Introduction to the Quran  
NEJS 186a  
Spring 2012

Monday and Wednesday

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Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday 11AM to 12PM and by appointment

Course Description: This course is an examination of the central teachings of the Quran. We will begin with the place of the Quran in Islamic Society and Muslim life, then discuss its place in history and different ways to approach the text. This will serve as the foundation for examining the major themes of the Quran, such as the nature of God, Humanity and the Cosmos. We will then investigate the Quranic treatment of Prophets and Prophecy. Throughout the semester we will also reflect upon the manner in which the Quran treats issues that are at large in the Islamic world today.

Course Objectives, Learning Goals: Call them what you will: To provide an overview of the teachings and central themes of the Quran and an understanding of the place of the Quran in Islamic life.

Course Procedure: This course meets twice a week, on Monday and Wednesday. Reading assignments will be given for each week, and students are expected to complete the reading assignment listed for each particular week before the first class of the week. I will discuss issues related to the readings on the assumption that the reading has been completed prior to class, and will expect all students to be prepared to contribute to discussions of the reading material.

Please note that I rarely employ power point presentations and only use visual aids when they fulfill an immediate educational objective. If you feel that this does not meet your preferred learning style, you are free to take a different class.

Note: Knowledge of Arabic is not required for this course. Those students who have the ability may consult a parallel Arabic text when reading the Quran in translation. For supplementary reading outside of class, http://www.usc.edu/dept/MSA/quran/ is an excellent resource, containing three different English translations of the Quran. It is searchable by keyword, and can provide an alternate version of difficult passages.

Lectures and Reading: You are required to complete the readings and attend the lectures. The lectures will expand upon and compliment the readings, they will not outline or paraphrase them. You will be responsible for demonstrating familiarity with both. If it becomes apparent
that students are not completing the readings, I will cold call and introduce quizzes with the course evaluation adjusted accordingly. Although there is no grade for class participation, it should be noted that students who do not attend regularly usually do not perform up to their potential.

**Required Readings:**

1. *Major Themes in the Quran*, Fazlur Rahman
2. *Approaching the Qur’an*, Michael Sells
3. *The Story of the Qur’an*, Ingrid Mattson
4. *Understanding the Qur’an*, Muhammad Abdel Haleem
5. Essays available on Latte
6. *The Quran*—Translated by Ali Quli Qara’i

**Course Evaluation:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Short Papers (3)</td>
<td>15% each, with 5% added to the best paper.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm Exam</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>30%</td>
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**Papers:** You will be responsible for three short papers (5–6 pages). These will be based upon topics that relate to the material covered in the lectures and readings. You will be responsible for demonstrating familiarity with both. Your first paper must undergo a review process.

**Exams:** The midterm exam will be an in class exam comprised of identification and essay questions. The final exam will be a comprehensive take home exam. It will be due May ?.

**Policy on Late Work and Incompletes:**

Late work will be penalized by half a letter grade for each day overdue (including weekends and holidays). Extensions will be granted only in exceptional circumstances, and in no case after the original deadline for completion has passed. Students who anticipate difficulty in meeting deadlines should contact me as far in advance of the due date as possible. A course grade of incomplete will only be granted for compelling reasons.

**Academic Integrity:** You must complete all assignments alone. In your writing, you must follow rules of attribution, meaning that you must cite all sources consulted in preparing your papers. As stated in the *Student Handbook*, “Every member of the University community is expected to maintain the highest standards of academic honesty. A student shall not receive credit for work that is not the product of the student’s own effort.” Examples of penalties for a student found responsible for an infringement of academic honesty are no credit for the work in question, failure in the course, and the traditional range of conduct sanctions from disciplinary warning through permanent dismissal from the University.

**Disabilities:** Students with documented disabilities should see me ASAP to be sure that adequate provisions are made.
Course Outline

Week 1 — January 13–15
   — Introduction
   — The Quran in Muslim Life and Islamic Society
Readings: Mattson, Chapters 1 & 4
Quran: Chapter 1, 2 (255), Chapter 36 (entire)

Week 2 — January 22
   — The Quran in Muslim Life and Islamic Society (Contd)
   — Quranic Art — Calligraphy and Recitation
   — The Quran as Revelation
Readings: Sells, Introduction, 145–207 and accompanying CD
     *Understanding the Qur’an*, chs. 1 & 2
     Nasr, “The Quran as the Foundation of Islamic Spirituality” (Latte)

Recommended:
Azami, *History of the Quranic Text*

Week 3 — January 27–29
   — The Quran and the Rise of Islam
   — The compilation of the text and current critical scholarship
   — Competing perspectives of Quranic history
Readings: Mattson, Chapters 2 & 3
Angelika Neuwirth, “Quran and History—A Disputed Relationship” (Latte)
Graham, “Muslim Scripture as Spoken Word” (Latte)

Recommended:
Fred Donner, “The Historical Context” (Latte)
Harald Motzki, “The Collection of the Quran” (Latte)

Week 4 — February 3–5
   — Approaches to the text, or how to read the Quran
   — The Historical Semantic Approach to the Quran
   — God in the Quran
Readings: Rahman, Chapter 1
     *Understanding the Qur’an*, ch. 12
     Daniel Madigan, *The Qur’an’s Self-Image*, 13–52 (Latte)
     Daniel Madigan, “Themes and Topics” (Latte)
Quran: 2 (115–117); 2 (186); 2 (255); 3 (26–30, 83); 5 (64); 7 (180); 10 (55–67); 13 (12–18); 16 (1–25); 24 (35–37); 30 (11–27); 35 (entire); 39 (entire); 55 (entire); 112 (entire).

Week 5 — February 10–12
   — First Short Paper due Monday February 13, “How to Approach the Quran?”
   — From the Divine to the Human
— Humankind in the Quran

**Readings:** Rahman, Chapter 2  
*Understanding the Qur’an*, ch. 9

**Quran:** 2 (30–40); 7 (10–25, 189); 6 (165); 7 (172–174); 10 (12–23); 11 (118–119); 16 (71–78); 18 (32–44); 20 (116–128); 32 (entire); 39 (6–9); 41 (49–54); 50 (16–29); 86 (entire); 91 (entire); 100 (entire); 103 (entire); 114 (entire).

Recommended: Toshiko Izutsu, “The Communicative Relationship between God and Man” (Latte)

**Midterm Recess February 17–21**

**Week 6** — February 24–26  
— Cosmos and Creation  
**Readings:** Rahman, Chapter 4  
*Understanding the Qur’an*, ch. 3  
Angelika Neuwrith, “Cosmology” from EQ (Latte)

**Quran:** 2 (164–165); 3 (83); 6 (38); 7 (54–58); 10 (3–6); 13 (1–8); 16 (1–21, 65–70, 79–83); 25 (45–62); 35 (9–14, 27–29); 36 (33–40); 39 (21); 41 (9–12); 45 (all).

Recommended: Reza Shah-Kazemi, “A Qur’anic Response to ‘An Inconvenient Truth’” (Latte)

**Week 7** — March 3–5  
Catch up, review, March 3  
**Mid-term exam, March 5**

**Week 8** — March 10–12  
— Prophets and Prophecy, Adam to Abraham  
**Readings:** Rahman, Chapter 5  
*Understanding the Qur’an*, chs. 10 & 11  
Reuven Firestone, “Abraham” from EQ (Latte)

**Quran:** 2 (135–141, 252–253, 284–86) 3 (81–85); 4 (150–152); 6 (83–90).  
[Abraham] 2 (124–141); 3 (65–68, 95–97); 6 (74–82); 11 (69–76); 19 (41–50); 21 (51–75)  
— Biblical comparison: Genesis, chapters 3 and 18–22.

Recommended: Cornelia Schock, “Adam and Eve” from EQ (Latte)  
Neal Robinson, “Surat Al ‘Imran and Those with the Greater Claim to Abraham” (Latte)

**Week 9** — March 17–19  
— Moses, the Israelites and Judaism  
— The People of the Book  
**Readings:** Joseph Lombard, “The Quranic View of Sacred History and Other Religions” (Latte)  
*Understanding the Qur’an*, ch. 6

Week 10 — March 24–26
— Second Paper due Monday March 26 (Comparison of Prophetic Stories in the Qurʾān and the Bible)
— Jesus and Christianity
— Other Prophets
Readings: Mahmoud Ayoub, “Jesus the Son of God”
Jeffey Parrinder, Selections from Jesus in the Quran

Quran: [Jesus] 2 (116); 3 (31–63); 4 (157–159, 171–172); 5 (46, 72–77, 109–118); 19 (16–40); 43 (58–66).

Week 11 — March 31–April 2
— Eschatology and Judgement
— Heaven and Hell
Readings: Rahman, Chapter 6
Toshiko Izutsu, “Good and Bad” (Latte)
Understanding the Qurʾan, chs. 7 & 8
Quran: 2 (23–25); 3 (23–30, 176–182, 196–198); 4 (40–42, 56–57); 5 (35–37); 7 (8–9, 34–53); 8 (49–51); 9 (34–35, 72, 102–106); 10 (7–10); 11 (96–109); 13 (20–26); 14 (47–51); 15 (45–50); 18 (30–31); 19 (61–63); 20 (74–76); 22 (18–25); 25 (10–19); 32 (17–22); 35 (31–37); 36 (51–67); 37 (15–74); 39 (71–75); 43 (66–78); 44 (40–57); 50 (30–35); 56 (1–56); 69 (13–37); 70 (1–35); 78 (17–40); 79 (35–46); 80 (33–42); 81 (1–16); 82 (entire); 83 (entire); 84 (entire); 88 (entire); 99 (entire); 101 (entire).

Week 12 — April 7–9
— Human Rights and Social Justice
— Women in the Quran
Readings: Maria Massi Dakake, “Quranic Ethics, Human Rights and Society”
Understanding the Qurʾan, ch. 4
Asma Barlas, Believing Women in the Qurʾan, ch. 4
Quran: 2 (153–157, 188–189, 215, 219–220, 254, 261–281); 3 (92, 130–136, 191–194, 200); 4 (32–39, 43, 86, 148); 5 (2, 8–9, 90–91); 6 (151–153); 7 (26–31, 55); 8 (28); 9 (23–24); 17 (23–39); 24 (22–33); 25 (63–72); 49 (entire); 55 (7–8); 60 (1–9); 104 (entire); 107 (entire).

Quran: 4 (1,124); 24 (26); 33 (35–37); 4 (32–35); 2 (282); 24 (30–31, 60); 33 (6,28–33,53,59); 2 (187, 223, 233); 30 (20–21); 4 (3,129); 2 (226–230); 4 (20–21); 2 (234–235); 2 (222), 4 (15–16); 24 (2–9).

Passover Break

Week 13ish — April 14 and April 23
Third Paper Due Wednesday April 23 (Topic of your choosing)
— Jihad and Warfare in the Quran

Readings: Understanding the Qur’an, chs. 5 and 6
David Dakake: “The Myth of a Militant Islam” (Latte)
Caner K. Dagli, “War and Peace in the Quran” (Latte)

Quran: 2 (190–194, 216–218, 243–251); 3 (140–150, 167–173); 4 (74–77, 84–96); 8 (26–40, 59–64, 70–75); 9 (1–29, 38–44, 80–88, 120–125); 22 (38–42); 47 (4–5, 20–21); 49 (9–10); 60 (1–9).

Week 14 — April 28
— Conclusion and Review

***TAKE-HOME FINAL EXAMINATION—DUE Monday May 7 by 5PM***

Grading Scale

To avoid any misunderstandings, I will share with you what is expected in order to obtain good marks in this course:

A: Excellent Work: a firm grasp of the material in lectures and readings and an ability to offer sound and insightful analysis and present it in a manner that is fluent and eloquent.

B: Solid Work: a good grasp of the material in lectures and readings and significant effort to interpret the material in an analytical fashion.

C: Decent work: a fair grasp of the material in lectures and readings, but analysis and effort are lacking.

D: Poor work: a simplistic understanding of the material with little or no effort towards analysis.

F: Little grasp of the subject matter and no attempt to engage the material or respect the parameters of the course and assignments.