

**Course Syllabus**  
**EMT2641HF – Sufi Interpretations of the Qur'an**  
**Emmanuel College**  
**Toronto School of Theology**  
**Fall 2018**

***Instructor Information***

Instructor: Sara Abdel-Latif, PhD Candidate  
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***Course Identification***

Course Number: EMT2641HF  
Course Format: *In-class*  
Course Name: Sufi Interpretations of the Qur'an  
Course Location: TBD  
Class Times: Wednesdays 9:00am – 11:00am  
Prerequisites: N/A

***Course Description***

This is a thematic survey of Sufi exegesis of the Qur'an. The course explores Sufi metaphysics, hermeneutics, epistemology and practice as mediated through Sufi interactions with Qur'anic meaning. Excerpts from the writings of a wide range of Sufis and Muslim mystics are analyzed in the context of relevant Qur'anic verses. Academic contributions in the field of Sufism and Qur'anic Studies are used to investigate the genre of Sufi Qur'anic exegesis, pertinent themes that inform Sufi theory and praxis, and the relationship of Sufi scriptural interpretations to Qur'anic exegesis in the broader Islamic tradition. The course consists of lectures, readings and essay assignments. Method of Evaluation: 40% Final Research Paper, 25% Midterm Paper, 15% Research Paper Proposal, 10% Class Participation, 10% Reading Quizzes.

***Course Resources***

**Required Course Texts/Bibliography**

1. Kristin Zahra Sands, *Sufi Commentaries on the Qur'an in Classical Islam* (New York: Routledge, 2006). (Available online through the library website)
2. Sahl al-Tustari, *Tafsir al-Tustari* (Louisville KY: Fons Vitae, 2011). (Available for

download online through <http://altafsir.com/index.asp>)

3. Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī. *Laṭā'if al-ishārāt: Subtle Allusions*. Translated by Kristin Zahra Sands. Louisville, KY: Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought and Fons Vitae, 2017. (Available for download online through <http://altafsir.com/index.asp>)

4. Rashid al-Dīn Maybūdī. *The Unveiling of the Mysteries and the Provision of the Pious: Kashf al Asrār wa 'Uddat al-Abrār*. Selections translated by William C. Chittick. Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 2015. (Available for download online through <http://altafsir.com/index.asp>)

5. Jalal al-din Rumi, *Masnavi, Book One and Masnavi, Book Two*, trans. Jawid Mojaddedi (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2004, 2007). (Available online through the library website)

6. Online Translation of the Qur'an (<http://corpus.quran.com/translation.jsp>)

7. Readings on Quercus and on Course Reserve (see below).

### Course Website(s)

Quercus: <https://q.utoronto.ca/>

This course uses Quercus for its course website. To access it, go to the UofT Quercus login page at <https://q.utoronto.ca/> and login using your UTORid and password. Once you have logged in to Quercus using your UTORid and password, look for the **My Courses** module, where you'll find the link to the website for all your Quercus-based courses. (Your course registration with ACORN gives you access to the course website in Quercus.) Information for students about using Quercus can be found at: <https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-10701> .

### Course Learning Objectives/Outcomes

#### College

#### BD Level

Students successfully completing this course will be able to demonstrate the following learning outcomes.

#### (A) IN RESPECT OF GENERAL ACADEMIC 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 the ability to study, summarize and utilize readings and

scholarship in writing and discussion.

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.

(B) IN RESPECT OF THE UNDERSTANDING OF THE CONTENT OF ONE OR MORE THEOLOGICAL DISCIPLINES

Demonstrate knowledge of Sufi religious heritage, and articulate clearly the relationship between Sufi theory and praxis and the tenets of Islam as a broader religious movement.

Understand how Sufis interpret scripture and religious texts using a variety of methods, sources, and perspectives.

Identify and respect the diversity of theological viewpoints and practices within the various religious traditions.

(C) IN RESPECT OF PERSONAL AND SPIRITUAL FORMATION

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

Display capacity for self-reflection and the ability to extend understanding to practitioners of faith from a variety of perspectives.

## ***Evaluation***

### **Requirements**

The final grade for the course will be based on evaluations in five areas:

*Basic Degree Students:*

*(1) Participation (10%) – In addition to participating in the regular activity of the class, including all individual and group work assigned in class, students are expected to contribute to*

discussions that emerge during lecture, formulating responses and asking questions based on their reading and contemplation of the course material. Students are expected to complete all required readings prior to the start of lecture.

(2) Reading Quizzes (10%) – Additionally, students are expected to complete 10/11 online reading quizzes at home, one before the start of lecture each week, to demonstrate a basic grasp of the readings assigned and ensure they are prepared for class discussion. If all 11 quizzes are completed, the 10 quizzes with the best scores will be calculated for grading purposes. Quizzes are to be completed online through Quercus. **THERE WILL BE NO EXTENSIONS GRANTED FOR THE READING QUIZZES.**

(3) Midterm paper (25%) – Students are expected to submit a paper partway through the course analyzing a specific qur'anic verse or set of qur'anic verses and their relationship to Sufi thought. The paper should be **6-8 pages** long. Essays must be formatted to the following specifications: 12-point font size, double-spaced, citations must adhere to Chicago Manual of Style, and the essay must have a cover page that includes the essay title, course code, instructor's name, student name, student number, and date of submission. Detailed essay guide will be made available on Quercus. **Due date: October 31st.**

(4) Research Proposal (15%) – Students will provide a **1-2 page** research proposal that includes a tentative title for their Final Research Paper as well as a preliminary outline of the essay's argument, a preliminary bibliography of a minimum of **10** sources and a short section with questions the student has about the course material or any issues they foresee may emerge in the process of writing their paper. Proposals must include a cover page with "Research Proposal" in the title, course code, instructor's name, student name, student number, and date of submission. **Due date: November 21st.**

(5) Final Research Paper (40%) – A substantial scholarly paper of **18-20 pages** addressing a specific Sufi exegete and their approach to interpreting the Qur'an. Essays must be formatted to the following specifications: 12-point font size, double-spaced, citations must adhere to Chicago Manual of Style, and the essay must have a cover page that includes essay title, course code, instructor's name, student name, student number, and date of submission. Detailed essay guide will be made available on Quercus. **Due date: December 12th.**

### **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 (BD).** Basic Degree students are expected to hand in assignments by the date given

in the course outline. **There is a 5% late penalty per day following stated deadlines. This includes weekends.** It is your responsibility to keep track of deadlines and submit your work on time. 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 a week after the last class, i.e. **December 12**. 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, whether temporary or permanent, are entitled to accommodation. Students in conjoint degree programs 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* and the Graduate program Handbooks (linked from <http://www.tst.edu/academic/resources-forms/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 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](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 in conjoint programs are required to have a valid utoronto email address. Students must have set up their utoronto email address which is entered in the ACORN 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. Students in non-conjoint programs should contact the Registrar of their college of registration.

**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 in conjoint programs 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 for students in conjoint programs. Students in non-conjoint programs should only use the email address they have provided to their college of registration.

## **Course Schedule**

### **Week 1**

*Wednesday, Sept. 12*

Introduction to Qur'anic Interpretation and Sufism

Required:

1. Islamic Mysticism - The Sufi Path (video) (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BeDHZupuqOI>)
2. Encyclopedia of Islam, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., "Tasawwuf" (Q)
3. Sands, *Sufi Commentaries*, "Introduction," pp. 1-4.
4. Qur'anic verses 1:1-7, 2:1-5
5. Tustari, *Tafsir al-Tustari*, Exegesis of Q2:5, p. 14.

Optional:

1. Introduction to Islam: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BeDHZupuq>

### **Week 2**

*Wednesday, Sept. 19*

*The Hidden and the Manifest: Levels of Meaning in the Qur'an*

Required Reading:

1. Qur'anic verse 2:26-39
2. Sands, *Sufi Commentaries*, Ch. 1 - "The Qur'an as the Ocean of All Knowledge, pp. 7-13.
3. Böwering, "The Scriptural Senses in Medieval Sufi Qur'an Exegesis," pp. 346-357. (Q)
4. Tustari, *Tafsir al-Tustari*, Exegesis of Q2:1, pp. 12-13.

### **Week 3**

Wednesday, Sept. 26

Types of Knowledge in Sufism

Required Reading:

1. Qur'anic verse 20:111-115, 39:9
2. Sands, *Sufi Commentaries*, Ch. 2 - "The Qur'anic Text and Ambiguity," pp. 14-28.
3. Carl Ernst, "Introduction," in *Words of Ecstasy in Sufism*, pp. 1-6. (Q)
4. Sulami, Introduction to *Haqa'iq al-Tafsir* (Q)
5. Qushayri, *Lata'if al-Isharat*, Exegesis of Q 3:7, pp. 252-254.

### **Week 4**

Wednesday, Oct. 3

The Qur'an as the Mirror of the Sufi's Heart

Required Reading:

1. Qur'anic verse 47:24
2. Sands, *Sufi Commentaries*, Ch. 3 - "Uncovering Meaning: Knowledge and Spiritual Practice," pp. 29-34.
3. Annabel Keeler, "Sufi Tafsir as a Mirror," pp. 1-21. (Q)
4. Rumi, Masnavi – Book One, "Kings seat Sufis in front of themselves so that their eyes may become illumined by them," pp. 193-194.
5. Rumi, Masnavi -- Book One, "The story about the competition between the Greeks and the Chinese in the art of painting and portraiture," 345-348.

### **Week 5**

Wednesday, Oct. 10

The Human Being as Microcosm/Macrocosm

Required Reading:

1. Qur'anic verse 41:53, 2:30-39
2. Ibn 'Arabi, *The Bezels of Wisdom*, Ch. 1 – "The Wisdom of Divinity in the Word of Adam," pp. 47-59. (Q)
3. Toshiko Izutsu, "Man as Microcosm," *Sufism and Taoism*, 218-243. (Q)

### **Week 6**

Wednesday, Oct. 17

The Problem of Evil and Suffering

Required Reading:

1. Qur'anic verse 4:79, 2:153-157, 114:1-6
2. Rumi, Masnavi – Book Two, “Moses asks God about the mystery behind why oppressors prevail,” pp. 106-109.
3. Ozgur Koca, “Ibn ‘Arabī (1165–1240) and Rūmī (1207–1273) on the Question of Evil: Discontinuities in Sufi Metaphysics,” pp. 293-311. (Q)

Optional:

1. Peter J. Awn, *Satan's Tragedy and Redemption: Iblis in Sufi Psychology*.

FALL READING WEEK: October 22-26

NO CLASS ON OCTOBER 24TH

**Week 7 (Midterm Paper Due)**

Wednesday, Oct. 31

Annihilation of the Ego

Required Reading:

1. Qur'anic verse 55:1-28, 28:88, 12:53
2. Chittick, "Naughting the Self," *Sufi Path of Love*, pp. 173-181. (Q)
3. Qushayri, *Lata'if*, Exegesis of 2:154, pp. 140-141.
4. Ibn ‘Ajiba, *The Immense Ocean*, Spiritual Exegesis of 55:26-27, pp. 16-18. (Q)

**Week 8**

Wednesday, Nov. 7

God as Lover, Qur'an as Love Letter

Required Reading:

1. Qur'anic verse 2:165, 3:31, 5:54, 39:53, 93:1-11
2. William C. Chittick, “The Pivotal Role of Love in Sufism,” pp. 255-273. (Q)
3. Rumi, Masnavi, Book One - “The Song of the Reed,” pp. 4-6.
4. Maybudi, *Kashf*, Exegesis of 2:152, p. 50-52. **ALSO** Exegesis of 5:54, pp. 164-165.
5. Aishah al-Bay'unniya, "Epilogue on Love," *The Principles of Sufism*, Section 5, pp. 85-98. (Q)

NO CLASS ON NOVEMBER 14

**Week 9 (Research Proposal Due)**

Wednesday, Nov. 21

Storytelling as a Method of Spiritual Instruction

Required Reading:

1. Qur'anic verse 11:120, 12:3-7, 12:111
2. Sands, *Sufi Commentaries*, Ch. 7 – “Qur'anic Verses 18:60-18:82: The Story of Musa and al-Khadir,” pp. 79-96.



## **Week 10**

Wednesday, Nov. 28

States and Stations of the Sufi Path

Required Reading:

1. Qur'anic verses 17:79, 53:1-18, 13:28, 2:152
2. Michael Sells, *Early Islamic Mysticism*, Ch. 6 – “Sarraj: The Seven Stations from the Book of Flashes,” pp. 196-211. (CR)
4. Maybudi, *Kashf*, Exegesis of 36:39, pp. 416-417.
5. Qushayri, *Epistle*, "The [Mystical] Station," and "The [Mystical] State," pp. 77-79. (Q)

Optional:

1. Omar Benaissa, "The Degrees of the Station of No-Station" (<http://www.ibnarabisociety.org/articles/nostation.html>)

## **Week 11**

Wednesday, Dec. 5

The Importance of Having a Teacher on the Sufi Path

Required Reading:

1. Qur'anic verse 2:151, 16:36, 16:43
2. Rumi, *Masnavi*, Book One – “On the nature of the Sufi guide and obedience to him” and “The messenger of God advises Ali, ‘Since everyone seeks proximity to God by means of an act of worship, seek proximity through companionship with the special sage and servant of God, so that you can excel all the rest’,” pp. 180-183.
3. Maybudi, *Kashf*, Exegesis of 4:162, pp. 153-154.

On Opposition to Sufi Tafsir:

4. Sands, *Sufi Commentaries*, Ch. 5, “Attacking and Defending Sufi Qur’anic Interpretation,” pp. 47-63.

## **Final Paper Due on December 12th, 2018**

### **Bibliography**

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