-38.) 	33:35 27:22-35
13	12/08	<p>Sharia, Politics & Jihad</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abdel Haleem (2017), ch. 3 (p. 55-74) • Stefan Wild, "Political Interpretation of the Quran," in <i>Cambridge Companion</i> 273-290 • Shaltut, (tr. R. Peters), "A modernist interpretation of jihad", in Peters, Rudolph. <i>Jihad in classical and modern Islam: a reader</i>. Markus 	2:190-195 60:7-9

		Wiener Publishers, 2005.	
14	12/15	Culture & Art <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mattson, 147-184 • Mattson, 247-265 • Sheila Blair and Jonathan Bloom, "Inscriptions in Art and Architecture," in <i>Cambridge Companion</i> 163-180 McAuliffe (ed.), <i>The Quran: Norton Critical Editions</i> (Norton, 2017), 596-601 (Female Muslim Healer in South India)	

Note: The syllabus is subject to change according to the needs of the class. Instructor will inform students about any changes.