



SAINT LOUIS UNIVERSITY

Madrid

Course:	THEO-2930 Special Topics: The Qur'an and the Bible
Semester:	Fall 2015
Time:	T R 12:30–13:45
Professor:	Carlos A. Segovia
Credits:	3
Prerequisites:	THEO-100

1. Course purpose and objectives

Notwithstanding its distinctively discontinuous style, the Qur'an repeatedly draws on the stock of Biblical stories and legends, which one often finds elliptically reworked in its pages. Occasionally, however, such reworked stories are better understood in light of their para-Biblical, both Jewish and Christian, glosses, on which the Qur'an relies as well, therefore. But what is the ultimate purpose of these complex intertextual strategies and how must they be approached and classified? Is it possible to speak of the Qur'an, at least partly, as an exegetical work? And if so, what would this imply? Can the study of the Biblical and para-Biblical stories in the Qur'an, moreover, help to shed light on the development of the theological debate that took place in the 7th-century Near East? Lastly, which are the intertextual connections susceptible of being established between prophecy, eschatology, and messianology in the Qur'an – and how do they affect our understanding of Islam's origins? All these questions ought to be examined afresh to understand the message of the Qur'an in its inherent complexity and to implement interfaith dialogue.

Students who successfully complete the course will have achieved the following learning objectives:

- to understand the intertextual relations existing between the Qur'an and the Bible
- to canvass the main results achieved in the contemporary study of Quranic intertextuality
- to discern the message of the Qur'an in its inherent complexity and historical context
- to critically assess the implications of the above-referred notions for modern interfaith dialogue
- to determine, by one's own lights, how to better deal with all the aforementioned issues

2. Course description

The course would divide into five sections:

- I JEWS, CHRISTIANS, ARABS, AND THE BIBLE IN PRE-ISLAMIC ARABIA
- II THE QUR'AN AS WITNESS TO A THEOLOGICAL DEBATE IN THE 7TH-CENTURY NEAR EAST?
- III REWORKED BIBLICAL STORIES AND FIGURES: A SELECTIVE SURVEY
- IV THE EMERGENCE OF A NEW RELIGIOUS IDENTITY IN THE LAND OF THE BIBLE
- V READING THE BIBLE AND THE QUR'AN SIDE BY SIDE: THEOLOGICAL INSIGHTS

3. Textbook

The text for the course is Muhammad A. S. Abdel Haleem. *The Qur'an: A New Translation*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.

It is required and available at SLU Madrid bookshop.

A Kindle edition can be purchased through www.amazon.com

4. Supplementary bibliography:

- Block, C. Jonn. *The Qur'an in Christian-Muslim Dialogue: Historical and Modern Interpretations*. London and New York: Routledge, 2014.
- Griffith, Sidney H. *The Bible in Arabic: The Scriptures of the "People of the Book" in the Language of Islam*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013.
- Lodahl, Michael. *Claiming Abraham: Reading the Bible and the Qur'an Side by Side*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2010.
- Newby, Gordon D. *The Making of the Last Prophet: A Reconstruction of the Earliest Biography of Muhammad*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1990.
- Rahman, Fazlur. *Major Themes of the Qur'an*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009.
- Reeves, John C., ed. *Bible and Qur'ān: Essays in Scriptural Intertextuality*. Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003.
- Reynolds, Gabriel Said. *The Qur'ān and Its Biblical Subtext*. London and New York: Routledge, 2010.
- Segovia, Carlos A. *The Quranic Noah and the Making of the Islamic Prophet: A Study of Intertextuality and Religious Identity Formation in Late Antiquity*. Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 2015.
- Ter Borg, Marlies, ed. *Sharing Mary: Bible and Qur'an Side by Side*. Lexington, KY: Create-Space, 2010.
- Wheeler, Brannon M. *Prophets in the Quran: An Introduction to the Quran and Muslim Exegesis*. London and New York: Continuum, 2002.

5. Grading and attendance

In this course final grades are calculated as a weighted average of four scores: two exams, a paper, and participation. The scores are weighted as follows:

Midterm exam:	25%
Paper:	25%
Final exam:	25%
Participation:	25%

Exams and paper: The exams must be taken and the paper turned in on the dates assigned (see Section 6 below). Violations of this policy will result in the loss of a grade point (from B to C, for example) in all but the most exceptional cases.

Participation: This component of your final grade will be based on oral exercises and commitment to the class discussions, attendance, effort, and punctuality. Seven or more absences FOR ANY REASON constitute an unrecoverable loss of course content and will result in an F for the course. Mobile phones are to be switched OFF in class. Computers and tablets are to be used SOLELY for taking class notes. Students are expected not to interrupt class by leaving the room and returning during the class period.

Please note that, as a student in this course, you are required to adhere to the university's Academic Honesty Policy. Cheating, falsification, and plagiarism are strictly forbidden. Plagiarism is the intentional representation of someone else's thoughts or words as if they were one's own. Any violation of this policy will result in an F for the pertinent academic exercise. A detailed statement of the policy may be found at http://spain.slu.edu/academics/academic_advising/docs/Academic_integrity.pdf.

6. Course calendar

I JEWS, CHRISTIANS, ARABS, AND THE BIBLE IN PRE-ISLAMIC ARABIA

- September 1
- Introducing our topic
 - The scriptural lore in the Qur'an
 - Was there a pre-Islamic Arabic Bible?
 - Texts and subtexts: Approaching the Qur'an as a textual corpus
 - Re-mapping sectarian boundaries: Pagans, Jews, and Christians in the Arabian peninsula on the eve of Islam
 - Reasons for moving beyond a merely comparative approach

II THE QUR'AN AS WITNESS TO A THEOLOGICAL DEBATE IN THE 7TH-CENTURY NEAR EAST?

- September 3 • Critical theory, Biblical studies, and Quranic studies today
 • Towards a symptomatic reading of the Bible: Revisiting the Exodus narrative and the “Fallen-Angels” passage in Genesis 6:1-8
 • Towards a parallel symptomatic reading of the Qur’an: Christian, pro-Christian, and anti-Christian formulas in the Quranic corpus?
 • Qur’an 43:57-9 + 61:14; 3:59-64; 4:171; 3:65-8
 * *Excursus*: How is it that religious differences come to be produced and inscribed?

September 4 → *Application Deadline for Fall Semester Degree Candidates*

September 8 General discussion over Sections I–II

III REWORKED BIBLICAL STORIES AND FIGURES: A SELECTIVE SURVEY

September 10 ADAM

- Adam as the first prophet?
- God’s vice-regent on earth
- God’s warning to the angels
- Why do they worship Adam?
- Qur’an 2:30-4; 15:28-31; 38:71-4
- Biblical and extra-Biblical sources of the Quranic Adam story
- Genesis 1:26-7; 2:7; and Hebrews 1:6 as subtexts? Implications
- Satan’s rebellion
- Adam’s fall: an altogether different tale
- How should we read the Adam story in the Qur’an?
- * *Excursus*: A note on the elliptical style of the Qur’an

September 14 → *Last Day to Drop a Class Without a Grade of W and/or Add a Class*
 → *Last Day to Choose Audit (AU) or Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory (S/U) Options*

September 15 • General discussion over the Quranic Adam story

September 17 NOAH

- The Quranic Noah story as a punishment story
- Quranic parallels: Lot and the Arabian prophets (Hud, Salih, and Shu’ayb)
- The Quranic Noah narratives
- Qur’an 7:59-64; 10:71-4; 11:25-49; 23:23-30; 26:105-22; 54:9-17; 71:1-28
- Rhetorical analysis of Qur’an 7:59-64
- Extra-Biblical sources
- An unnoticed key issue: Noah as a model for the Quranic prophet
- * *Excursus*: Eschatology in the Qur’an; or, the Qur’an as an apocalyptic text

- September 22 NOAH (cont.)
- The editor's hand at work in Qur'an 11:25-49 and 71:1-28
 - A single original narrative?
 - Qur'an 11:35 and 11:49 as textual additions
 - Who is who in Qur'an 11:35, 49?
 - Isaiah 54:7-10 and 4QTanhumim 9-13 as subtexts?
 - What about 1 Enoch 93:4; Matthew 24:37-9; Luke 17:26; and 2 Peter 3:5-7, 10-12?
- September 24 • General discussion over the Quranic Noah story
- September 29 • "A Christian Reading of the Qur'an" (G. S. Reynolds) – Video and discussion
- October 1 • "A Muslim Reads the Bible" (Sh. Akhtar) – Video and discussion
- October 6 ABRAHAM
- Abraham's monotheism and Islam: The traditional view
 - Towards a new interpretation
 - The original Abraham story: an hypothesis
 - Qur'an 6:74-83; 19:41-50
 - A later polemical reworking?
 - Qur'an 2:122-38; 3:65-8
 - * *Excursus*: On the expression "People of the Book" in Qur'an 3:64 and 3:65
- October 8 General discussion over the Quranic Abraham story
- October 13 **Midterm Exam**
- October 15 *Invited Talk*: "How Do We Know What We Think We Know about the Qur'an?" – Guillaume Dye (Free University of Brussels [ULB])
- October 20 JOSEPH AND MOSES
- The Joseph story in Qur'an 12
 - Extra-Biblical sources
 - The Moses story in Qur'an 7:103-62 and parallels
 - Joseph, Moses, and Muhammad
- *Last Day to Submit Transfer Application for Spring Semester*
- October 22 JESUS
- Jesus' name and titles in the Qur'an
 - Qur'an 4:171
 - Jesus' name in the Qur'an: Why 'Isa?
 - Jesus as God's messenger and servant

- Jesus as the Messiah, son of Mary
- Questioning Jesus' divine sonship: An anti-Christian move?
- Jesus as a word from God (Qur'an 3:45), or Jesus as God's Word?
- Jesus as a spirit from God: The enigma behind Qur'an 21:91 and 66:12

- October 27 JESUS (cont.)
- The narratives of Jesus' birth in the Qur'an
 - Why do the stories of Mary and John the Baptist precede that of Jesus' birth?
A symptomatic reading of Qur'an 3:33-41; 19:2-15 after Mark 1, Luke 1, John 1, and the Protevangelium of James
 - Jesus's annunciation and virginal birth in Qur'an 3:42-51
 - Jesus' birth in Qur'an 19:16-27: One or two tales put together?
 - Why does Jesus speak from the cradle in Qur'an 3:46 and 19:27-33?
 - The Qur'an and the Arabic Gospel of the Infancy
 - The missing connection: The birth of Noah in 1 Enoch 106 and its New Testament parallels
 - The full symbol: The Son-of-Man passage in Daniel 7:9-28

- October 29 JESUS (cont.)
- Jesus' teachings
 - Jesus as a sign for humanity in Qur'an 2:136; 4:163; 21:19; 33:7; 42:13
 - Jesus as a messenger to the Children of Israel in Q 3:49-57
 - Unraveling the anti-Jewish Christian rhetoric implicit in Q 3:49-57
 - Jesus' miracles
 - Jesus death: The interpretative problem in Qur'an 4:157
 - Christian docetism, the Qur'an, and the Muslim tradition
→ *Last Day to Drop a Class and Receive a Grade of W*

November 3 General discussion over the Quranic Jesus story

November 4 → *Registration for Spring 2016 Semester begins*

November 5 **Paper due**
Students' presentations A

November 10 Students' presentations B

November 12 Students' presentations C

IV THE EMERGENCE OF A NEW RELIGIOUS IDENTITY IN THE LAND OF THE BIBLE

November 17 • "How Islam Began" (F. M. Donner) – Video and discussion

November 19 • Late 7th-century Jerusalem and the foundation of the Arab state

- ‘Abd al-Malik’s innovative religious policy: Towards a new confessional formula
- The Dome of the Rock as a religious-political symbol
- Its two Arabic Kufic inscriptions
- Quranic texts on them? Reassessing a rather complex problem
- The inscription on the outer face of the octagonal arcade (Inscription I): Thematic division and rhetorical analysis
- The inscription on the outer face of the octagonal arcade (Inscription II): Thematic division and rhetorical analysis
- The elusive referent of the titles “servant,” “prophet,” and “messenger”: A transition text?

November 24 “Islam: The Untold Story” (T. Holland) – Video and discussion

November 26 General discussion over Section IV

V READING THE BIBLE AND THE QUR’AN SIDE BY SIDE: THEOLOGICAL INSIGHTS

- December 1
- Job in the Bible and the Qur’an
 - The Biblical Job: A claim to unconditional faithfulness or something else?
 - The historical setting of the narrative
 - Exile and religious reform
 - Ezekiel 18; 2 Samuel 7; 1 Kings 8:22-6; 1 Kings 2:1-4; and 2 Chronicles 6:12-7: What is at stake in these texts?
 - Job’s response
 - How should one read Job 42?
 - Shifting interpretative emphases
 - Qur’an 21:83-4; 38:41-4 and the Christian reading of Job
 - Conclusion: Individual freedom vs. submissive patience?
- December 3
- Cain and Abel in the Bible, the Qur’an, Muslim tradition, and modern Jewish thought
 - Genesis 4:1-16
 - Cain, the wicked brother, vs. Abel, the righteous guy?
 - What kind of plot are we faced with? Who are the players? And which is their game?
 - Just a moral tale? Of what kind?
 - God’s silence and human responsibility in modern Jewish thought
 - Qur’an 5:27-32
 - Back to the mainstream Christian interpretation of the story?
 - Traditional Muslim scholars and their views
- December 8 *Inmaculada Concepción Holiday (University Closed)*

December 10 Provisional conclusions and general discussion

December 16 **Final Exam**

7. Guidelines for writing your paper, preparing your presentation, and taking your two exams

You will have to write a research paper (c. 4,000 words) on one of the topics of the course. Further indications on the eligible topics and the recommended bibliography will be provided in due time.

All students will be asked to individually present their papers (which are due on November 5) on November 5, 10, and 12 (see Section 6 above).

The midterm exam will cover Sections I–III of the programme (on which see Section 2 above). You will be asked to undertake a textual analysis of two texts. The analysis of each text will be worth 1.75 points; 0.50 additional points will be for style. Your midterm grade will be that of your midterm exam.

The final exam will cover Sections III–V of the programme. Like in the midterm exam, You will be asked to undertake a textual analysis of two texts. The analysis of each text will be worth 1.75 points; 0.50 additional points will be for style. As mentioned above (see Section 5), your final grade will be calculated as a weighted average of four scores including your two exams, your paper, and your participation throughout the course.

You will be allowed to bring your class and home notes to both exams, provided they are handwritten. No other materials will be admitted, though.

8. Collection of student work for assessment

Saint Louis University – Madrid Campus is committed to excellent and innovative educational practices. In order to maintain quality academic offerings and to conform to relevant accreditation requirements, we regularly assess our teaching, services, and programs for evidence of student learning outcomes achievement. For this purpose we keep on file anonymised representative examples of student work from all courses and programs such as: assignments, papers, exams, portfolios, and results from student surveys, focus groups, and reflective exercises. Thus, *copies of your work for this course, including exams, oral presentations, and/or submitted papers may be kept on file for institutional research, assessment and accreditation purposes.* If you prefer that Saint Louis University-Madrid Campus does not keep your work on file, you will need to communicate your decision in writing to your professor.

9. Academic accommodations

In recognition that people learn in a variety of ways and that learning is influenced by multiple factors (e.g., prior experience, study skills, learning disability), resources to support student success are available on campus. Students who think they might benefit from these resources can find out more about:

- course-level support (e.g., faculty member, departmental resources, etc.) by asking your course instructor; and
- university-level support (e.g., tutoring/writing services, Disability Services) by visiting the Academic Dean's Office (San Ignacio Hall) or by going to http://spain.slu.edu/academics/learning_resources.html.

Students who believe that, due to a disability, they could benefit from academic accommodations are encouraged to contact Disability Services at +34 915 54 58 58, ext. 204, send an e-mail to counselingcenter-madrid@slu.edu, or visit the Counselling Office (San Ignacio Hall). Confidentiality will be observed in all inquiries. Course instructors support student accommodation requests when an approved letter from Disability Services has been received and when students discuss these accommodations with the instructor after receipt of the approved letter.

10. Office hours and e-mail

T R 12:00–12:30 and by appointment in San Ignacio Hall (Room 315).

E-mail contact: segoviaca@slu.edu