THE FOUNDATIONS OF QUR’ĀNIC STUDIES:
History, Form, and Application of Islam’s Holy Scripture

HARTFORD SEMINARY
Fall 2015

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COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This class is designed to equip students with a more profound understanding of the text of the Qur’an through employing two parallel themes throughout the course. One will be a systematic overview of the various aspects of the sciences of the Qur’an as scripture such as the history of its compilation and recording, divisions of Meccan and Madinan verses, its ten canonical readings, hermeneutic approaches, and abrogated and abrogating verses. The
second theme of this course will be an applied study of the Qur'an through giving students an opportunity to formulate a semester long project studying the text of the Qur'an which meets the particular goals, abilities, and previous study of each individual student. Students in the Islamic Chaplaincy and/or Imam and Muslim Community Leadership programs will be encouraged to focus their semester projects on developing practical skills of Qur'anic recitation and reading that will be essential in their future work. The weekly meetings will be divided between lecture, group discussion of assigned readings, and practical study related to each student’s semester projects, which they will be required to report their progress on weekly as a part of a cumulative final project grade.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**
This course will require the successful completion of three main assignments. The first assignment will be the successful completion of a final exam based on weekly lectures covering the foundations of Qur'anic studies. The second requirement is to read the assigned articles for each week and come ready to discuss them. Each article will be assigned to a student who will lead the discussion and provide a one page summary for the rest of the class. This will count as part of participation points. In addition, students will also read sections of the Qur’an and identify key concepts and themes in class. Finally, students will have a final project assignment which they will be working on throughout the semester. This project may include close work with the Qur’an either in its Arabic form or an English translation. Each student is expected to meet with me to decide upon an individualized project that will be both enriching and consistent with their level of exposure to the Qur’an.

**ATTENDANCE POLICY:**
Attendance in class is required. If you know you will be unable to attend a class session please inform the professor in advance. Missing two unexcused sessions will result in an automatic lowering of your final grade by 10%. Missing three or more sessions without prior approval will result in automatic failure of the course.

**LEARNING GOALS:**
- To learn key elements of Qur’anic studies such as the history of the Qur’an’s text, Meccan and Medinan revelations, and the survey of hermeneutic literature extant in the Muslim scholastic tradition.
- To be able to engage and critically discuss various themes related to the nature and role of the Qur’an in Muslim society.
- To become familiar with skills in accessing the Quranic text as they are related to and relevant for each student’s career goals.
• To be able to identify key concepts, themes, and structural characteristics of the Qur’an.

REQUIRED TEXTS:


Translation of the Qur’an: M.A.S Abdel Haleem translation recommended.

RECOMMENDED TEXTS AND RESOURCES:

Ayoub, Mahmoud. *A Muslim View of Christianity.* Orbis Books.


Wadud, Amina. *Qurʾān and Woman*. Oxford University Press.


**GRADE DISTRIBUTION:**

Exam: 30%

Class Participation: 30%

Final Project: 40%

**CLASS SCHEDULE**

**Week 1: 9/8**

**Introduction**

Names of the Qurʾān, Audience of the Qurʾān, Revelation

Qurʾān Sample: *al-Fātiḥa* (1), *Yūsuf* (12), *Tāḥā* (20), *Hūd* (11)

**Week 2: 9/15**

**The Qurʾān and its Contextual Framework**

Mattson, Chapter 1: “God Speaks to Humanity”
Mir, “The Qur’an: Word of God” in *Voices*
Michot, Yahya. “Revelation,” in *Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic Theology*
Qur’an Sample: Chapters 93-114

**Week 3: 9/22**

**The General Structure and Themes of the Qur’an**

Madigan, (Cambridge Companion) “Themes and Topics of the Qur’an”
Ernst, pp. 20-75 “History and Form of the Qur’an.”
Morris, “Encountering the Qur’an: Contexts and Approaches” pp. 66-95
Qur’an Sample: *al-Nabā’* (78), *al-ʿAlaq* (96), and *al-Muzammil* (73)

**Week 4: 9/29**

**The Qur’an and Other Monotheistic Faiths**

Lumbard, “Prophets and Messengers in Islam”
Schleifer, “Mary: the Blessed Virgin of Islam”
Qur’an Sample: *al-Anbiyāʾ* (21), *Maryam* (19)

**Week 5: 10/6**

**The Qur’an and Other Monotheistic Faiths**

Sachedina, “The Qur’an and Other Religions,” in *Cambridge Companion to the Qur’an.*
Rahman, Appendix II “People of the Book and Diversity of Faiths”
Ayoub, Mahmoud, “Towards an Islamic Christology II” in *Muslim View of Christianity*, 156-183.
Qur’an Sample: *al-Mā’ida* (5)

**Week 6: 10/13**

**The Role of the Prophet Muhammad, Revelation, and the Meccan Context**

Mattson, Chapter 2: “The Prophet Conveys the Message”
Hanson, “Sunna: The Way of the Prophet Muhammad,” in *Voices of Islam* vol.i
Qur’an Sample: *al-An‘ām* (6)

**Week 7: 10/20**

**Beauty and Symbolism in the Qur’an**

Lings, Martin. “Qur’anic Symbolism of Water.”
Shawkat, Toorawa. “Islamic Literatures: Writing in the Shade of the Qur’an.”
Qur’an Sample: *al-Ibrāhīm* (14), *Kahaf* (18)

**Week 8: 10/27**
**The Qur’an and Orality**
Graham, “Recitation and Aesthetic Reception” in *Cambridge Companion*  
Mattson, Chapter 3: “The Voice and the Pen”  
Sells, “Hearing the Qur’an”  
Qur’an Sample: *al-Baqara* (2): 1-180

**Week 9: 11/3**
**The Qur’an and its Role In the Lives of Muslims**
Mattson, Chapter 4: “Blessed Words: Qur’an and Culture”  
Knysh, “Multiple Areas of Influence” in *Cambridge Companion*  
Abdallah, Umar. “Islam and the Cultural Imperative.”  
Qur’an Sample: *al-Baqara* (2): 180-286  
‘ULŪM AL-QUR’AN EXAM

**Week 10: 11/10**
**The Qur’an and Islamic Ethics**
Sells, (EIM) “Early Sufi Qur’an Interpretation”  
Qur’an Sample: *al-Qaṣaṣ* (28), *al-Mu‘minūn* (23)

**Week 11: 11/17**
**The Qur’an and its Exegesis**
Mattson, Chapter 5: “What God Really Means Interpreting the Qur’an”
Sells, “The Sura of Compassion”
McAuliffe (Cambridge Companion), “The Tasks and Traditions of Interpretation”
Qur’an Sample: Yāsīn (36), Waqī’a (56)

**Week 12: THANKSGIVING BREAK**

**Week 13: 12/1**

**The Qur’an as Art**
Blair, (Cambridge Companion) “Inscriptions in Art and Architecture”
Lings, “The Art of Qur’an Calligraphy.”
Khatibi, *The Splendor of Islamic Calligraphy*
Blair, *Islamic Calligraphy*
Qur’an Sample: al-Ḥadīd (57), al-Jumu’a (62), al-Ḥujurat (49)

**Week 14: 12/6**

FINAL EXAM

**FINAL PROJECTS DUE**