Course Syllabus
EMT1851H Surat al-Baqara: An Introduction to the Quran
Emmanuel College
Toronto School of Theology
Fall 2017

Instructor Information
Instructor: Nevin Reda, PhD, Assistant Professor
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E-mail: nevin.el.tahry@utoronto.ca
Office Hours: Wednesdays, 11:00 am – 12:00 pm or by appointment

Course Identification
Course Number: EMT 1851H L0101
Course Name: Surat al-Baqara: An Introduction to the Qur’an
Course Location: EM 302
Class Times: Wednesdays, 9:00 am – 11:00 am
Prerequisites: None

Course Description
Located in the beginning of the Quran immediately following a short introductory prayer, Surat al-Baqara is the doorway to understanding this scripture and its distinctive style and organization of ideas. The largest chapter in the corpus, it covers the major themes and discourses and is uniquely suited to begin the study of the Quran and related scholarship. This course is an introduction to the Quran and will familiarize students with the hallmarks of both traditional and western scholarship. It will cover topics such as the collection of the Qur’an, abrogation, mysterious letters and the Quranic sciences. Students will become acquainted with some of the main classical and modern commentaries and will learn how to identify Surat al-Baqara’s distinctive structure and unifying themes. Knowledge of Arabic, though useful, is not required. Lectures, readings, class discussions. Class participation 10%; pop quizzes: 20%; reflection papers: 30%; research paper: 40%.

Course Resources

Required Textbooks

Additional Course Materials

Optional Readings:

The Qur’an in Translation
For the meaning of the Qur’an, students are welcome to use any of the translations of the following scholars: Abdullah Yusuf Ali, Marmaduke Pickthall, Laleh Bakhtiar, Muhammad Abdel Haleem and Ahmad Zaki Hammad. ’Abdullah Yusuf ‘Ali’s *The Meaning of the Holy Qur’an* is one of the oldest and tends to be the most widely disseminated. It is available on-line. Bakhtiar’s *The Sublime Qur’an* has the advantage of formal equivalence: She tries to use the same English word for the same Arabic word consistently. Students have found Hammad’s *The Gracious Quran: A Modern-Phrased Interpretation in English* to be very smooth and easy to understand. Abdel Haleem’s translation tends to be popular in academic circles.

Encyclopaedia of the Quran (EQ) and Other Research Tools
This encyclopedia is a valuable resource and is available on-line through the library catalogue or in book form. You will occasionally be required to read some of its articles in preparation for class. Use EQ when conducting research for your paper. You will find valuable information and bibliography. Also use Index Islamicus and Encyclopedia of Islam (EI): both are available on-line and in book form, similar to EQ.

Course Website(s)
• Blackboard [https://weblogin.utoronto.ca/](https://weblogin.utoronto.ca/)
This course uses Blackboard for its course website. To access it, go to the UofT portal login page at [http://portal.utoronto.ca](http://portal.utoronto.ca) and login using your UTORid and password. Once you have logged in to the portal using your UTORid and password, look for the My Courses module, where you’ll find the link to the website for all your Blackboard-based courses. (Your course registration with ROSI gives you access to the course website at Blackboard.) Note also the information at [http://www.portalinfo.utoronto.ca/content/information-students](http://www.portalinfo.utoronto.ca/content/information-students). Students who have trouble accessing Blackboard should ask Wanda Chin for further help.

Course Learning Outcomes
Upon successful completion of the course, students are expected to:

Religious Faith and Heritage
• Demonstrate knowledge of religious heritage, and articulate clearly their own theological positions (as related to pastoral practices).
• Interpret scripture and religious texts using a variety of methods, sources, and norms.
• Identify and respect the diversity of theological viewpoints and practices within their religious tradition.

Culture and Context
• Give evidence of critical self-awareness with regard to their own and other faith perspectives and practices of educational ministry.

Spiritual/Vocational Formation
Display capacity for self-reflexive and spiritual practices within communities of faith.

**Ability with Scholarly Tools and Skills**

- Demonstrate competence in the use of a library and in the construction of a bibliography
- Demonstrate familiarity with pertinent web-based resources and skills.
- Demonstrate competence in the following skills:
  - Clear and effective communication in both oral and written forms;
  - The construction of a logical argument;
  - The making of informed judgments on complex issues;
  - The use of standard conventions of style for scholarly writing.

Give evidence of an understanding of the nature and processes of research.

**Evaluation**

*Each student should know from the outset that this course requires daily reading, both written and oral assignments, and regular class participation. More than two unexcused absences will negatively affect the student’s grade. Any student with more than four unexcused absences will receive an automatic failing grade, without possibility of supplemental examination.*

**Requirements**

The final grade for the course will be based on evaluations in four areas.

1. **Preparation, participation and reading** (10%)
   - In addition to participating in the regular activity of the class, including the reading of the required texts, students are expected to devote two hours or more outside of class for every hour of classroom instruction. Use this time to prepare the required readings and primary texts in advance. Always be ready to provide a brief summary of each reading, list the main points and explain how the readings relate to one another. Your class participation mark will reflect your participation in classroom discussions and two oral presentations: one on your reflection essays and one on your research paper.

2. **Pop Quizzes** (20%)
   - You will receive 2-6 pop quizzes throughout the course at the beginning of lectures. These quizzes will be only 20 minutes long, so ensure that you arrive on time to every class. They will typically consist of a choice of five out of seven words, which you will be asked to define and to explain their significance in relation to the Quran. I will place a list of 5-10 words after every class on a course wiki on the course website. The quiz words will be chosen from that list. Students may use the wikis to work independently or together on those words in preparation for pop quizzes.

3. **Two Reflection Papers** (30%)
   - The first reflection paper should be on a Meccan sura, while the second should be on a long Medinan sura. Suras will be allocated on the first day of classes. Each assignment should be 3-4 pages in double-spaced 12 pt Times New Roman font. Like any essay, it should have an introduction and a conclusion. If you like, you may include a brief summary of the sura, highlighting the main sura themes and/or passages that you discuss in your essay. The summary and introduction together should never exceed more than one third of your paper, preferably less. Your reflection paper should include what struck you the most when reading the sura and your personal thoughts, feelings and opinions. You should also try to relate these passages to each other, the rest of the sura’s themes, the Quran or the world around you. Sometimes these reflections can lead to discovery of a unifying theme or idea; see if you can find one.

4. **Research Paper: Interpreting the Qur’an** (40%)
   - The topic of your research paper should be focused on a particular theme in the Quran and it should reflect your awareness of the different methods that are used in interpreting relevant passages in both classical and modern times. This assignment should be 10-15 pages in double-spaced 12 pt Times New Roman font. Footnotes and bibliography should consistently follow *Chicago Manual of Style*. Your paper should include the following:
Title page. This includes the paper title, the student's name, the course code and name, the name of the instructor and the date of submission.

Introduction. The most important part of the introduction is the thesis statement, setting out in the briefest possible form the exact proposition or hypothesis which the paper will demonstrate. The introduction also provides the context necessary to show why the paper is important. To this end it identifies the research question and describes its broader setting in academic research. It gives attention to previous enquiry and available secondary literature (the status quaeestionis). The Introduction should also include a description of the project as a whole (i.e. a one-paragraph road map outlining what you plan to do in your paper).

Your introduction should not exceed 1-2 pages. Some students like to write two or three paragraphs: one with the thesis statement, one with the road map, and one on the state of the scholarship.

For this particular research paper, you may also want to include a section on method, describing the relevant primary literature (e.g. the Qur'an or parts thereof) and the methods to be used for interpreting it (e.g. using vocabulary such as thematic, holistic, intertextual, scientific, linguistic, literary, synchronic, diachronic, modern, classical, esoteric and/or feminist and explaining how your approach relates to the Qur'anic sciences, Ibn Taymiyya’s hermeneutics, and past and present contexts). You should give a rationale for the method and indicate how it is used to generate dependable conclusions and verify the thesis statement.

Exposition. The main body of the paper is the clarification, development, and demonstration of the thesis statement, using authoritative evidence. The exposition is typically organized as parts of an argument. The interrelationship of the parts of the exposition, and the direct relevance of each part of the exposition to the thesis statement, should be clear to the reader.

Conclusion. The thesis statement should be recapitulated, the demonstration should be summarized, the limitations of the demonstration and the remaining uncertainties should be acknowledged, and the implications of the study for the faith community, the wider scholarly community, and/or the world should be set forth.

Bibliography. Books, articles, and other sources that have been used must be listed. Primary and secondary literature should always be distinguished, e.g. by having two parts to your bibliography. For the differences between primary and secondary sources, see http://writing.utoronto.ca/advice/specific-types-of-writing/history.

(This assignment is based on the TST Basic Degree thesis requirements with modifications.)

Requirement Due Dates

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>10 %</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pop Quizzes</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflections Paper 1</td>
<td>15 %</td>
<td>Oct. 11 @ 9:00 am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflections Paper 2</td>
<td>15 %</td>
<td>Nov. 1 @ 9:00 am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Paper</td>
<td>40 %</td>
<td>Dec. 6 @ 9:00 am</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Grading System

A+ (90-100)
A (85-89)
A- (80-84)
B+ (77-79)
B (73-76)
B- (70-72)
Failure

Please see the appropriate handbook for more details about the grading scale and non-numerical grades (e.g. SDF, INC, etc).

**Late work.** Students are expected to hand in assignments by the date given in the course outline. Penalty for late assignments is 2% reduction in mark per day of lateness. Assignments will not be accepted after one week of the due date. This penalty is not applied to students with medical or compassionate difficulties; students facing such difficulties are kindly requested to consult with their faculty adviser or basic degree director, who should make a recommendation on the matter to the instructor. The absolute deadline for the course is the last day of classes. Students who for exceptional reasons (e.g., a death in the family or a serious illness) are unable to complete work by this date may request an extension (SDF = “standing deferred”) beyond the term. An SDF must be requested from the registrar’s office in the student’s college of registration no later than the last day of classes in which the course is taken. The SDF, when approved, will have a mutually agreed upon deadline that does not extend beyond the conclusion of the following term. If a student has not completed work but has not been granted an SDF, a final mark will be submitted calculating a zero for work not submitted.

**Course grades.** Consistently with the policy of the University of Toronto, course grades submitted by an instructor are reviewed by a committee of the instructor’s college before being posted. Course grades may be adjusted where they do not comply with University grading policy (http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/grading.htm) or college grading policy.

**Policies**

**Accessibility.** Students with a disability or health consideration are entitled to accommodation. Students must register at the University of Toronto’s Accessibility Services offices; information is available at http://www.accessibility.utoronto.ca/. The sooner a student seeks accommodation, the quicker we can assist.

**Plagiarism.** Students submitting written material in courses are expected to provide full documentation for sources of both words and ideas in footnotes or endnotes. Direct quotations should be placed within quotation marks. (If small changes are made in the quotation, they should be indicated by appropriate punctuation such as brackets and ellipses, but the quotation still counts as a direct quotation.) Failure to document borrowed material constitutes plagiarism, which is a serious breach of academic, professional, and Christian ethics. An instructor who discovers evidence of student plagiarism is not permitted to deal with the situation individually but is required to report it to his or her head of college or delegate according to the TST Basic Degree Handbook (linked from http://www.tst.edu/content/handbooks) and the University of Toronto Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/AssetFactory.aspx?did=4871. A student who plagiarizes in this course. Students will be assumed to have read the document “Avoidance of plagiarism in theological writing” published by the Graham Library of Trinity and Wycliffe Colleges (http://www.trinity.utoronto.ca/Library_Archives/Theological_Resources/Tools/Guides/plag.htm).

**Other academic offences.** TST students come under the jurisdiction of the University of Toronto Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm).

**Back-up copies.** Please make back-up copies of essays before handing them in.
**Obligation to check email.** At times, the course instructor may decide to send out important course information by email. To that end, all students are required to have a valid utoronto email address. Students must have set up a utoronto email address which is entered in the ROSI system. Information is available at [www.utorid.utoronto.ca](http://www.utorid.utoronto.ca). The course instructor will not be able to help you with this. 416-978-HELP and the Help Desk at the Information Commons can answer questions you may have about your UTORid and password. **Students should check utoronto email regularly** for messages about the course. **Forwarding** your utoronto.ca email to a Hotmail, Gmail, Yahoo or other type of email account is not advisable. In some cases, messages from utoronto.ca addresses sent to Hotmail, Gmail or Yahoo accounts are filtered as junk mail, which means that emails from your course instructor may end up in your spam or junk mail folder.

**Email communication with the course instructor.** The instructor aims to respond to email communications from students in a timely manner. All email communications from students should be sent from a utoronto email address. Email communications from other email addresses are not secure, and also the instructor cannot readily identify them as being legitimate emails from students. The instructor is not obliged to respond to email from non-utoronto addresses.

**Course Schedule (may be subject to change)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Sep. 13</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Sep. 20</td>
<td>Historicizing the Qur’an</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Sep. 27</td>
<td>Oral and Written Transmission</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**Required Readings:**


Optional Readings:

4 Oct. 4

**Poetics and Structure**

**Required Readings:**
4. Sura 2.

5 Oct. 11

**Interpreting the Qur’ān**

**Required Readings:**
2. John Burton “Abrogation,” *EQ*

Reflections 1 due

6 Oct. 18

**Classical Sunni Tafsīr**

**Required Readings:**
3. Sura 109
   Ibn Kathir’s commentary on Sura 109 can also be found on [www.qtafsir.com](http://www.qtafsir.com).

**Reading Week: No Classes on Oct. 25**

7 **Nov. 1**

**Sufi Taʾwīl**

**Required Readings:**
4. Sura 18:60-82.

**Reflections 2 due**

8 **Nov. 8**

**Shiʿi Taʾwīl**

**Required Readings:**

9 **Nov. 15**

**Modern Quran Interpretation**

**Required Readings:**

**Optional Readings:**
3. Abdullah Saeed, *Reading the Qurʾan in the Twenty-First Century: A Contextualist*
10 Nov. 22

Political and Scientific Quran Interpretations

Required Readings:

11 Nov. 29

Women’s Interpretations

Required Readings:
4. Sura 27 (al-Naml)

Optional Readings:

12 Dec. 6

The Qur’an and Mental Health

Required Readings:
Religion and Health 55, no. 3 (2016), pp. 821 - 829

Optional Readings:

Research Paper due

Additional Bibliography


Cassuto, Philippe and Pierre Larcher (eds), *Oralité & écriture dans la Bible & le Coran*. Aix-en-
Christmann, Andreas. “‘The Form is Permanent, but the Content Moves’: the Qur’anic Text and its Interpretation(s) in Mohamad Shahrou’s al-Kitab wal-Qur’an” Die Welt des Islam 43, no. 2 (2003), pp. 143-172.
—. “Teaching,” *EQ*, vol. 5, pp. 200-205.
Haddād, Yusuf Durra. *Naẓm al-Qur’ān wa-l-kitāb*. [Bayrūt?: s.n., 196-?].
Ibn Abī Yaḥyā, Abū Ja’far ʿAbd Allāh ibn Ibrāhīm. *Al-Burāhān fī ṣawwar al-Qur’ān*, ed. ʿAbd Allāh ibn Ṭāhir. [Bayrūt?: s.n., 196-?].
Molla-Djafari, Hamid. Gott hat die schönsten Namen ... ... Wahrheit der eschatologischen Überlieferung: Islamische


—. “Sūra(s),” EQ, vol. 5, pp. 166-176.


Patton, Walter Melville. Ahmed Ibn Hanbal and the Mihna: A Biography of the Imam including...

Qurṭūbī, Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-. al-Jāmi‘ li-aḥkām al-Qur’ān. 14 vols. al-Qāhirah:


——. *Reading the Qurʾān in the Twenty-First Century: A Contextualist Approach*. London:
Routledge, 2014.


