

## **New Tafsir Module**

(Feb 2020)

### **Curriculum Outline**

#### **Overview:**

The aim of this module is to provide students with a thorough overview and understanding of the treatment of the Qur'an by exegetes. Students will first be familiarised with the Qur'an through preliminary discussions in Qur'anic sciences. The module also incorporates principles of correct recitation (*tajwid*) to make it accessible to beginners and non-Arabs, also affording them an overview of the history of the translation of the Qur'an in various languages. The main focus of the module will be to provide students with an insight into the principles and practices employed by exegetes in their endeavours to understand and extrapolate the true meaning of the Qur'an. It will examine the methodologies employed by exegetes in interpreting the Qur'an as well as the various lenses that have been used to approach it over the centuries: theological, legal, sociological, scientific, mystical, etc. with a concern for both historical context and theoretical content, placing exegesis within the broader context of the classical Islamic sciences. It will also explore the two main types of *tafsir* works: chronological (*tartibi*) and thematic (*mawdu'i*).

#### **Prerequisites:**

- Successful completion of the Ulum al-Qur'an module in Semester 1.
- Ability to read Arabic. Being a second-semester entry-level module, the student will not be expected to know or understand Arabic, but any level of proficiency will be most useful.

#### **Syllabus:**

The following topics will be covered within this course:

- Familiarisation with the arrangement of the Qur'an

- Principles of correct Qur'anic recitation and *tajwid*
- Recap of preliminary discussions from Ulum al-Qur'an relevant to Tafsir
- History of the translation of the Qur'an
- Early history of exegesis
- Principles and prerequisites of exegesis: arabic grammar, philology, etymology, *asbab al-nuzul*, logic, prohibition of *ra'y*, general and specific, definite and indefinite, abrogation, etc.
- difference between *tafsir* and *ta'wil*
- *tafsir* methodologies
- *tafsir* lenses
- *tafsir tartibi* and *mawdu'i*: their benefits, and notable scholarship in each one
- a closer look at seminal Shi'i *tafsir* works: *al-Mizan fi tafsir al-Qur'an*, *Majma' al-bayan*, *al-Tasnim*, *Min wahy al-Qur'an*, etc.
- contemporary *tafsir* works

### **Learning Outcomes:**

On completion of this module, the successful student will:

- have gained an understanding of the historical background of the early and classical scholarship associated with the interpretation of the Qur'an.
- have been introduced to correct pronunciation and recitation, to further practice and master themselves.
- have a good overview of Shi'i exegetic scholarship, both chronological and thematic, and feel confident accessing them for their research
- be able to discuss the principles and methodologies employed by exegetes in greater

depth.

### **Assessment Weighing:**

- 40% assignment: essay (2500-3000 words) in comparative *tafsir tartibi*, or *tafsir tartibi and mawdu'i* dealing with the exegesis of specific verses or themes of the Qur'an.
- 60% exam

### **Learning Materials**

#### **Core Readings:**

- Bahmanpour, Abbas. *Qur'anic Sciences and Shi'i Exegesis*, edited by Abbas Bahmanpour. ICAS Press, 2017.
- Bar-Asher, M. *Scripture and Exegesis in Early Imami Shi'ism*. E.J. Brill, 1999.
- Hamza, Feras and Sajjad Rizvi with Farhana Mayer. *The Anthology of Qur'anic Commentaries: On the Nature of the Divine*. Edited by Feras Hamza and Sajjad Rizvi with Farhana Mayer. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Nasr, S.H. et al. *The Study Qur'an: A New Translation and Commentary*. Harper Collins, 2015.
- Shirazi, N. M. *Message of the Qur'an, Volume 1: Knowledge and Comprehension in the Noble Qur'an*. London: The World Federation of KSIMC, 2010.

#### **Further Reading:**

- Abbott, Nabia. *Studies in Arabic Literary Papyri II, Qur'anic Commentary and Tradition*. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1967.
- Gätje, Helmut. *The Qur'an and its Exegesis: Selected Texts with Classical and Modern Interpretations*. Translated by Alford T. Welch. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1976.

- Görke, Andreas and Johanna Pink (editors). *Tafsir and Islamic Intellectual History: Exploring the Boundaries of a Genre*, Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2013.
- Rippin, Andrew. *The Qur'ān: Formative Interpretation*. Aldershot: Variorum, 1999.
- Shah, Mustafa. *Tafsīr: Interpreting the Qur'ān*. London; New York: Routledge, 2010.
- Versteegh, Kees. *Arabic Grammar and Qur'ānic Exegesis in Early Islam*. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1993.