

The Qur'an as Literature
Spring 2016 - ARA4930/04EF

Instructor: Sarra Tlili
Course title: The Qur'an as Literature-ARA4930/04EF
Meeting time: T 8th-9th periods, R 9th period
Office location: 354 Pugh Hall
Office Hours: Thursday 10:00 am-12:00 pm.
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Course Description: This Course approaches the Qur'an from a literary standpoint. It examines this Scripture's history, themes, structure, and style and assesses its impact on Arabic literature, Islamic thought, and Muslim Culture.

Course Objectives: Upon successful completion students will:

- Become familiar with the Qur'an's major themes
- Gain firm understanding of the Qur'an's structure and stylistic features (e.g. characterization, plot, and voice)
- Learn about the Qur'an's use of literary devices (e.g. interplay between sound and meaning, irony, flashback, and foreshadowing)
- Become familiar with the scholarly debate on the history of the Qur'an
- Appreciate the impact of the Qur'an on Arab/Islamic culture and thought

Required Textbooks:

- Carl Ernst, *How to Read the Qur'an: A New Guide, with Select Translations* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011).
- Abdullah Saeed, *The Qur'an: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2008).
- Asma Barlas, *"Believing" Women in Islam: Unreading the Patriarchal Interpretations of the Qur'an* (Texas: University of Texas Press, 2002).
- Supplemental readings are available on Canvas
- The Qur'an: Several translations of the Qur'an are available online.

Additional Material: Additional material will be posted on Canvas. Depending on class interest and needs we may incorporate it or substitute it with other readings.

Course Requirements:

Participation: Class activities revolve primarily around discussions of reading materials, debates and short presentations. For every session you will be assigned one or more articles/book chapters. Please come prepared to discuss all material critically.

Presentations: Students are required to give 15-minute presentations on a topic of their choice at the end of the year, but which must be discussed with me no later than the tenth week of the semester. The presentation will be graded based on content, organization, and clarity.

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Other requirements: There will also be one midterm (March 8th) and one final exam (April 19th). There may also be pop quizzes.

Grading:

Class participation: 25%
Midterm: 20%
Final: 30%
Final presentation: 15%
Quizzes: 10%

A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	E
100-93	92-90	89-87	86-83	82-80	79-77	76-73	72-70	69-67	66-63	62-60	59-0
4.0	3.67	3.33	3.0	2.67	2.33	2.0	1.67	1.33	1.0	0.67	0

Note: A C- grade will not be sufficient for Majors or Minors or count towards a GE or Gordon Rule Credit or College Basic Distribution Credit. See UF website on grading policy:
<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>
<http://www.isis.ufl.edu/minusgrades.html>

General Administrative Issues:

Canvas: All assignments, announcements, exercises, study guides, grades, and other class-related matters will be posted on the course website on Canvas. It is your responsibility to check the website regularly and keep up to date with the class.

Class Attendance: Attendance and participation are mandatory. Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work are consistent with university policies that can be found in the online catalog at: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>. With the exception of religious holidays, for which you only need to give prior notice, all excuses must be documented. You are also allowed three absences without need to provide justification. Any additional non-excused absence will cause your course grade to drop by one degree (A becomes A-, A- becomes B+, and so forth). Every three late arrivals equal one absence.

Should you miss class for any reason, it is your responsibility to be informed of the material covered. Make-up options for missed exams and assignments are available only for excused absences. For more information, refer to the following website:
<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx#absences>

Late and Make up Work: No late work will be accepted or make-ups will be offered unless the student offers a legitimate documented excuse. See class attendance for

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more information.

Cell Phones and Other Electronic Devices: Students are expected to put their cell phones on silent during class time. Electronic devices may be used only for class activities upon instructor's request.

Academic Integrity: Academic honesty and integrity are fundamental values of the University community. An academic honesty offense is defined as the act of lying, cheating, or stealing academic information so that one gains academic advantage. Any individual who becomes aware of a violation of the Honor Code is bound by honor to take corrective action. Violations of the honor code include, but are not limited to: plagiarism, cheating, bribery, misrepresentation, fabrication, and conspiracy. Such violations may result in the following: lowering of grades, mandatory 0 on assignments, redoing assignments, a final failing grade in the course, expulsion from the course, referral to the student-run Honor Court. The Honor Code states: "We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity." On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment. For more information please refer to:
http://www.dso.ufl.edu/Academic_Honesty.html

Students with Special Needs: Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office (Disability Resources in Reid Hall). The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation. Contact the Disability Resources Center (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>) for information about available resources.

Counseling and Mental Health Resources: Students facing difficulties completing the course or who are in need of counseling or urgent help should call the on-campus Counseling and Wellness Center (352-392-1575; <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/>)

Online Course Evaluations: Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course based on 10 criteria. These evaluations are conducted online at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>

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Weekly Course Schedule of Topics and Assignments

Week 1 (Jan. 5): Context: Arabia, Islam, Muhammad (no class on January 7th)

- Watch *Empire of Faith*

Week 2 (Jan. 12 &14): Context (cont.) - Overview

- Daniel Brown, *A New Introduction to Islam* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004): "The Conquests", "Arabia", 3-20
- Saeed, Chap. 1
- Ernst, "Introduction" and Chap. 1
- Readings from the Qur'an: sura 35

Week 3 (Jan. 19 &21): Genesis

- Saeed, Chaps. 2&3
- Nöldeke, "The Koran", 72-94.
- Readings from the Qur'an: suras 96, 73, and 74.

Week 4 (Jan. 26 & 28): Translatability --First debate: Is the Qur'an translatable?

- Saeed, Chap. 7
- Bruce Lawrence, "Approximating *saj'* in English Renditions of the Qur'an: A Close Reading of Sura 93 (*al-Duḥā*) and the *basmala*," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 7. 1 (2005): 64-80.
- Ernst, pp. 62-72.
- Shawkat Toorawa, "The Inimitable Rose: being Qur'anic *saj'* from Sūrat al-Ḍuḥā to Sūrat al-Nās (Q.93-114) in English Rhyming Prose," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 8.2 (2006):143-156.
- Listening assignment: Listen to Shawkat Toorawa's video lecture titled "How (not) to translate the Qur'an" following this link: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EO0Lj70CCFU>

Week 5 (Feb. 2 &4): Structure

- Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy* (London: Routledge, 1988), "The Orality of Language" and "The Modern discovery of Primary Oral Cultures", 5-30.
- Michel Cuypers, "The Semitic Rhetoric in the Koran and a Pharaonic Papyrus" *US-China Foreign Language*, 8.1 (2010): 8-13. (Open Access)
http://www.ideo-cairo.net/IMG/pdf/The_Semitic_rhetoric_in_the_Koran_and_a_Pharaonic_papyrus-3.pdf
- Readings from the Qur'an: suras 1, 11:25-100, 18.

Week 6 (Feb 9 & 11): Early Meccan Suras – Themes of the Qur'an

- Ernst, Chap. 2
- Saeed, Chap. 4
- Thomas J. O'Shanghnessy, S. J., "God's Purpose in Creating According to the Qur'an" *Journal of Semitic Studies* 20.2 (1975): 193-209.
- Isra Yazicioglu, "Redefining the Miraculous: al-Ghazālī, Ibn Rushd and Said Nursī on Qur'anic Miracle Stories", *Journal of Qur'anic Studies*, 13.2 (2011): 86-108.

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- Rosalind Ward Gwynne, "Sign, Analogy, and the *Via Negativa*: Approaching the Transcendent God of the Qur'an" in *Sacred Tropes: Tanakh, New Testament, and Qur'an as Literature and Culture*, edited by Roberta Sterman Sabbath (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 53-63.
- Readings from the Qur'an: suras 112, 103, 69, 75, 78.

Week 7 (Feb. 16 & 18): Middle and later Meccan Suras

- James Bellamy, "The Mysterious Letters of the Koran: Old Abbreviations of the Basmalah" *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 93.3 (1973): 267-285.
- Martin Nguyen, "Exegesis of the *hurūf al-muqatta'a*: Polyvalency in Sunnī Traditions of Qur'anic Interpretation" *Journal of Qur'anic Studies*, 14.2 (2012): 1-28.
- Alan Jones, "The Mystical Letters of the Qur'an," *Studia Islamica* 16 (1962):5-11.
- Saeed, Chap. 8
- Ernst, Chap. 3
- Readings from the Qur'an: Suras 43 and 44.

Week 8 (Feb. 23 & 25): Medinan Suras

- Ernst, Chap. 4
- Saeed, Chap. 9
- Toshihiko Izutsu, *Ethico-religious Concepts in the Qur'an* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1966), 119-155.
- Readings from the Qur'an: Sura 3:33-52, 190-200.

March 1 & 3 - Spring Break

Week 9 (March 8 & 10) Midterm and Qur'anic narrative

Midterm – March 8th

- M.A.S. Abdel Haleem, "The Qur'anic Employment of the Story of Noah" *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 8.1 (2006): 38-57.

Week 10 (March 15 & 17): Qur'anic narrative and Women in the Qur'an

- Ingrid Mattson, "The Most Beautiful of Stories" in *Qur'an in Conversation*, edited by Michael Birkel (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2014), 14-21.
- A. H. Johns, "Jonah in the Qur'an: An Essay on Thematic Counterpoints" *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 5.2 (2003): 48-71.
- Barlas, Chaps. 1 & 2
- Readings from the Qur'an: Sura 12

Week 11 (March 22 & 24): Women in the Qur'an (cont.)

- Barlas, Chaps. 3, 4, 5
- Readings from the Qur'an: Suras 58:1-4, 66

Week 12 (March 29 & 31): Women in the Qur'an (cont.), Poverty and Wealth

- Barlas, 6, 7.
- Michael Bonner, "Poverty and Economics in the Qur'an" *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*. 35.3 (2005): 391-406.

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- Readings from the Qur'an: Sura 4:1-35

Week 13 (April 5 & 7): Contemporary Context (Peace /War, animals)

- Asma Afsaruddin, "War and Violence" in *The Qur'an: An Encyclopedia*, edited by Oliver Leaman (London: Routledge, 2005), 686-692.
- Muhammad Abdel Haleem, "War and Peace in the Qur'an" in *Understanding the Qur'an: Themes and Style* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1999), 61-73.
- Animals in the Qur'an
- Readings from the Qur'an: Suras 9 and 10.

Week 14 (12 & 14): Final – Contemporary Context

Tuesday April 12th – Final

- Animals in the Qur'an

Week 15 (April 19): Presentations