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

HARTFORD SEMINARY
Winter/Spring 2014

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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 will be
learning the foundational elements of what is known as ʿulūm al-Qurʾān or Qur’anic sciences.
This will be presented by me for a portion of each class in lecture form and students will take
an exam in this field upon its completion. A course pack based on original translations will be
made available to students for purchase. The second part of the course will be based on
reading discussions in class. The reading load will be divided among students who will each
present on and lead class discussions related to his/her assigned reading entry. This will count
as part of participation points. In addition, students will also read sections of the Qurʾan 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 Qurʾan 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 for their
career goals and consistent with their level of exposure to the Qurʾan.

**LEARNING GOALS:**
- To learn key elements of Qur’anic Sciences such as the history of the Qurʾan’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 Qurʾan 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
  Qurʾan.
GRADE DISTRIBUTION:
Exam: 30%
Class Participation: 30%
Final Project: 40%

REQUIRED TEXTS:


Qur’an Translation, Yusuf Ali or Ali Unal translation recommended.

RECOMMENDED TEXTS AND RESOURCES:

Azami, Muhammad. The History of the Qur’anic Text: from Revelation to Compilation. UK Islamic Academy.


Wadud, Amina. *Qur’an and Woman.* Oxford University Press.


**CLASS SCHEDULE**

**Week 1: 1/21**

**Introduction**

Names of the Qur’an, Audience of the Qur’an, Revelation

Qur’an Sample: : *al-Ḥāṣa (1), Yūsuf (12), Tāhā (20), Hūd (11)*

**Week 2: 1/28**

**The Qur’an and its Contextual Framework**

Mattson, Chapter 1: “God Speaks to Humanity”

Mir, “The Qur’an: Word of God” in *Voices*


Qur’an Sample: Chapters 93-114
Week 3: 2/4
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: 2/11
The Qur’an and Other Monotheistic Faiths
Lumbard, “Prophets and Messengers in Islam”
Schleifer, “Mary: the Blessed Virgin of Islam”
Qur’an Sample: al-Anbiyā’ (21), Maryam (19)

Week 5: 2/18
The Qur’an and Other Monotheistic Faiths
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: 2/25
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: 3/4
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: 3/11**

**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: 3/18**

**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: 3/25**

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

**Week 11: 4/1**

**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), Waqi‘a (56)

Week 12: 4/8 Women and the Qur’an
Wadud, Qur’an and Woman, chapters 1-3.
Qur’an Sample: Luqmān (31), Isrā’ (17), Nahl (16)

Week 13: 4/15
SPRING BREAK

Week 14: 4/22
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-Ḥujurāt (49)

FINAL PROJECT DUE