

NELC 0500/RELS 0504

Goal:

The goal of this course is to provide students with a general introduction to the holy scripture of the religion of Islam, the Qur'an (*al-qur'ān*, القرآن). The course is divided into four main sections: (1) introduction to the Qur'an's form and content; (2) the Qur'an as a response to the Bible and the Biblical literature of Late Antiquity; (3) the Qur'an in the Islamic tradition; (4) the Qur'an and modernity. Through close reading and discussion of selected passages, students will gain first-hand knowledge of the Qur'an's treatment of prophecy, theology, law, and the Biblical tradition as well as various aspects of Qur'anic form, content, and style. Students will also survey and debate the merits of different scholarly approaches to the interpretation and the history of its text. The course satisfies the College's "Humanities and Social Sciences" sector requirement. No prior background in Arabic or Islamic studies is required.

Assignments:

Almost all sessions of this course are based on assignments that combine reading of and short written responses to selected passages from the Qur'an and other texts. It is absolutely vital that students complete all such assignments and bring them to class, since they will form the basis of the in-class discussion. A significant percentage of students' grades is also directly related to the timely and thoughtful completion of these assignments.

In addition to the regular assignments, students will write a short essay and a book review (circa 6-8 pp. each), and there will be a final exam.

Attendance; Grading:

Attendance is a vital component of success in this course and repeated absences will cause grades to be lowered. Grades in this course will be based on class participation (including attendance, 25%), quality of assignments (including timely completion, 25%), papers (25%), and a final exam (25%).

Required Texts (available at the Penn Bookstore: Barnes and Noble, on Walnut St.):

W.M. Watt, *Introduction to the Qur'an* (Edinburgh Univ. Press)

A. Jones, tr., *The Qur'ān* (Gibb Memorial Trust)

F. Esack, *The Qur'an* (Oneworld)

A. Wadud, *Qur'an and Woman* (Oxford Univ. Press)