

ISLA 501
The Qur'an: Text and History
McGill University
Institute of Islamic Studies
MW 4:05-5:25PM
SH688 361

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Office location: Morrice Hall, Room 309
Office hours: Wednesdays 10:30am-12:00pm

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course studies the Qur'an's teachings, structures, style, and history in light of classical and modern scholarship. Following the chronological order of the Qur'an, classes will consist of close readings of excerpts of the Qur'an and engagement with various academic methodologies from both Western and Islamic contexts of study. We will explore the Qur'an as both oral and written scripture as well as how it functions as a rhetorical, literary, historical, theological, linguistic, and liturgical text.

EVALUATION

This course contains five main grading components:

1. **Research Journal (20%)**: You will be provided with a small notebook in which to take class notes, jot down questions or points of confusion, useful technical terminology, any primary or secondary sources you may be interested in perusing, and/or ideas for your final paper. At the end of each month, I will take in your Research Journals and review them to assess your work and progress in the course. Since the Research Journal represents your attendance and participation in class, please make sure to date each entry clearly.
2. **Peer Teaching (20%)**: Each student is expected to lead discussion in one class using the readings assigned as a foundation. You will present on the class readings for 10-15 minutes, making sure to identify the main methodology and argument of each author and explain how we might apply their methodology to our readings from the Qur'an that week. You will then provide some thoughtful questions to your peers to help initiate further discussion.

3. **Proposal and Annotated Bibliography (10%): DUE WEDNESDAY SEPTEMBER 29, 2021 BY 11:59PM**

Your proposal should consist of a 400-word abstract that includes a summary of your tentative research question, methodology, sources, preliminary arguments, and significance of your research project. You must also attach an annotated bibliography consisting of 6-8 sources (for undergrads) or 10-15 sources (for grads) with notes addressing the main argument of each source and its overall relevance to your research project.

4. **Outline (10%): DUE MONDAY OCTOBER 18, 2021 BY 11:59PM**

Your outline should consist of a clear point-by-point illustration of the flow of your argument for your final research paper. Beginning with your thesis statement, the rest of your outline should delineate the path from your research question to the final conclusion in the form of bullet points with each point representing a paragraph in your final paper. Sections and subheadings must be used. A sample outline will be provided as a model.

5. **First Draft with Abstract AND Final Research Paper with Cover Letter (10% + 30% = 40%): FIRST DRAFT DUE MONDAY NOVEMBER 22, 2021 (Paper and Abstract only). FINAL DRAFT DUE FRIDAY DECEMBER 10, 2021 BY 11:59PM (with Cover Letter attached indicating revisions).**

Your final paper will go through a review process similar to what typical academic journals might require. You will submit a polished first draft to me in November, which I will offer comments on. Subsequently, you will implement the suggestions I made and revise your paper. You will then resubmit your paper with a cover letter explaining what changes you made and justifying any changes you chose not to implement.

PAPER FORMAT GUIDELINES: 12 pages (undergrads), 15-20 pages (grads), 12 pt. Times New Roman font, double-spaced, normal margins, IJMES transliteration system, cover page with: title, student name, student number, student status (year of study and major), course name, date of submission, page count, and word count.

REQUIRED READINGS (Available on McGill Library website)

1. Neuwirth, Angelika. *The Qur'an and Late Antiquity: A Shared Heritage*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019.
2. Suyūṭī, Jalāl al-Dīn al-. *The Perfect Guide to the Sciences of the Qur'an*. Reading: Garnet Publishing Limited, 2011.
3. Abdel-Haleem, M.A.S. (Trans.). *The Qur'an*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

All other readings can be found online through the McGill Library website.

CLASS SCHEDULE

WEEK 1 – INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE

WEDNESDAY SEPTEMBER 1

- Qur'an: suras/chapters 96, 68, 73, 74, 1, 111, 81, 87, 92, 89, 93, 94, 103

WEEK 2 – HOW TO STUDY THE QUR'AN

MONDAY SEPTEMBER 6 – **Holiday (Labor Day)**

WEDNESDAY SEPTEMBER 8

- Qur'an: 100, 108, 102, 107, 109, 105, 113, 114, 112, 53, 80, 97, 91, 85, 95, 106, 101
- Angelika Neuwirth, "Introduction," *The Qur'an and Late Antiquity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 1-31.
- Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, "Introduction," *The Perfect Guide to the Sciences of the Qur'an* (Reading: Garnet Publishing Limited, 2011), xix-xxxiii.

WEEK 3 – THE QUR'AN AND LATE ANTIQUITY

MONDAY SEPTEMBER 13

- Qur'an: 75, 104, 77, 50, 90, 86, 54, 38
- Neuwirth, "The Qur'an and History," *The Qur'an and Late Antiquity*, 105-138.

WEDNESDAY SEPTEMBER 15

- Qur'an: 7, 72
- Ibn Hishām, Ibn Ishāq and Alfred Guillaume, "The Beginning of Christianity in Najran," *The Life of Muhammad: A Translation* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1967), 14-16.
- Muqātil b. Sulaymān, *Tafsīr Muqātil*, Q7:27-30. [Arabic]

WEEK 4 – HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

MONDAY SEPTEMBER 20

- Qur'an: 36, 25, 35, 19
- Neuwirth, "Stages of Communal Formation in the Early Meccan Period," *The Qur'an and Late Antiquity*, 239-275.
- Suyūṭī, "Occasions of Revelation," *The Perfect Guide*, 55-70.

WEDNESDAY SEPTEMBER 22

- Qur'an: 20, 56, 26
- Walid Saleh, "The Preacher of the Meccan Qur'an: Deuteronomic History and Confessionalism in Muhammad's Early Preaching," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 20.2 (2018): 74-111.
- Alī b. Aḥmad al-Wāḥidī, *Asbāb al-Nuzūl* (Amman: Royal Aal al-Bayt, 2008), 111, 145-146.

WEEK 5 – LITURGICAL AND ORAL ANALYSIS

MONDAY SEPTEMBER 27

- Qur'an: 27, 28, 17
- Neuwirth, "The Liturgical Qur'an," *The Qur'an and Late Antiquity*, 201-238.
- Suyūṭī, "The Arts of Reciting the Qur'an," *The Perfect Guide*, 263-294.

WEDNESDAY SEPTEMBER 29 – **ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE BY 11:59PM**

- Qur'an: 10, 11
- Andrew G. Bannister, "The Narrativ Roots of the Islamic Tradition," *An Oral-Formulaic Study of the Qur'an* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2014), 38-54.

WEEK 6 – TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

MONDAY OCTOBER 4TH

- Qur'an: 12, 15
- Mariana Klar, "Text-Critical Approaches to Sura Structure: Combining Synchronicity with Diachronicity in *Surat al-Baqara*, Part One," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 19.1 (2017): 1-38.

WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 6TH

- Qur'an: 6, 37
- Nicolai Sinai, "The Qur'an's Dietary Tetralogue: A Diachronic Reconstruction," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 46 (2019): 113-

WEEK 7 – LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS

MONDAY OCTOBER 11 – Holiday (Thanksgiving)

THURSDAY OCTOBER 14TH – **MONDAY MAKEUP**

- Qur'an: 31, 34, 39, 40
- El-Badawi, Emran, "The Impact of Aramaic (especially Syriac) on the Qur'an," *Religion Compass* 8/7 (2014): 220-228.
- Suyūṭī, "Chapter 38," *Al-Itqān fi 'ulūm al-Qur'ān*, 288-300. [Arabic]

WEEK 8 – SOURCE-CRITICAL ANALYSIS

MONDAY OCTOBER 18 - **OUTLINE DUE BY 11:59PM**

- Qur'an: 41, 42, 43
- Neuwirth, "The Qur'an and Scripture," *The Qur'an and Late Antiquity*, 65-103.
- Schoeler, Gregor, "The Constitution of the Koran as a Codified Work: Paradigm for Codifying *Hadīth* and the Islamic Sciences," *Oral Tradition* 25:1 (2010): 199-210.

WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 20

- Qur'an: 44, 45, 46, 51
- Neuwirth, "Redaction and History of the Text," *The Qur'an and Late Antiquity*, 139-162.

WEEK 9 – COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

MONDAY OCTOBER 25

- Qur'an: 88, 18, 16
- Neuwirth, "Qur'an and Bible," *The Qur'an and Late Antiquity*, 347-378.

WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 27

- Qur'an: 71, 14, 21, 23
- Michael E. Pregill, "The Hebrew Bible and the Qur'an: The Problem of the Jewish 'Influence' on Islam," *Religion Compass* 1.6 (2007): 643-59.
- Al-Biqā'ī and Walid Saleh, *In Defense of the Bible* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 81-88. [Arabic]

WEEK 10 – RHETORICAL ANALYSIS

MONDAY NOVEMBER 1

- Qur'an: 32, 52, 67, 69, 70, 78, 79
- Michel Cuypers, "Introduction," and "The Question of the Coherence of the Qur'anic Text," *The Composition of the Qur'an: Rhetorical Analysis* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), vii-x, 1-12.

WEDNESDAY NOVEMBER 3

- Qur'an: 82, 84, 30, 29, 83
- Neuwirth, "The Rhetorical Qur'an," *The Qur'an and Late Antiquity*, 453-482.

WEEK 11 – LITERARY ANALYSIS

MONDAY NOVEMBER 8

- Qur'an: 2
- Neuwirth, "Sura Structures and Chronology," *The Qur'an and Late Antiquity*, 163-199.

WEDNESDAY NOVEMBER 10

- Qur'an: 3, 8
- Carl W. Ernst, "Toward a Literary Reading of the Qur'an," *How to Read the Qur'an* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 205-212.

WEEK 12 – GENDER ANALYSIS

MONDAY NOVEMBER 15

- Qur'an: 33, 60
- Aisha Geissinger, "Mary in the Qur'an, Re-reading Subversive Births," in *Sacred Tropes: Tanakh, New Testament, and the Qur'an as Literature and Culture* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2009), 379-92.

WEDNESDAY NOVEMBER 17

- Qur'an: 4
- Laury Silvers, "'In the Book We have Left out Nothing': The Ethical Problem of the Existence of Verse 4:34 in the Qur'an," *Comparative Islamic Studies* 2.2 (2006), pp. 171-180.

WEEK 13 – THEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

MONDAY NOVEMBER 22 – **FIRST DRAFT OF PAPER DUE BY 11:59PM**

- Qur'an: 99, 57, 47, 13, 55, 76, 65
- Nevin Reda, "Tafsir, Tradition, and Methodological Contestations," in *Islamic Interpretive Tradition and Gender Justice: Processes of Canonization, Subversion, and Change* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2020), 67-99.

WEDNESDAY NOVEMBER 24

- Qur'an: 98, 59, 24, 22
- Younus Y. Mirza, "Ibn Taymiyya As Exegete: Moses' Father-In-Law and the Messengers in Surat Ya Sin," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 19.1 (2017): 39-71.

WEEK 14 – SOCIOPOLITICAL APPROACHES TO THE QUR'AN

MONDAY NOVEMBER 29

- Qur'an: 63, 58, 49, 66, 64, 61, 62
- Neuwirth, "Stages of Communal Formation in Medina," 313-345.

WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 1

- Qur'an: 48, 5
- Mun'im Sirry, "Towards Understanding the Qur'an's Polemical Texts," *Scriptural Polemics: The Qur'an and Other Religions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 33-65.

WEEK 15 – TEXT AND HISTORY

MONDAY DECEMBER 6

- Qur'an: 9, 110
- Neuwirth, "How the Qur'an Has Been Read So Far," *The Qur'an and Late Antiquity*, 33-64.

FINAL DRAFT OF PAPER DUE FRIDAY DECEMBER 10TH AT 11:59PM