

RELG/SCHC 358, Quran and Hadith

Instructor: Noah Gardiner, gardinen@mailbox.sc.edu
Office hours: Rutledge College 325, Wednesdays 11-12, Thursdays 12:30-1:30, and by appt.

Course overview:

In this course we engage intensively with the main scriptural sources in Islam: the Qur'an and the Prophetic Hadith (sayings and anecdotes ascribed to the Prophet Muhammad), both of which are widely misunderstood and misrepresented in modern Western debates about Islam and Muslims. We examine the origins of the Qur'an and its relationship to other Abrahamic scriptures; major themes of the Qur'an; the processes through which it was composed and recorded; Qur'anic interpretation from Sunni, Shi'i, Sufi, and non-Muslim points of view; ritual and magical uses of the Qur'an; and reflections of the Qur'an in the arts and popular culture of Islam historically and in the present. With regard to Hadith, we explore the history of how the sayings of the Prophet were recorded and transmitted, the culture of learning that grew up around the study of Hadith, the major compilations of Hadith, their central importance in Islamic law and theology, and their role in the collective memory of the Prophet in Muslim popular culture.

This is an SCHC course, and it satisfies the GLD requirement in the Carolina Core.



Learning Outcomes:

Students who successfully complete this course should be able to:

- Articulate the history and importance of the Quran and Hadith as scriptural sources in Islam.
- Critically evaluate statements about the Quran and Hadith and their interpretation.
- Synthesize different ways that Muslim thinkers make legal and theological arguments on the basis of Quran and Hadith.
- Communicate effectively in discussion and writing about the Quran and Hadith and their place in Islamic thought and culture.



Required texts:

- Seyyed Hossein Nasr et al., eds., *The Study Quran: A New Translation and Commentary*. New York: Harper One, 2015. ISBN 978-0-061-12586-7. Referred to in the syllabus as *TSQ*.
- Jonathan A.C. Brown. *Hadith: Muhammad's Legacy in the Medieval and Modern World*. Oxford: Oneworld, 2009. ISBN 978-1-851-68663-6. Referred to in the syllabus as *Hadith*.

Other readings will be posted on Blackboard.



Web resources:

A list of useful web resources will be provided on Blackboard, including various sources for those who wish to consult the Arabic text of the Quran (and some hadith collections).

Students are advised to be extremely cautious in dealing with non-recommended web resources on these topics, as many are motivated by sectarian or Islamophobic agendas that seriously undermine the

quality of information they provide. In general, non-recommended sources should not be used for work for this class before checking with Prof. Gardiner.



Assignments, requirements, and grading:

Grades will be based on the following:

Participation:	%20
Response papers:	%10
Completed writing portfolio:	%40
Final project:	%30

Letter grades are assigned as follow:

A, 90-100; B+, 87-89; B, 80-86; C+ 77-79; C 70-76; D+ 67-69; D, 60-66; F, 59 or less.

Participation

The participation grade reflects students' preparation for and active contributions to class. Participation in class means being present and attentive, and being willing and able to make meaningful contributions to discussions (which in turn requires having carefully completed the assigned readings for each class-meeting). Those for whom participation in classroom discussions is a source of serious anxiety are encouraged to regularly visit Prof. Gardiner's office hours in place of classroom participation.

Good participation does not require that you have understood everything you have read or heard. Indeed, one of the best ways to participate is to ask questions about the things you have not understood. The more everyone participates, the more productive, interesting, and fun the class will be.

Good participation does require coming to class. Frequent absenteeism will lead to a significantly lower participation score. **Students who will be missing classes due to religious holidays, sporting events, etc. must notify Prof. Gardiner by the end of the second week of class (Friday, Sept.1).**

Response papers and writing portfolio

Over the course of the semester students are required to write (almost) weekly short papers responding to the readings. There will be twelve of these in total. Once near the middle of the term and again at the end, students will be asked to select some of these short papers for reconsideration, revision, and expansion. **These revised and expanded papers will be collected into an eight-piece writing portfolio that is graded at the end of the semester.**

The response papers handed in each week are not graded *per se*; rather, the 10 points of the grade for the response papers reflects their being handed in on time and written with satisfactory effort. Some important details:

- **Initial response papers should be roughly 500-700 words long.**
- **All papers are due Tuesday before class starts.**
- To be counted as written with satisfactory effort, a paper must respond to the prompt and show engagement with the assigned readings. It must be written in full sentences (i.e. no bullet points, outlines, or fragmentary notes) and not riddled with typos. If a paper is not satisfactory, the student will be asked to resubmit the paper within a short period of time, and the

resubmitted paper will be counted as late. A pattern of unsatisfactory initial efforts will result in subsequent unsatisfactory papers being rejected altogether and penalized as missed papers.

- Each late paper will result in a one-point penalty.
- Late papers must be handed in by the Friday of the week they were originally due in order to be accepted. A pattern of late papers will result in subsequent late papers being rejected altogether and penalized as missed papers.
- Each missed paper will result in a 2.5 point penalty.
- **Anyone with more than four missing response papers will automatically fail the course.**

The completed writing portfolio handed in at the end of the semester will consist of eight pieces of writing based on the response papers. The idea of the response papers is that students will have an initial opportunity to think about and respond to the readings, such that we are all on the same page for that week's discussions. The papers that the student chooses to include in the portfolio will build on these initial efforts (though it is permitted to start fresh on a given topic), but will have been revised and expanded based on classroom discussions, readings from later in the class, and perhaps even outside research.

There will be a **mid-term portfolio review** in week 9, during the Tuesday, October 17 class meeting. There are no readings due that week, and students will instead choose three or four of the response papers they have written thus far to revise and expand. **Revised papers should be polished pieces of writing at least 800 words long.** Students will also be prepared to briefly present one of those papers in class that day, discussing the development of their thinking on that topic. Students will hand in the initial batch of three or four papers that day, and will receive a provisional grade on them shortly thereafter.

The **completed writing portfolio** is due on Thursday December 14. It will consist of eight pieces of polished writing based on the response papers. It may—but does not necessarily have to—include some or all of the papers handed in for the midterm portfolio review, and students are free to further revise papers they handed in at the midterm. The completed writing portfolio should be at least 6500 words long, and no longer than 9,000 words.

N.B. This is a significant amount of writing, and altogether accounts for %50 of the final grade. Students are thus well-advised to take the process of crafting their portfolios seriously at each step of the process.

Final project

Final projects can be done individually or in groups of up to four students. They can be research papers, posters, websites, films, podcasts, or something else. The requirements are that they must deal directly with the topics of the class and must involve research beyond the assigned texts (though this outside research can include parts of the Quran or Hadith not assigned for class). Possibilities might include projects that engage with online museum or library collections, interviews with people outside the class, or—for students or native speakers of Arabic—the Arabic texts of the Quran and Hadith. These are merely suggestions, and students are wholly encouraged to devise other kinds of projects. **Written descriptions of final projects must be approved by Prof. Gardiner no later than November 7. All projects will be due in the final week of class, and the last two class-meetings (December 5 and 7) will be dedicated to project presentations.**

Project presentations in the final week of class will be 10-20 minutes long, depending on the number of students involved in the project.



One-on-one meetings

A few weeks into the class, all students will be required to schedule a one-on-one meeting with Prof. Gardiner during his office hours or at some other time. This is an opportunity to see where the office is located and have a brief chat. Students will be expected to have memorized Surat al-Fātiḥah (Quran 1:1-7) in Arabic prior to the meeting, and will recite it during the meeting.



Class guidelines:

Students must always bring their copy of *The Study Quran* to class. They should also bring copies of Brown's *Hadith* during weeks when readings from it have been assigned. Students must also be able to access copies of readings assigned on Blackboard during class for which they are assigned, as well as copies of their response papers, whether printed or on a computer or tablet.

Students are permitted to use computers or tablets in class only when discussing readings stored electronically. Devices should otherwise be closed during class, unless the student can verify a medical need to use them at other times. Students should thus bring a notebook and pen or pencil to class for taking notes. The use of phones during class is not permitted. Those who do not follow these guidelines should expect to be called out in class, and Prof. Gardiner reserves the right to disallow the use of electronic devices in class if too many issues arise from their use.

You are welcome to bring food to class if you need to. Please try to avoid particularly loud, crunchy foods or anything that might otherwise distract the rest of the class.



Discussion etiquette:

Everyone in the classroom has the right to hold and express their ideas, opinions, and beliefs. Discussion and debate are at the heart of this kind of learning, and you are free—even encouraged—to disagree with the instructor and/or your classmates. However, when you do so, be sure to criticize the idea a person has expressed and not the person herself/himself. Follow basic rules of civil conversation: try not to interrupt or shout over each other, and be sure to give everyone a chance to talk. If anyone feels that he or she is being mistreated in classroom discussions then please come talk to the instructor outside of class as soon as possible. All such discussions will be kept confidential.



Accommodations:

Please notify the instructor by the end of the first week of classes if you require any special accommodations for the class and furnish any qualifying documentation.



Academic integrity:

As in all classes, students are bound by the University of South Carolina Honor Code with regard to cheating, plagiarism, lying, etc. For more information please refer to the Office of Academic Integrity's student resources page:

<https://www.sa.sc.edu/academicintegrity/honor-code-policy-information/>