Overview and Course Goals

This course is devoted to the women figures in the Qur’an. We will probe the lessons that arise from their stories and explore themes related to gender and authority. This is not a course on women and law, but we will occasionally touch upon such themes in our discussions.

Readings and Course Materials

All required materials for this course are supplied in PDF and online. I recommend that you have on hand a copy of The HarperCollins Study Qur’an as well as a copy of the Qur’an (in Arabic). The page numbers on the syllabus refer to the The Quran, Translated by Ali Quli Qara’i, which is the side-by-side Arabic-English edition that I use. Each week you are responsible for closely reading the required readings listed on the syllabus for that day. Please read the Qur’anic selections carefully and thoroughly several times. You may also want to memorize some of the selections, if you have not done so already. Most weeks also include media to be viewed prior to class.

Policy and Accommodations

You are expected to fully and completely adhere to the academic honesty policy of the Boston Islamic Seminary. Please inform me at the beginning of the course of any necessary accommodations. If you expect to be absent, please send me a note ahead of class via email.
1) Weekly Discussion Post & Comments on other students’ posting (50%)

Most weeks you will post a reflection (approximately 250 words) that comments upon least three verses from the Qur’an that we read for that week. These reflections should be fully cited, polished and well written. These reflections are due by 10pm on the Thursday before the class meets - see course portal for further details and rubric. Each week you will comment (approximately 200 words) on the posting of at least one other student. This is due by 10:00am on the SUNDAY when the class meets. Your comments should be constructive, professional, and well written.

2) Draft of a Final Course Product: Sermon, op-ed, or halaqa plan - (total 25%)

This assignment is an opportunity to apply your learning in the course. The sermon, op-ed, or detailed one-hour lesson plan should be approximately 1000 words and should explicitly draw upon the course themes and texts. A draft of this assignment is due in the appropriate discussion forum by Nov. 15th. You will receive instructor and peer feedback by Dec. 1st. You should incorporate the feedback and post your final project on the FINAL PROJECT DISCUSSION FORUM for your colleagues to view by Dec. 15th. See the course portal for details and evaluation rubric. Note that promptness in online submissions also factor into the grade.

3) Journal and Final Self-assessment - (25%)

Each week you are expected to keep a short journal (minimum 100 words/week) that relates the themes for that particular week of study to your own spiritual development. I will also give occasional prompts for journal writing. The journal is only for you and the instructor. You will submit the journal periodically throughout the term. At the end of the course, you will submit a self-assessment (approximately 500 words, due Dec. 1st) that reflects upon your growth over the course. Where were areas in which you grew intellectually or spiritually? How do you expect to apply the knowledge that you gained in your further education or in your community? What lingering questions do you have? Your journal entries may also take the form of works of artistic or poetic expression.

COURSE READINGS

Recommended Pre-Reading and Resources:

- Ingrid Mattson, The Story of the Qur’an (2nd ed.) pp. 4-25
- Shaykh Abdal-Hakim Murad – The Essence of Islamic Education – until 12mn.

Week 1 —Eve/Ḥawwāʾ: The Female Progenitor
Required Readings:

- **Qur’an**: (Qarā’ī translation): *The Women* 4:1 (pp. 105-6); *The Heights* 7:1-27 and 189-190 (pp. 204-8 and 237); *al-Hijr* 15:10-48 (pp. 361-64); *TaHa* 20:115-135 (pp. 446-49); *Saad* 38:65-88 (pp. 642-44); *al-Zumar* 1-7 (pp. 644-45)

Optional Readings:

- Cornelia Schöck, “Adam and Eve,” in *Encyclopedia of the Qur'an*, pp. 22-26
- Barbara Freyer Stowasser, ch. 2 “The Chapter of Eve,” in *Women in the Qur’an, Traditions, and Interpretation*, pp. 25-38

Online Resources:

- Mufti Menk on Eve - [See discussion starting at 36:57](#)

**Week 2 — Hagar/Hājar and Sarah/Sāra (RA): Destiny and Miracles**

**Journal prompt:** If Hājar (RA) would write her spiritual autobiography, becoming Ibrahim’s (AS) concubine/wife, giving birth to Ismā’īl (AS), journeying to Mecca, and surviving the desert would be some of her major life-changing events. Share one major event on the timeline of your life and its import for your spiritual growth.

Required Readings:

- **Qur’an**: (Qarā’ī translation): *The Cow* 2:121-141 (pp. 26-30); *Livestock* 6:74-94 (pp.184-188); *Mary* 19:41-63 (pp. 427-30); *The Prophets* 21:51-73 (pp. 455-57), *Ibrahim* 14:35-52 (pp. 357-59); *Scattering Winds* 51:24-30 ( p. 737); *Hūd* 11:69-73 (pp. 312-13); *al-Hijr* 15:49-56 (pp. 364-65)
Optional Readings:

- Aysha A. Hidayatullah, ch. 3, “Relationships to Feminist Theologies and the State,” in Feminist Edges of the Qur’an, pp. 46-62
- Barbara Freyer Stowasser, selections from ch. 3, “The Women of Abraham,” in Women in the Qur’an, Traditions, and Interpretation, pp. 43-49
- Bible: Genesis, 15:5, 16:10-11, 17:20-21, 21:17-20, Psalms 84:5-6

Online Resources:

- TDB

Week 3 — Women Supporters of Moses/Mūsā (AS)

Required Readings:

- Qur’an: (Qarā’ī translation): The Cow 2:47-62 (pp. 10-13); The Feast 5:1-26 (pp.144-51); TaHa 20:1-98 (pp. 434-44); and al-Qaṣaṣ 28:1-53 (pp. 538-47)

Optional Readings:

- Cornelia Schöck, “Moses,” in Encyclopedia of the Qur’an, pp. 419-426
- Barbara Freyer Stowasser, ch. 5, “The Women in the Life of the Prophet Moses,” in Women in The Qur’an, Traditions, and Interpretation, pp. 57-61,

Online Resources:
Omar Sulyman on Äsya bint Muzāhim, Wife of Pharoah

Week 4 – Week of Review and Guest Speaker!

Week 5 – Queen of Sheba /Bilqīs Malikat Saba’

Required Readings:

- **Qur’an**: *al-Naml* 27:15-53 (pp. 527-532)

Optional Readings:

- Barbara Freyer Stowasser, ch. 6, “The Chapter of Bilqis, Queen of Sheba,” in *Women in The Qur’an, Traditions, and Interpretation*, pp. 62-66
- Annemarie Schimmel and Susan H. Ray, Ch. 3, “Women in the Qur’an and in the Tradition,” in *My Soul is a Woman: The Feminine in Islam*, 2003

Online Resources:

- [Mufti Ismail ibn Musa Menk on Story of the Queen of Sheba](#) - begins at 22:30

Week 6 – Ishba’ Mother of Yahya and Maryam Mother of Jesus (RA)

Required Readings:

- **Qur’an**: *Family of Imran* 3:33-64 (pp. 75-81); *Mary* 19:1-40 (pp. 423-29)

Optional Readings:
• Barbara Fryer Stowasser, “Mary,” in The Encyclopedia of the Qur’an, pp. 288-295

• Denis Spellberg, “History Then, History Now: The Role of Medieval Islamic Religio-Political Sources in Shaping the Modern Debate on Gender,” in Beyond The Exotic: Women's Histories In Islamic Societies, pp. 7-14

• Barbara Freyer Stowasser, Ch. 7, “The Chapter of Mary,” in Women in the Qur’an, Traditions, and Interpretation, pp. 67-82


• Martin Lings, on early Muslim encounters with Christians, see ch. 27 “Abyssinia, in Muhammad: His Life Based on the Earliest Sources, pp. 83-86


• Mona Siddiqui, Christians, Muslims, and Jesus, ch. 4, “Reflections on Mary,” pp.149-170

Online Resources:

• Omar Sulyman on Maryam – the best woman of all humankind

• Hamza Yusuf on the honor of Maryam – start at 7:50 until 12:00

Week 7 – Khadija bint Khuwaylid (RA)

Required Readings:

Qur’an: 73:1-10 (pp. 818-19); 96:1-5 (p. 855)

Optional Readings:

• Martin Lings, chs. 12-13 and 15, “Questions of Marriage,” “The Household,” and “The First Revelations,” in Muhammad: His Life Based on the Earliest Sources, pp. 33-41, 44-46

• Kecia Ali, The Lives of Muhammad, Chapter 4, pp. 115-130

• Marilyn Booth, ch. 8, “Famous Wombs and Women’s Memories: Gender, Nation, and Life Writing in Today’s Egypt,” in May Her Likes Be Multiplied: Biography and Gender Politics in Egypt

Online Resources:

- Omar Sulyman on Khadija

Week 8 – Wives of the Prophet (SA)/ “Mothers of the Believers” (RA)

Required Readings:

- Qur’an: 33:6 (pp.584-585); 33:28-40 (pp.589-91); al-Nūr 24:11-26 (pp. 488-93); al-Tahrīm 66:1-5 (pp. 797-98)

Further Readings:

- Martin Lings, Ch. 70, “Whom Lovest Thou Most,” in Muhammad: His Life Based on the Earliest Sources, pp. 279-82
- Kecia Ali, end of Ch. 4 and ch. 5, The Lives of Muhammad, pp. 131-199 (skim)
- Barbara Freyer Stowasser, ch. 8, “Mothers of the Believers in the Qur’an,” in Women in the Qur’an, Traditions, and Interpretation, pp. 85-103
- Martin Lings, ch. 65, “The Lie,” in Muhammad: His Life Based on the Earliest Sources, pp. 251-54

Online Resources:

- Listen to Kecia Ali discussing The Lives of Muhammad, on NPR’s All Things Considered, November 3, 2014
- Popular American Muslim scholar Omar Sulyman on ʿĀʾishah in The Superstars Series
- Series on the Mothers of the Believers, by Suhaib Webb, first video here.
- Dr. Yasin Qadhi on Zaynab Bint Jahsh and Orientalist accounts of her marriage (vocabulary: mahram= family member of a woman who cannot marry her)
Week 9 — Nov. 12th —  Fāṭima bint Muḥammad (RA), Nusayba Bint Ka’ab (RA), and Khawla bint Tha‘lab / “al-Mujadilah” (RA)

Required Readings:

- **Qur’an**: Family of Imrān 3:58-64 (pp.80-81); al-Shūra 42:23 (p. 684); 76:5-25 (pp. 826-27); al-Fath 48:18-19 (pp. 724-25); al-Alzāb 33:35 (p. 590 – reread); al-Mujadilah 58:1-4 (pp. 769-70); al-Muntahanah 60:8 (p. 782)

Optional Readings:

- Ingrid Mattson, The Story of the Qur’an (2nd ed.) pp. 1-3
- Martin Lings, ch. 47, “Deaths and Marriages,” in Muhammad: His Life Based on theEarliest Sources, pp. 167-71

Online Resources:

- Omar Sulyman Superstar Series – Fāṭima bint Muḥammad
- Abdul-Malik from Native Deen – spoken word story of Nusayba
- Mufti Menk on Women Companions – Asmā’ bint Abū Bakr and Umm Salamah
- Account of the life of Umm ‘Umārah on Islam’s Women

Week 10 – The Unfortunates: Wives of Noah, Lot, Job, Azīz Misr, and Abū Lahab

Required Readings:

- **Qur’an**: Joseph 12:1-53 (pp. 320-330); al-Naml 27:54-81 (pp. 532-536); al-Maṣad 111 (p. 864); al-Tahrīm 66:10-12 (pp. 799-80) ; al-Hājir 15:49-77 (pp. 364-66)

Optional Readings:

• Barbara Freyer Stowasser, selections from chaps. 3 and 4, in Women in The Qur’an, Traditions, and Interpretation, pp. 39-43 and 50-56

Online Resources: TBD

Week 11 — Week of Review and Guest Speaker!

Week 12 – Course Summation – Assessing the legacy