

Major Themes in the Qur'an (Rel. 115): Fall 2009

Instructor: Dr. Arash Naraghi

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Office Hours: Monday 9am-10am; Tuesday 1:30pm-2:30pm; Wednesday 9am-10am; and by appointment.

Lectures: MW 11:45am- 12:55pm, Main St. Campus, Comenius Hall, 305

Course Description:

- The course outlines three major topics related to the Qur'an:

(i) *The basic structure of Qur'anic worldview:* In the first part of the course, the main question is as follows: What are the major themes of the Qur'an? To address this question, we discuss Qur'anic views of God, Human being, the Muslim Community, the Structure of the World as human beings' home, and Etico-Religious concepts. We particularly emphasis on three types of relations between God and human being as conceived in the Qur'an: Ontological relation, Communicative relation, and Ethical relation.

(ii) *Interpreting the Qur'an:* In the second part of the course, the main question is as follows: How should one understand and interpret the Qur'an? To address this question, we discuss three major approaches in the tradition of Qur'anic exegesis: Textualism, Semi-textualism, and Contextualism.

(iii) *Contemporary Challenges:* In the last part of the course, we are concerned with the following questions: What are the major challenges to Qur'anic world view in modern era? To address this question, we discuss three major challenges to Qur'anic world view: (a) Scientific challenges; (b) Feminist challenges; and (c) Political challenges.

- Throughout the course, we also read and discuss some chapters of the Qur'an to have a better sense of style and content of the text.

(M3)

Course Objectives:

- To develop a substantial understanding of the text of the Qur'an, including its form, style, and content.
- To develop skills of textual analysis through close reading and the comparison of texts.
- To exercise scholarly fairness, sympathy, and tolerance toward different cultures and world views, and expand our intellectual horizon.
- To develop expository writing skills.
- In a class of this nature, class members will naturally come with or develop a wide variety of opinions about the topics covered. But the goal of this course is not to agree and to adopt a single opinion concerning the interpretation of a particular text; rather, the goal is to back up or criticize the opinions put forward in a rational manner, and to reveal the complexity of cultural phenomena, particularly, in the realm of religion.

Required Texts:

- *God and Man in the Qur'an (Semantics of the Qur'anic Weltanschauung)*, Toshihiko Izutsu. Islamic Book Trust, Kuala Lumpur, 2002. ISBN: 983-9154-38-9
- *Approaching the Qur'an (The Early Revelations)*, Introduced and translated by Michael Sells, White cloud Press, 2002 (or any more recent edition). ISBN:1-883991-26-9.
- *The Cambridge Companion to The Qur'an*, Edited by Jane Dammen McAuliffe, Cambridge University Press, 2006. ISBN: 978-0-521-53934-0

These books are available at Moravian College Book Store.

- Some additional articles would also be available during the course on the Blackboard. (Please make sure to register for the course Blackboard.)

If you like to have a hard copy of the Qur'an, the following translations are recommended:

- *The Koran Interpreted*, Arthur Arberry, New York: Macmillan, 1955.

Or

- *The Meaning of the Holy Qur'an*, Yusuf Abdullah Ali, Brentwood, Md.: Amana Corporation, 1991.

- For the purpose of this course, you may use online version of the Qur'an. For example, see the following link: <http://www.islamicity.com/mosque/quran/>

For further reading on the Qur'an, the following book is recommended:

- *The Opening the Qur'an (Introducing Islam's Holy Book)*, Walter H. Wagner, University of Notre Dame Press, 2008. ISBN: 13:978-0-268-04415-2.

Note: You will find that you get the most out of the course if you read each assignment before lecture and then re-read the assignment after the lecture.

Lecture attendance:

It is not possible to perform well in the course without attending lecture regularly. We will cover substantial amounts of material in lecture not included anywhere in the readings. It is highly unlikely that you will learn this material adequately by, e.g., borrowing your friend's lecture notes. You have two class sessions you can miss with no questions asked. Beyond those two class sessions, any further missed classes without a really good excuse (involving a note from your doctor, psychiatrist, parole officer, etc.) will cost you 2% of your final grade.

Academic honesty:

Students are required to honor academic integrity. The course imposes the application of Moravian College's Academic Honesty Policy. The policy is to be found at Moravian College's *Student Handbook*.

Course requirements:

A regular final exam, scheduled for **Friday December 18, at 1:30pm**, plus a midterm (tentatively scheduled for **Wednesday, September 30**), and two short papers (600-800 words) due throughout the semester. Papers should be typed, double spaced, and spell-checked. You are responsible to submit a hard copy of your paper. In some exceptional cases, you may be allowed to submit your papers through email. If so, you must receive a confirmation email from me, otherwise, you must assume that I have not received your paper.

You will be provided with several suggested paper topics; however, you are allowed to write on a topic of your own choice as long as the topic is in the domain of the issues discussed in the class. If you decide to write on a topic of your choice, please make sure you have my approval first.

If a paper is turned in late without prior permission, the grade will be adjusted downwards by a third of a grade for each day the paper is late (e.g., A to A-, A- to B+, B+ to B, etc.). Make up midterm and final exams will be administered only under the most extraordinary of circumstances, and only in light of appropriate supporting documents.

Although the papers are rather short, you will find that they require an amount of effort far disproportionate to their length. You are required to discuss the draft of your paper with me before you submit the final version of your paper. You may also want to show a draft to your friends, roommates, or classmates so as to solicit feedback.

Important note: *All two papers, plus the midterm and the final must be completed in order to pass the course.*

Grading:

Each paper- 20% (Total 40%)

Midterm exam-30%

Final exam-30%

You will be provided with a study guide for the midterm and for the final a week prior to the exams.

The grading scale is as follows:

Points	Grade	4-point conversion
95-100	A	4
90-95	A-	3.7
87-90	B+	3.3
84-87	B	3
80-84	B-	2.7
77-80	C+	2.3
74-77	C	2
70-74	C-	1.7
67-70	D+	1.3
64-67	D	1
60-64	D-	0.7
0-60	F	0

Tentative Lecture Schedule:

Part I	Preliminary Remarks
Aug. 31	<p>*Introducing the Text: History and General Features of the Qur'an <i>*Reading:</i> Fred M. Donner, "The historical context", From: <i>The Cambridge Companion to the Qur'an</i>, pp.23-39. Also, <i>Approaching the Qur'an</i>, "Introduction", pp.1-31.</p>
Sept. 2	Introducing the Text (Continue)
Sept. 7	Labor Day- No class
Part II	Qur'anic Worldview
Sept. 9	<p>*The Basic Structure of the Qur'anic Worldview <i>*Reading:</i> <i>God and Man in the Qur'an</i>, Ch. 3, pp.74-99 *Discussion: <i>Approaching the Qur'an</i>,pp.42-47.</p>
Sept.14	<p>*The Basic Structure of the Qur'anic Worldview (Continue) *Discussion: <i>Approaching the Qur'an</i>, pp. 48-55.</p>
Sept.16	<p>*God in the Qur'an (Allah) <i>*Reading:</i> <i>God and Man in the Qur'an</i>, Ch.4, pp.110-126; Also, Daniel A. Madigan, "Themes and topics", in <i>The Cambridge Companion to the Qur'an</i>, pp.79-96 <i>*Recommended article:</i> Andrew Rippin, "God", in <i>The Blackwell Companion to the Qur'an</i>, edited by Andrew Rippin, Ch. 14, pp.223-233. (More information on this article would be posted on the Blackboard) *Discussion: <i>Approaching the Qur'an</i>,pp.56-63.</p>
Sept.21	<p>*God in the Qur'an (Allah) (Continue) *Discussion: <i>Approaching the Qur'an</i>,pp.64-71.</p>
Sept.23	<p>*Man in the Qur'an <i>*Reading:</i> Fazlur Rahman, <i>Major Themes of the Qur'an</i>, Ch. Two, pp.17-36. (More information on this chapter would be posted on the Blackboard.) *Discussion: <i>Approaching the Qur'an</i>,pp.72-77. *Study Guide for the Midterm</p>
Sept.28	Review Session for the Midterm
Sept.30	Midterm Exam

Oct.5	<p>*The relation between God and man: Ontological relation <i>*Reading: God and Man in the Qur'an, Ch. 5, pp. 127-139.</i> *Discussion: <i>Approaching the Qur'an,pp.78-83.</i> <i>*First Paper Assignment</i></p>
Oct.7	<p>*The relation between God and man: Communicative relation or Wahy <i>*Reading: God and Man in the Qur'an, Ch.'s 6 & 7</i> Also, Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, "The Qur'an: God and Man in Communication" (The article would be available on the Blackboard) *Discussion: <i>Approaching the Qur'an,pp.84-89.</i></p>
Oct.12	Recess
Oct.14	<p>*The relation between God and man: Communicative relation or Wahy(Continue) *Discussion: <i>Approaching the Qur'an,pp.90-93.</i></p>
Oct.19	<p>*Prophethood and Prophets in the Qur'an <i>*Reading: Uri Rubin, "Prophets and Prophethood", in The Blackwell Companion to the Qur'an, Ch. 15, pp.234-247. (More information on this article would be posted on the Blackboard)</i> *Discussion: <i>Approaching the Qur'an,pp.94-99.</i></p>
Oct.21	<p>*The relation between God and man: Ethical relation <i>*Reading: God and Man in the Qur'an, Ch.9, pp.254-273.</i> Also, Toshihiko Izutsu, <i>Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qur'an</i>, Ch.V. "The Islamization of Old Arab Virtues", pp.74-104. (More information on this chapter would be posted on the Blackboard) *Discussion: <i>Approaching the Qur'an,pp.100-107.</i> <i>* First draft due</i></p>
Oct.26	<p>*The relation between God and man: Ethical relation (Continue) *Discussion: <i>Approaching the Qur'an,pp.108-111.</i></p>
Oct.28	<p>*Qur'anic Cosmology: The Seen and The Visible <i>*Reading: God and Man in the Qur'an, pp. 83-97.</i> Also, Fazlur Rahman, <i>Major Themes of the Qur'an</i>, Ch. 4 pp.65-79,and Ch.6, pp.106-120 (More information on these chapters would be posted on the Blackboard) And, Walter Wagner, "The Qur'an on the End of This World and Life in the Hereafter", in <i>Opening the Qur'an</i>, Ch. 9, pp.231-254. (More information on this chapter would be posted on the Blackboard.) *Discussion: <i>Approaching the Qur'an,pp.112-115.</i></p>
Part III	Interpreting the Qur'an

Nov.2	<p>*Interpretation of the Qur'an (1): Based on tradition *Reading: Jane Dammen McAuliffe, "The task and traditions of interpretation", in <i>The Cambridge Companion to The Qur'an</i>, pp.181-209. Also, Abdullah Saeed, <i>Interpreting the Qur'an (Toward a contemporary approach)</i>, Ch. 4 (More information on this book would be posted on the Blackboard) *Discussion: <i>Approaching the Qur'an</i>,pp.116-119.</p>
Nov.4	<p>*Interpretation of the Qur'an (2): Based on Reason *Reading: Abdullah Saeed, <i>Interpreting the Qur'an</i> , Ch. 5, (More information on this book would be posted on the Blackboard) *Discussion: <i>Approaching the Qur'an</i>,pp.120-123. *First Paper Due</p>
Nov.9	<p>*Interpretation of the Qur'an (3): Based on Socio-historical Context *Reading: Abdullah Saeed, <i>Interpreting the Qur'an</i>, Ch. 10 (More information on this book would be posted on the Blackboard) *Discussion: <i>Approaching the Qur'an</i>,pp.124-127. *Second Paper Assignment</p>
Part IV	Modern Challenges to the Qur'an
Nov.11	<p>*Scientific Challenges (1) *Reading: Andrew Rippin, "The Qur'an and Modernity", in <i>Muslims: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices</i>, Ch. 14, pp.218-245. *Discussion: <i>Approaching the Qur'an</i>,pp.128-133.</p>
Nov.16	<p>*Scientific Challenges (2) Discussion: <i>Approaching the Qur'an</i>,pp.134-137.</p>
Nov.18	<p>*Feminist Challenges to the Qur'an(1) *Reading: Andrew Rippin, "The Qur'an and Modernity" Also, Asma Barlas, "Women's readings of the Qur'an", in <i>The Cambridge Companion to the Qur'an</i>, Ch.12, pp.255-271. And, Walter Wagner, "The Qur'an on Woman and Women", in <i>Opening the Qur'an</i>, Ch. 10, pp.255-296. (More information on this chapter would be posted on the Blackboard.) *Discussion: <i>Approaching the Qur'an</i>,pp.138-141. *First Draft Due</p>

Nov.23	<p>*Political Challenges (1): Jihad or Holy war * <i>Reading:</i> Reuven Firestone, "Jihad", in <i>The Blackwell Companion to the Qur'an</i>, Ch.20, pp.308-320. Also, Walter Wagner, "The Qur'an on Justice and Jihad", in <i>Opening the Qur'an</i>, Ch.12, pp.350-396. (More information on this chapter would be posted on the Blackboard.)</p>
Nov.25	Thanksgiving
Nov.30	<p>*Political Challenges (2): Human Rights * <i>Reading:</i> Leah Kinberg, "Contemporary Ethical Issues", in <i>The Blackwell Companion to the Qur'an</i>, Ch. 30, pp.450-466.</p>
Dec.2	<p>*The Qur'an and other religions (1) * <i>Reading:</i> Fazlur Rahman, "The People of the Book and Diversity of Religions", in <i>Major Themes of the Qur'an</i> ,Appendix II, pp.162-170; Also, Abdulaziz Sachedina, "The Qur'an and other religions", in <i>The Cambridge Companion to the Qur'an</i>, Ch.14, pp.291-309. And, Walter Wagner, "The Qur'an on Biblical Figures, Jews and Christians", in <i>Opening the Qur'an</i>, Ch.11, pp.297-349.</p>
Dec.7	The Qur'an and other religions (2)
Dec.9	<p>*Review Session for the Final; *Second Paper Due</p>
Dec. 18	Final Exam: Friday December 18, at 1:30pm, Comenius Hall, 305

Important Note: Students who wish to request accommodations in this class for a disability should contact Mr. Joe Kempfer, Assistant Director of Learning Services for Disability Support, 1307 Main Street (extension 1510).