

REL 137 The Bible “&” the Qur’an

MW 2:20-3:35

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

FOCUS ON THE WORD AND IN THE TITLE. we are exploring the “&”

Though the title for the course might suggest a straightforward comparison of two sacred books, the comparison of special interest in this course is not so much the books per se, but rather the books in the hands of their users: how these scriptures are approached, held, and used by their adherents, both historically and in the present. This keeps us from thinking that the Qur’an is derivative from and dependent on the Bible (a typically Western scholarly and Christian view), or that the Bible is a preliminary and imperfect revelation compared to the perfect revelation of divine word and will present in the Qur’an (the traditional Islamic view). When we ask, “what do these scriptures mean to their respective users,” we are less likely to fall into traditional habits of subordinating one to the other or thinking one is deficient because it’s not like the other.

Zamir disagrees!

I agree with everything thus far, except I will not make this statement. For me, given that one inhabits the Quranic or Biblical world would predispose a person to see the other in a particular way. **“POSITIONALITY”** is the key word and I will speak about it the first day. I would like us all to think about our positionalities and vantage points from which we see things, and try to see the lens itself that gives me my perception. Is this subordination issue Biblical or Quranic? I would love to explore if they are, and if they are not, whose position is it, and can it be unpacked a bit?]

DYNAMICS OF THIS CO-TAUGHT COURSE: (GS)

1. TWO-BOX SCHEME (PRESERVING PERSPECTIVES)

GS (Bible) What brought me to this course? Why are we doing this?	SRZ (Quran) Why am I in this conversation?
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Course objectives <https://rizwanzamir.net/learning-outcomes-yours/>

Students should be able to:

-give a basic account of key aspects of the Bible and the Qur'an; their shape, content, and theories about their origin.

-understand how Christians and Muslims approach and feel about their respective scriptures; how they're used; what "habits of reading" are characteristic of Christians and Muslims.

-understand in new ways the act of reading and interpretation: how one approaches a text and derives/constructs meaning from it.

-come away with an appreciation for the nature of "scripture" as a structure of authority and how that structure might differ between religions.

-experience the discipline of Scriptural Reasoning through practice.

--witness and participate in actual dialogue: dynamic dialogue that involves you, your classmates, and the professors. [More than just "talking" or "discussion"] We are aiming for deep interactions and new ways of fostering and structuring such interactions.

--facilitate a dynamic and mutually creative experience that requires your active engagement.

YOURS?

Students will add their own learning outcomes, due on Wednesday, 1/27.

Books for the course

The New Oxford Annotated Study Bible, NRSV translation, ed. Michael Coogan

The Qur'an, tr. Ali Quli Qarai

Selected articles online and on Moodle

Assignments

- Syllabus review exercise: (1/27; 5%)
- In-class exam on Bible and Qur'an basics (2/22; 20%)
- Moodle journals (20%): questions you'll answer before certain classes, focussed on readings for the day. Might be a single question, might be several, might involve you reacting to a post from fellow students, or doing some short exercise, a bit of internet research, etc. Created (in conversation with SRZ) and graded by Snyder.

- Reflective portfolio work (20%): In conversation with HGS, Prof. Zamir will give you prompts to write 500-word Interpretive Reflections, called the IRs.
- Final exam/reflective essay (25%)
- Participation: 10%

Pandemic Prologue

The good news: we have a significant and fascinating topic, stimulating books and activities, and each other to explore them with. We will learn a lot in spite of the conditions imposed by the pandemic. We'll have to adapt to these conditions, but we won't be defined by them. From me, you can expect extra measures of flexibility and understanding. From you, the professors hope to receive honest communication about your situation—which may change unexpectedly—and as much patience and upbeat goodwill as you can muster.

Formal class meetings will be (almost) entirely online. Depending on the size of the class, some outdoor gatherings in small groups may be possible. We'll assess that possibility as we go along. In any event, we'll find ways to create the sense of a group.

O mankind, truly We created you from a male and a female, and We made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Surely the most noble of you before God are those most Godfearing. (Qur'an 49:13).

"... we go hence greater than we came by so much life as we have awakened in each other." (Emerson, *Journal H*)

Attendance

1. Should there be a conflict between any class meeting and a religious observance, let your profs know. Religious observances are allowed by college policies and respected.
2. Life-urgencies and difficulties are also understandable; communicate those as they arise;
3. It is up to you to 'catch-up' (e.g., obtain notes). *Absence does not seem to be a good excuse for not knowing what happened in the classroom*

Toward the end of the term, you will submit a handwritten or typed “Absence/Presence Sheet”. It will have the following details:

1. Your full name;
2. Number of classes you have missed with respective dates;
3. An explanation as to why you have missed these classes, and anything more that you’d like to say in regards to those;
4. Provide an assessment of your overall participation this semester. What grade would you give yourself and why?

[NOTE: Attendance policies usually involve “policing” and we are not cops]

<https://rizwanzamir.net/a-note-on-absence-from-and-presence-in-the-classroom/>

If you wake up with a fever or any other ailment that prevents you from participating, even virtually,, send us a note before class and take a rest; under the truth-telling assumptions of the Honor Code, we’ll take your word for it. There will be days when you can’t attend on account of a religious holiday, an athletic competition, a job interview, or for personal reasons—a family obligation or emergency.

Please note: Any student that is absent for more than one-quarter of the class meetings will receive a failing grade for the course, as mandated by the Academic Handbook.

Zoom Policies

When we’re in synchronous sessions, as a general rule, keep the video on. We will assume that video on means attention on; video off means attention off. There may be reasons you need to video mute for a minute and that’s ok, but the default position should be “on.” As for audio mute, use it if you have a lot of background noise, but otherwise, stay present both visually and aurally.

Accommodation

We are committed to accommodating students with different learning styles or challenges. Please let us know if you are entitled to special consideration where written materials, test taking or assignments are concerned. The College policy on accommodation runs as follows:

The college welcomes requests for accommodations related to disability and will grant those that are determined to be reasonable and maintain the integrity of a program or curriculum. To make such a request or to begin a conversation about a possible request, please contact

the Office of Academic Access and Disability Resources, which is located in the Center for Teaching and Learning in the E.H. Little Library: Beth Bleil, Director, [bebleil@davidson.edu](mailto:bebleil@ davidson.edu), 704-894-2129; or Alysén Beaty, Assistant Director, albeaty@davidson.edu, 704-894-2939. It is best to submit accommodation requests within the drop/add period; however, requests can be made at any time in the semester. Please keep in mind that accommodations are not retroactive.

Let US know if you feel like you're falling behind or encountering difficulties that affect your performance. Davidson can be a high-stress environment; if you think you're getting in an unhealthy place and not able to function up to your normal level, please seek out one of your kindly professors (Snyder or Zamir, that is).

Grading: the philosophy

SEE THIS: <https://rizwanzamir.net/a-note-on-grades/>

HGS WOULD ADD THE FOLLOWING: !

You came to an excellent college, seeking the training it offers, and an important part of that training is a frank assessment of your work. Even before you leave Davidson, you'll be writing cover letters, grant applications, proposals. Those will be judged by people who won't tell you why the proposals and cover letters did not succeed. It falls on professors to provide this kind of feedback: to give their honest opinion about the quality of your work and most importantly, how it might be improved. Carefully assigned grades are a necessary part of this process.

That said, having been shaped by the success-driven rat race that brought you to a competitive college, you may find yourself believing that your self-worth depends on your grades. Don't buy into this way of thinking. We are evaluating your *work*, not your *worth*. Your self-worth (and our regard for you) does not depend on your grade. Take the grades your work receives as opportunities for improvement. If the path to improvement seems unclear, please come talk to us. **[SRZ loves this statement.]**

See? SRZ and HGS agree on this![AND THAT'S WHY IT'S HIGHLIGHTED]

Grading: the numbers

Depending on the assignment, you might receive a letter or a number grade. Here's the letter-to-number scale I use.

93.0-100 A 90.0-92.9 A- 87.0-89.9 B+ 83.0-86.9 B 80.0-82.9 B- 77.0-79.9 C+
73.0-76.9 C 70.0-72.9 C- 67.0-69.9 D+ 60.0-66.9 D < 60.0 ah well...

You can expect the following assumptions on our part: an A or A- represents a real accomplishment; a B+ is a good grade, and you don't get a B for just showing up. Low grades (a C or less) generally result from a failure to attend class and/or to turn in assignments.

Late work

We reserve the right to penalize late work at the rate of one grade per day. You may rely on a compassionate ear where family and medical emergencies are concerned of course, but we can't accept sheer busyness ("I have three papers due that day") as an excuse. Everyone is busy and for the sake of fairness to all, your professors can't get involved in judging who is busiest. Please arrange your affairs so as to submit work on time.

Plagiarism: It shouldn't arise, given the nature of the assignments, but we shall pursue it at first sight. All journal work, reflections, and papers must be entirely your own work. Questionable cases will be turned over to the Honor Council. All work should be pledged.