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RLGN 2100 Approaches to the Qur'an

Winter 2022

EXAM ONE

25% of Final Grade

Essay Topics (DUE Tuesday March 1, 2022).

The Midterm Assignment consists of writing two essays.

Required length of each essay: two pages, double-spaced, and 12 point font. Please use either MLA or Chicago style format. Please include citations and references. Supplementary guidelines for academic writing will be posted on UM Learn

Additional Guidelines: The aim of this exam is to show your engagement with some of the major themes and issues introduced in the first three sets of required readings for the course.

The requirements regarding style, format, and method of citing the readings and/or the Qur'an are as follows: please make sure to cite any direct quote, direct discussion, or paraphrase from the readings; for example, (Author, page number). Citations from the Qur'an should include chapter number and verse number; for example, (Qur'an 15: 1). You may use footnotes if you prefer.

Please make sure to proof read and double-check your written work before sharing your work on our UM Learn dropbox for this assignment.

Your work will be graded on the basis of your engagement with the required readings set for the essay topic you have selected. These readings will be specified in the guidelines. Your essay will also be graded in terms of clarity of writing, the presentation of your ideas, and your critical analysis.

ESSAY ONE

Worth 12 points

1.

The Qur'an in history.

This essay topic requires basing your essay on two out of the following readings: Ernst, Lawrence, and Nelson.

Historically, both Muslim scholars and Western scholars of Religious Studies and History have been deeply interested and engaged in studying the Qur'an and working to locate the Qur'an in history. While some scholars have worked towards outlining the history of the Qur'an, others assert that it is more productive to approach the Qur'an in a wide range of historical contexts, and in relation to Muslim communities and practitioners in their contexts.

Provide in your essay both an overview and an analytical response, based on your close reading of two of the course readings mentioned above, to either 1). The history of the Qur'an; or 2). The Qur'an in History. Please provide examples from the readings when presenting your overview and your analysis. Also, please keep in mind the requirements of academic writing and include your references and citations.

2.

This essay topic requires discussing Ernst and Sells. Please keep in mind that you will explore 1). A theme; and 2). This theme in relation to one Meccan surah.

The Meccan surahs are characterized as follows: brief, short, eloquent, poetic.

Conceptually, the Meccan surahs discuss God, the revelation of the Qur'an, eschatology and the Day of Judgment, amongst other themes.

For this essay topic, make sure that you state clearly what the theme is that you wish to explore in the following short list of early Meccan surahs, for convenience:

111, 109, 106, 105, 96, 94, 89, 88, 87, 86, 85, 84, 83, 81, 80, 78, 77, 75, 74, 73, 70, 69, 68, 65, 56, 55, 54, 53, 52, 51, 50, 37.

You can focus on one or two Meccan surahs from the list above. You have in fact a wide selection of possible choices to consider, so choose a theme that claims your attention and then follow it up with what Ernst and Sells present to see what pattern emerges. How would you define the one major theme of the Meccan surahs? This is also your opportunity to make some original observations about what these two authors have to say about how Qur'anic text works, and bringing the Arabic of the Qur'an into English translation, within the space limitations of this essay.

3.

“Word of God”, Scriptures, and the Qur'an

Some of our course readings, such as those by Graham, Cantwell-Smith, as well as others, present an overview of the study of the Qur'an and Islam in academic contexts as well as more generally in the “West” (Europe and North America). In this essay, please use two readings (Graham and Cantwell-Smith). On the basis of these two readings,

present an overview and then discuss what Graham means by the “Oral Qur’an.” Following your discussion of Graham, please outline and then discuss what Cantwell-Smith builds into his theoretical approach to the Qur’an when he states that the Qur’an’s meaning is the “history of its meanings.” Lastly, space permitting, please include your assessment of their underlying concerns and questions: what do these two scholars aim to address as a means of resolving misconceptions of the Qur’an in both academic contexts as well as in the “West”?

ESSAY TWO

Worth 13 points

Please choose **one** topic for Essay Two.

Using one of the online resources for this course (Nelson, Lecture, “Art of Reciting the Qur’an,” Documentary, “Koran by Heart” (2013), or one Qur’an manuscript from the British Library Collection (under additional online resources for Midterm Assignment, on UM Learn), write a critical reflection piece. In terms of organizing your essay, your critical reflection piece will include: 1). An overview on the importance of your selected topic for approaching the study of the Qur’an; 2). What the online resource you have selected to focus on provides in terms of information, discussions, insights, and approaches to the study of the Qur’an; and 3). A critical discussion of what this online resource offers as a research tool, study resource, and piece of scholarship on the Qur’an.

1.
How to read the Qur’an

2.
Reciting the Qur’an

3.
Early Qur’an manuscripts



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