

FALL  
2020

# Study Guide and Readings for the “Signature Assignment”

REL 265.103, “WORLD RELIGIONS”

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# Signature Assignment

Due October 5, 2020

## Is the God of the Bible the same deity (divinity) as the “Allah” of the Qur’an?

*Here are some possible ways of answering the question:*

1. **Yes.** There is one “true” God, and that God is both revealed in the Bible and in the Qur’an.
  - a. You can try to prove this *philosophically*. There is only one God, and religions that claim to believe in one God must believe in the same God.
  - b. You can try to prove this *theologically*: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam have the same view of “ultimate reality,” of understanding “how the world works,” of what “God is like.”
2. **Yes.** We cannot know if any god exists (or, there is no god), but the 3 religions have the same understanding of what their god is. (This is a variant of 1.b.; however, you will be questioning/doubting whether the god “really” exists.)
3. **No.** The God of the Bible is the true “one God,” and the “Allah” of the Qur’an is a parody or “counterfeit” god. You can try to prove the negative of 1.a or 1.b.
4. **No.** Only Jews have the true God; the god of the Christians and Muslims is a “fake” or “forgery”.
5. **No.** The divinities of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are imaginary beings anyway, and each religion “invents” a version of god that supports their understanding of reality and their authority over their believers.
6. **It is impossible to know.** The divinities of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are imaginary beings anyway, and it is impossible to know if one god is the same as another god.
7. Remember the question posed at the end of our discussion on the Signature Assignment: How does one know that two spiritual beings are identical? How can one determine that God A is the same being as God B?
8. The essay should be 5-6 pages long,  $\approx$  1750-2000 words.

## Reserves

### Translations of the Qur'an (Koran)

1. *Approaching the Qur'an: The Early Revelations*. Introduced and Translated by Michael Sells. **BP130.4 .S43 2007**. Clear Translations with detailed commentary on the facing page. Begins later (Surah 83) in the Qur'an than the instructor's commentary (below). The place to begin when the student is ready to actually "read" the Qur'an.
2. *The Holy Qur'an*. Arabic Text, English Translation and Commentary. Ali, Maulana Muhammad. **BP 109 .K45 1995**. Detailed Notes.
3. *The Qur'an*. English translation and parallel Arabic text. Abdel Haleem, M. A. **BP109 2010**.
4. *The Qur'an: A New Translation*. Cleary, Thomas. **BP 109 .K4613 2004**. Probably the best translation in the library for the average student. Small Print.

### Introductions and Reading Guides

5. *How to read the Qur'an : a new guide, with select translations*. Ernst, Carl W., 1950-. **BP130 .E76 2011**. Ch. 2, "Early Meccan Surahs," gives detailed explanation of the Surahs which are presumed to be given at the beginning of Muhammad's activity. For advanced students.
6. *The Koran, a very short introduction*. Cook, Michael, 1940-. **BP130.4 .C66 2000**. Chapters 1 & 2: (pp. 3-20). **Start here!!**
7. The instructor has written a complete commentary on the Qur'an. The student can access it at the instructor's website:  
[http://www.davidwaynelaymanphd.com/uploads/9/6/0/5/9605300/quran\\_commentary.pdf](http://www.davidwaynelaymanphd.com/uploads/9/6/0/5/9605300/quran_commentary.pdf)

### Judaism, Christianity, Islam

8. *Common ground: Islam, Christianity, and religious pluralism*. Heck, Paul L. **BP172 .H43 2009**. Ch. 1: "Does the Qur'an Belong in the Bible?"
9. *Inheriting Abraham: the legacy of the patriarch in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*. Levenson, Jon Douglas. **BS580 .A3 L483 2012**. A detailed explanation of the instructor's position that there is not a single "Abrahamic religion." See esp. chapter 6: "One Abraham or Three?"
9. *Islam, Judaism, and Christianity: Theological and Historical Affiliations*. Busse, Heribert. **BP172 B8613 1997**. Explains the Qur'anic retelling of the Biblical stories. Requires substantial background in the stories of the Jewish and Christian Bibles, and their understanding of their own stories.
10. *Islam: Past, Present & Future*. Küng, Hans. A theologically sophisticated presentation by famous Christian theologian. Küng adheres to the modern ecumenical idea that we ought to find common ground among all the world's religions, that ultimately they ought to seek to "get along." Requires some theological sophistication and background. Some parts that might be helpful include:
  - a. Pp. 45-56: Is there a single "Abrahamic" religion?"
  - b. Pp. 489-503: How do we understand Jesus from Jewish, Christian and Muslim perspectives? The student needs to be aware that the instructor does not agree with Küng's understanding of Jesus as "Messiah".

11. *No other gods: Christian belief in dialogue with Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam*. Vroom, H. M., 1945-. **BR128.B8 V76 1996**. Ch. 4, “The One God, the Prophet, and the Cross” is probably the most accessible discussion of the Assignment Prompt in the books on reserve.
12. *Opening the Qur’an: introducing Islam’s holy book*. Wagner, Walter H., 1935-. **BP130.4 .W24 2008**. Chapters 2 & 3, “Basic Narratives for Judaism and Christianity,” and “Islam’s Basic Narrative and Core Positions” give a detailed compare and contrast of the “narratives” (the basic “story-line”) of the three religions.

#### Other Translations in the “Stacks”

13. *The Glorious Qur’an: A Translation*. Pickthall, Mohammed Marmaduke. **BP 109 .P5 2000**. An older translation by an English convert (so English was his native language).
14. *The Meaning of the Holy Qur’an*. Ali, Abdullah Yusuf. **BP 109 2002B**. A parallel edition of the Arabic and English translation, with extensive notes. Might be difficult to follow for the student new to the Qur’an.
15. *Interpretation of the meanings of the noble Qur’an in the English language : a summarized version of At-Tabari, Al-Qurtubi, and Ibn Kathir,...* **BP130.4 .K5714 1994**. Printed in reverse (right to left order), with extensive notes.
16. *The Message of the Qur’an*. Asad, Muhammad. **BP 130.4 .A77 2003**. Heavy (literally: Arabic/transliteration/English with extensive notes).

#### Sources on the Internet

17. Several years ago, an instructor at a Christian college wore a “hijab” in “solidarity” with Muslims. This initiated an internet debate over whether the Christian god was the same god as Allah. This is a *philosophical* question: **is there only one “one-God”?** Put another way: can there be two different divinities, each claiming to *the* “one God”? Here are some important postings from that debate
  - a. **Pro** (God *is* the same god as Allah):  
<https://www.thecatholicthing.org/2015/12/17/domuslims-and-christians-worship-the-same-god/> ;  
 follow-up: <https://www.thecatholicthing.org/2016/01/07/why-muslims-andchristians-worship-the-same-god/>
  - b. **Con** (God *is not* the same god as Allah):  
<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/leithart/2015/12/muslims-and-christians/?> ;  
<http://thefederalist.com/2015/12/21/wheaton-is-right-the-christian-and-muslim-godsare-different/> ; <http://www.andrewtwalker.com/2015/12/18/do-muslims-and-christians-worship-the-same-god-a-response-to-francis-beckwith/> ;
  - c. The basic theory that there is only *one* one-God is called “classical theism”. One contemporary defender of this theory is Edward Feser. Here he gives a “round-up” of different postings he has done on the issue:  
<https://edwardfeser.blogspot.com/2012/07/classical-theism-roundup.html> . Here is the primary post on the issue: <http://edwardfeser.blogspot.com/2010/09/classicaltheism.html> .

18. Pope Benedict XVI gave an important speech contrasting Christianity and Islam. Here is the Wikipedia summary (which you are permitted to use in your essay):  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Regensburg\\_lecture](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Regensburg_lecture) . The important paragraphs are found at [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Regensburg\\_lecture#Key\\_paragraphs](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Regensburg_lecture#Key_paragraphs) . The full text can be found here:  
[http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedictxvi/en/speeches/2006/september/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_spe\\_20060912\\_universityregensburg.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedictxvi/en/speeches/2006/september/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20060912_universityregensburg.html) .
19. Muslim leaders responded with “A Common Word Between Us and You.” You can read key ideas here:  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A\\_Common\\_Word\\_Between\\_Us\\_and\\_You#Main\\_quotations\\_from\\_the\\_Letter](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Common_Word_Between_Us_and_You#Main_quotations_from_the_Letter) .  
 The full text can be found at <http://www.acommonword.com/the-acw-document/> .
20. A key argument between Muslims and Christian critics is whether Allah is a God of love. A good statement on this question (arguing the negative position), and the general question of whether the God of the Qur’an is the God of the Bible is <https://www.firstthings.com/web-exclusives/2013/06/no-the-god-of-the-quran-is-not-the-god-of-the-bible> .
21. Here is one of the instructor’s own writings comparing the role of Christ and the Qur’an:  
<http://www.firstthings.com/blogs/firstthoughts/2010/08/is-the-quran-analogous-to-christ> .

The course text, “World Religions in a Thematic Perspective,” includes a commentary on the final part of the Qur’an, the “early” Surahs (**pp. 46-52**). (As the instructor explains in class, the Qur’an is in reverse chronological order.) The student is advised to read this to gain a quick introduction to this part of the Qur’an.