

GVPT 449A
Prof. Charles Butterworth
Tydings 1149
Tel. 301 405 4110

Spring 04
Office hours: Tue 2:00-3:00 and 6:30-7:30
Thu 2:00-3:00
cebworth@gvpt.umd.edu

THE QURAN

It is rather standard practice in liberal arts colleges for students to read the Bible, usually under the rubric of a course entitled “The English Bible.” In this course, I propose to approach the Quran in that same spirit – that is, to read it the way one would read the Bible and to seek to understand it on its own terms. Recent political events in the world and in the United States make it more important than ever for us to understand this important book and what it says about a number of political questions: toleration, civil disobedience, meting out of justice by individuals as opposed to duly constituted political bodies, warfare, fighting, and suicide.

To that end, we will use the standard translation of the Quran, that by Yusuf Ali, plus one other English translation – this in order to have some insight into alternative translations of an admittedly most difficult text. We will study some general introductory material about Islam at the beginning of the course. Otherwise, we will concentrate on the text itself as it presents itself to the reader. The course is designed as a seminar, that is, a course proceeding by discussion. Consequently, students must come to class prepared to contribute intelligently to discussion because they have read the assignment for the day before class.

Requirements for credit: 5 very short analyses (2-3 pages, 500-750 words) of the reading for Feb 17; Mar 16 and 30; Apr 13; and May 4. Each is due on that day at the start of class. In addition, 2 short papers (8-10 pages, 2000-2500 words), each on a problem that arises from the Quran. The goal is to formulate the problem in terms of the text, then sketch out alternative answers to it that come from the text, and finally provide a solution based on analyzing these alternatives. The first paper is due by March 9 (the 7th class meeting) and the second on the day of the final examination. Students will find it advantageous to speak to the instructor about topics before setting about to write a paper.

Students are expected to read the assigned material, take notes, and organize on paper the general lines of argument within the particular reading before coming to class. Such preparation should take no more than 6 hours. Moreover, it is necessary to attend all classes. More than 3 absences will result in a failing grade.+

Grades are assessed on an absolute (that is, no curve) scale according to which 60-69 = D, 70-79 = C, 80-89 = B, and 90+ = A. The very short analyses count for 30% of the grade, each short paper for 30%, and intelligent participation for the remaining 10%.

Please take advantage of office hours to make contact with me and to talk about your progress as well as other matters. If posted hours do not work, make a special appointment.

For the record:

1. The UMD Code of Academic Integrity will be enforced. In short, no cheating.
2. Students with documented disabilities should see me. Your needs will be accommodated.
3. The UMD policy of respecting the religious observances of students or their participation in university activities will be followed. I must be informed of these absences by February 10, 2004.

READING SCHEDULE

1. January 27: Introduction to the Quran and Islam
 2. February 3: Suras 1-3
 3. February 10: Suras 4-6
 4. February 17: Suras 7-11
 5. February 24: **NO CLASS**
 6. March 2: Review of Suras 1-11
 7. March 9: Suras 12-19
 8. March 16: Suras 20-27
- SPRING BREAK! NO CLASS!**
9. March 30: Suras 28-37
 10. April 6: Review of Suras 12-37
 11. April 13: Suras 38-48
 12. April 20: Suras 49-74
 13. April 27: Review of Suras 38-74
 14. May 4: Suras 75-114
 15. May 11: Review of Suras 75-114 and whole Quran

REQUIRED

A. Yusuf Ali, *An English Interpretation of the Holy Quran With Full Arabic Text* (Chicago: Kazi Publications), leather, ISBN 9694320003, \$21.95.

Michael Cook, *The Koran: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), paper, ISBN: 0192853449, \$9.95.

Michael Sells, *Approaching the Quran: the Early Revelations* (Ashland, OR: White Cloud Press, 1999), paper, ISBN: 1-883-991-269, \$21.95
or Chicago: Kazi Publications, paper, \$18.95.

RECOMMENDED (on reserve in McKeldin)

Nabia Abbott, *Aishah: The Beloved of Muhammad*

Muhammad Abdel Halim, *Understanding the Qur'an*

A. J. Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted: A Translation*, trans. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996); Touchstone Books, ISBN 0-684-825-074. \$20.00

Muhammad Asad, *Message of the Quran*, (Chicago: Kazi Publications,) \$29.95.
or New Era Pubns, 1980, paper, ASIN: 0317524569, \$46.00

Michael Cook, *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong*

Kenneth Cragg, *Readings in the Qur'an*

John Esposito, *Islam: The Straight Path*.

Bernard Lewis, *The Middle East: A Brief History of the Last 2,000 Years* (New York: Scribner, 1995)

Martin Lings, *Muhammad: His Life Based on the Earliest Sources* (New York: Inner Traditions International, c1983), 359 pp., UMCP McKeldin, BP75 .L56 1983.

Fazlur Rahman, *Major Themes of the Quran* (Chicago: Kazi Publications,) \$19.95. For question of *asb-b al-nuzā*.

Maxime Rodinson, *Mohammed*, trans. Anne Carter (New York: Pantheon Books, 1971), xix + 360 pp., maps, UMCP McKeldin Library Stacks BP75 .R5713 1971

George Sale, *The Koran, trans. into English from the original Arabic by George Sale. With explanatory notes from the most approved commentators. With an introd. by Sir Edward*

Denison Ross (London: Warne, n.d), 609 pp., UMCP McKeldin BP109 .S2

Others on Reserve:

Richard Bell, *Introduction to the Quran*, revised W. Montgomery Watt

The Life of Muhammad: A Translation of Ishāq's Sīrat Rasūl Allāh, with Introduction and Notes
by A. Guillaume (London: Oxford University Press, 1955). Note: the author is
Muhammad Ibn Ishāq; Abd al-Malik Ibn Hishām edited the work and added some notes.