READING THE QUR’AN IN ENGLISH TRANSLATION

RLST 290AK-L01
Winter 2014
10:00 – 11:15 a.m. TR
Room 213, Luther College

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Office Hours: Please contact me in class, or by phone or e-mail, to make an appointment. I am generally available in my office during the week, but an appointment will ensure that you will be able to see me.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course explores the content and literary style of the Qur’an in the context of the late antique Near East. Large parts of the Qur’an will be read in various English translations. Sometimes texts belonging to other religious groups explicitly mentioned in the Qur’an, such as Jews and Christians, will also be read. Students will be exposed to the scholarly challenges of studying the different layers and genres of the text, identifying its audience, and dealing with the limits of translation.

The aim is for students to:

- Appreciate the particular power of the Qur’an as the scripture of Muslims.
- Gain some understanding of the structure of the Qur’an, and its rhetorical and thematic characteristics.
- Learn about the historical process of the origins of the Qur’an in Late Antiquity.
- Cultivate a critical awareness of multiple interpretive approaches to a sacred text such as the Qur’an.
- Develop the skills of close reading and analysis of textual units (pericopes) of the Qur’an, making use of available scholarly literature
- Identify the use of Christian and Jewish intertexts in the Qur’an
- Appreciate the challenges of translation and cross-cultural communication

The success of this course depends on your participation. Evaluation will be based on your reading of the Qur’an and supplemental material, your writing about it, frequent quizzes, and your participation in class and on-line.

META-SKILLS

In this course, students will work on developing the following general competencies:

- Close and careful reading and analysis of texts. This skill will be developed through the reading of the qur’anic text in class, applying the tools of scholarly approaches, and in the assigned written pericope studies.
- Cross-cultural competence. This competence will be developed in the identification of the interplay between the Qur’an and other sacred texts, and in the relationship of these ancient texts to the modern world.
• Reading, writing, research and critical analysis. These skills will be developed and practiced through class presentations and discussion, quizzes, and the writing assignments.
• Historical consciousness. This capability will be developed through the examination of the origins of the Qur’an in the Late Antique context, and the recognition of flux and change from a human experiential perspective in the reception and canonization of the Qur’an.

COURSE PREREQUISITE

Completion of 12 credit hours or RLST 100 (or permission of the department head). No prior knowledge of Arabic or Islam is required or expected.

Please note that this is not a class in basic Muslim beliefs and practices. While the Qur’an is fundamental to Muslim beliefs and practices, our focus in this course will be on gaining familiarity with the text of the Qur’an. Class members who wish an introduction to the basic tenets of Islam are directed to the great variety of introductory textbooks on the subject, and are also encouraged, if they have not already done so, to enroll in RLST 100 “Introduction to Religious Studies” and/or RLST 241 “Introduction to Islam”.

REQUIRED TEXTS


2. At least two different English translations of the Qur’an. The translations by Yusuf Ali and M.A.S. Abdel Haleem are suggested as translations by Muslims; the translations by A.J. Arberry and A.J. Droge are suggested as translations by non-Muslims.

Other readings will be assigned and made available on-line or on library reserve. Class handouts (including this course syllabus!) are also required reading.

SUPPLEMENTAL TEXTS

Reading the Qur’an; the contemporary relevance of the sacred text of Islam, Ziauddin Sardar. London: Hurst & Company, 2011.

[published in 2002 as The Qur’an: A short introduction]

Familiarity with the following scholarly resources is a requirement for successful completion of this course (other resources may be added to this list):
COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. You are expected to attend class, and to have completed the assigned readings and any assignments for each class period. You are also expected to make active use of the discussion area and other features of the class website. Your class participation mark, and your general performance in this course, will depend on your attendance, and on your preparedness and active participation in class and on-line. Please note the academic regulation concerning class attendance in the 2013-2014 Undergraduate Calendar, §5.3. Persistent absenteeism and/or tardiness will jeopardize your ability to pass this course.

2. You will write a short quiz, based on the reading assignments and class lectures and discussion, at the beginning of each class session on Tuesdays. The quizzes are meant to motivate you to keep up with the material. While 12 quizzes in total will be written, only the 10 with the highest marks will be counted towards your final grade. Missed quizzes cannot be made up.

3. You will write three papers (5-7 pages each): two analyses of qur’anic periscopes, one on a Meccan sura and one on a Medinan sura (or part of a sura), and a paper on a thematic topic. Further information will be provided in class. Written assignments are due on Thursdays, January 30, March 6, and April 17.

**Note: You must complete all of the above requirements in order to pass this course. For written assignments, see the section on “Written Work” below.

There is no final exam in this class.

EVALUATION

Class and on-line participation 15%
Quizzes: 10 X 2.5 25%
3 Written Assignments: 15%, 20%, and 25% 60%
CLASS SCHEDULE

Readings and other assignments will be given in class and posted on the course website. They will be chosen from the lists below. It is your responsibility to keep informed on assignments and their due dates.

1. The Opening and Closing of the Qur’an

Suras 1, 112, 113, 114  
Ernst: Introduction: “The problem of reading the Qur’an”

2. Overview and Historical Context

Suras: As assigned  
Ernst: Chapter One: “The history and form of the Qur’an and the practices of reading”

3. Early Meccan Period

Suras: As assigned  
Ernst: Chapter Two: “Early Meccan suras”

4. Middle and Late Meccan Period

Suras: As assigned  
Ernst: Chapter Three: “Middle and Later Meccan Suras”

5. Medinan Period

Suras: As assigned.  
Ernst: Chapter Four: “Medinan Suras”

6. A Literary, Historical and Intertextual Approach?

Suras: As assigned.  
Ernst: Conclusion: “Toward a Literary Reading of the Qur’an”

7. Contemporary Themes and Issues

Sardar: As assigned.

NOTE: We will attempt to follow this schedule but circumstances may require modifications along the way.
WRITTEN WORK

- All written work must be typewritten on 8 1/2" by 11" white numbered pages, provided with a cover page with a title, your name and student number, and stapled in the upper left-hand corner. No binders or report covers, please!
- Written work should be properly referenced with consistent full citations and a properly formatted bibliography.
- Written work is due on the deadlines specified in the class schedule above. If, for circumstances beyond your control (e.g. medical reasons, death in the family), you are unable to complete the written work on time, you must apply, in advance if possible, with the instructor for an extension. Assignments submitted late without permission of the instructor will be penalized 10% for every day overdue.
- Plagiarism will result in a mark of zero for the written assignment. See the academic regulations regarding plagiarism in the 2013-2014 Undergraduate Calendar, § 5.13.2. The authenticity and scholarly reliability of sources from the Internet must be carefully evaluated before being used; if in doubt, consult the instructor.

COURSE WEBSITE

You will need to access the course website for at least four purposes:
- To participate in on-line discussions.
- To find up-to-date information on readings and other assignments.
- To access various course materials.
- To check your marks.

We will be using the U of R’s on-line course support system, UR Courses. Log in at http://urcourses.uregina.ca. If you need help, contact the Information Services Helpdesk at helpdesk@uregina.ca or 585-4685.
HELPFUL STUFF

If, because of a disability, you have need for accommodations in this course, please discuss this matter as soon as possible with the instructor, and also contact the Centre for Student Accessibility at 585-4631 (Riddell Centre 251). See http://www.uregina.ca/studserv/disability/index.shtml

The University of Regina Counselling Services at 251 Riddell Centre (585-4491) provides personal counseling, educational and career planning, and training in skills for academic success. See http://www.uregina.ca/counselling/facts.shtml.

The Religious Studies Students Association (RSSA) is an organization of students interested in the study of religion, and welcomes you to participate in their activities. The RSSA will sponsor various events during the year - watch for posters and announcements. See http://www.uregina.ca/arts-religious-studies/current-students/rssa.html

TEACHING AND LEARNING PHILOSOPHY

You, as a student, are responsible for your own learning; I, as an instructor, am responsible to assist you with your learning. I do not claim to have all the answers on the subject matter; rather, together we will generate productive questions and explore possible answers. Instead of competing with other students in class, make friends and collaborate.

I will strive to be prepared each class; I expect you also to be prepared. I will work hard, be involved and enthusiastic; I expect the same from you. I expect you to read the required readings, take notes, ask questions and talk about what you are learning. I will respect your contributions and alternative views of the material.

I will maintain standards to ensure learning. I will endeavour to inform you of your standing in the class in an ongoing manner.

Please do not hesitate to contact the instructor about any questions or problems connected with the course. See the next page of academic announcements for helpful information on student responsibilities, and various procedures and deadlines.

SOME ADVICE FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

1. Ask questions.
2. Sit in the front.
3. Take good notes.
4. Read the required readings.
5. Talk with others about what you are learning.
6. Manage your time.
7. Make friends.

“A mind is not a vessel to be filled. It is a fire to be kindled”
Plutarch
Special Needs
Any student with a disability who may need accommodations should discuss these with the course instructor, and contact the Coordinator of the Centre for Student Accessibility at (306)585-4631.

Student Responsibilities and Course Prerequisites
Students are responsible for understanding and following the academic regulations outlined in the University Calendar. Please see §5.1 of the 2013-14 Calendar under Responsibilities of Students. Your first responsibility is to ensure that you have the necessary prerequisite for this class. If not, you will not receive credit for it at graduation time, and you may have difficulty in completing your degree program.

Attendance
Regular and punctual attendance is expected of students in their courses. Students who are persistently tardy or absent or who neglect academic work may be subject to disciplinary action and may be excluded from the final examinations (§5.3 of the 2013-14 Calendar). Please note any specific requirements for attendance in this course.

University Email Accounts
Check your University of Regina email account regularly or have your University email forwarded to your preferred email address; see http://www.uregina.ca/is/student/email/index.html

Procedures and Dates for Dropping Courses
All changes to course registration must be made in writing to your Faculty or College. Students who are not attending but have not formally withdrawn are still considered to be registered, are liable for fees, and are assigned a failing grade of NP for failing to complete the course. Non-attendance does not constitute withdrawal.

Last day to drop a course and receive 100% refund: January 20, 2014
Last day to drop a course without a transcript record: January 20, 2014
Last day to withdraw from a course and receive 50% refund: February 3, 2014
Last day to withdraw from a course without a failing grade: March 17, 2014

Academic Misconduct – Plagiarism and Cheating
Note the definitions of plagiarism and cheating in §5.13.2.2 of the 2013-14 Calendar, as well as the potential punishments (which range from a grade of 0 on the test or essay in question up to expulsion from the University). If you have any questions about the proper methods of citing sources, the extent to which sources (including internet resources) must be cited, or what might constitute plagiarism, please discuss your questions with your instructor before handing in work! Please note that when you hand in assignments, it is assumed that you handed in the version you intended to hand in – the excuse that you ‘accidentally’ handed in the wrong file will not be accepted.

Procedures for Requesting Deferrals of Final Exams or Term Work
If you are unable to finish your final exam or term work for reasons beyond your control (e.g., illness, accident, death in the family), please contact the Assistant/Associate Dean of your Faculty or College as soon as possible for advice. Procedures for requesting deferral of final examinations or term work are outlined in see §5.7 of the 2013-14 Calendar. If you experience any personal difficulties during the semester, for example due to illness or family issues, please discuss your situation with your instructor and/or your Assistant/Associate Dean as soon as possible.

University Harassment and Discrimination Prevention Policy
All members of the University community are entitled to a professional working and learning environment free of harassment and discrimination. See §8.4.6 of the 2013-14 Calendar for more details.

Wishing you a successful semester!