

## REL 137 Final Paper

As described in class, the final project will take the form of a comparative paper. For several weeks, we've been looking at both the Bible and Qur'an along certain thematic lines: sacrifice, gender, food, fasting, prayer, almsgiving, eschatology, etc. Choose one of these themes, and then choose one or at most two texts from the Bible and one or two texts from the Qur'an and interpret the passages first individually, and then, after you've done careful readings of the passages individually, bring them into conversation with each other. The paper thus involves several distinct steps: choosing a theme that interests you, and within that theme, certain passages; then performing a meticulous reading of the individual passages on their own, and then bringing your readings of these passages into a probing and thoughtful dialogue.

We strongly suggest that you pick one of the themes we've discussed already and choose passages that have been supplied as relevant to that theme. In that sense, the paper can take off from one of your Moodle posts where we've asked you to compare Biblical and Qur'anic passages. It'll just be a more formal and elaborate version of the same idea. We also suggest that—depending on the length of the passages you choose—you treat one or at most two passages from each scripture. It may be that a single verse from the Bible or the Qur'an doesn't give you enough to work with and that you need an additional text. But a chapter from the book of Joel, for instance, would be more than enough for the Biblical side of your comparison.

In the field of Religious Studies, there's a famous article with the name, "In Comparison a Magic Dwells"; we hope you'll find a certain "magic" in your comparative reading, where the overall harvest is more than simply the sum of the individual passages. One passage will raise questions about the other that you might not have thought to ask. An element in one passage will conjure up a similar or perhaps a contrasting observation about the passage being compared in ways that are not easy to specify or predict. See if through this juxtaposition of the two texts, and a dialogical and relational reading, you are able to discover an insight on your chosen theme. Keep probing, asking 'why', 'how', 'so what'? In the spirit of SR stay close to the text, letting these texts anchor and guide your analysis. This careful attention to the text will hopefully lead to nuanced and sensitive comparisons. Close your essay with a clear conclusion or/and a takeaway.

Length: 1500 (minimum) – 2000 words (maximum)

Due: **Monday, May 10, at 5:00.**

### Other details

You may find it useful to consult certain reference works when looking at your passages. Where the Bible is concerned the introductory essays in the Oxford Study Bible would be a good place to begin; for something more in-depth, you could look at John Collins, *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible* (3<sup>rd</sup> edition), on reserve at the library, and available electronically. For the Qur'an, you might wish to have a look at the [Qur'an online](#), a study resource at the library with several helpful volumes. When it comes to the Bible, please do not roam the internet; much of that material is dated or flat out wrong. Stick with established, academic sources.

If you use bibliography outside of the assigned texts (the Oxford Bible, or Qarai's Qur'an), use a recognized bibliographical scheme, either [MLA](#) or the [Chicago Manual Style](#).