USKUDAR UNIVERSITY

***READING SAID NURSI READING THE COSMOS***

SYLLABUS FOR SEMESTER ONE

**Lecture One**

Unit Title: *Introduction to Said Nursi and the Risale-i Nur*

Aim: To locate and contextualise Said Nursi historically

Objectives: To acquaint students with the premise behind the *Risale-i Nur* and to provide them with a broad conspectus of its contents; to outline the main ‘pillars’ of Nursian thought; to provide a thumbnail biography of Said Nursi; to give a broad-brush overview of the module structure and format.

Reading: Sukran Vahide’s biography of Said Nursi

**Lecture Two**

Unit Title: *The Universe as a Gallery of Divine Art: Said Nursi’s ‘theology of Divine names’*

Aim: To give students an insight into Said Nursi’s conceptualisation of the universe as a ‘gallery of Divine names and attributes’

Objectives: To acquaint students with the notion of creation as the place in which God is ‘hidden in plain sight’; to understand the names of God as ‘the pillars that hold up the cosmos’; to familiarise students with Said Nursi’s conceptualisation of the creation as a book that is to be read; to understand the importance of the names of God as hermeneutical keys which unlock the meaning of existence.

Reading: *The First Word* ; Chapter One of *The Quran Revealed*

**Lecture Three**

Unit Title: *Unity and Unicity: the tawḥīdī paradigm*

Aim: To understand the conceptual and practical importance of the two main components of Divine unity, namely *aḥadiyya* (uniqueness) and *wāḥidiyya* (oneness).

Objectives: To locate and identify the unity/unicity binary in various creational settings; to read other Divine names and attributes against the backdrop of the unity/unicity binary.

Reading: Chapter One of *The Quran Revealed*

**Lecture Four**

Unit Title: *Is the rose beautiful or is it created beautifully?*

Aim: To acquaint students fully with the Nursian binary of *ma‘nā-i ismī* and *ma‘nā-i ḥarfī* and its role in his ‘theology of the names’

Objectives: To learn to identify the ‘self-referential’ and the ‘Other-indicative’ in writing and in the spoken word; to be able to explain lucidly and in full the nature and significance of the self-referential/Other-indicative binary, and to account for its significance in Nursian thought.

Reading: To be decided

**Lecture Five**

Unit Title: *Nature: Cause or Effect?*

Aim: To acquaint students thoroughly with Nursi’s disavowal of causality and his philosophical arguments against the efficacy of secondary causation.

Objectives: To become familiar with Nursi’s approach to the nature of ‘nature’; to understand and account for the notion of causes a ‘veil’; to understand the place of the ‘natural’ in Muslim cosmology.

Reading: *The Twenty-Third Flash*; Chapter Three of *The Quran Revealed*.

**Lecture Six**

Unit Title: *Towards a Nursian angelology*

Aim: To understand the nature and role of angels in Nursi’s theology

Objectives: To acquaint students with the Quranic view of angels and their place in the cosmic scheme; to understand the role of angels in the process of revelation and Divine manifestation; to explore the notion that angels may be invoked as an explanation of why inanimate objects appear to exhibit purpose and consciousness; to explore the idea of angels as a ‘replacement’ for cause and effect.

Reading: *The Twenty-Ninth Word* ; Chapter Four of *The Quran Revealed*.

**Lecture Seven**

Unit Title: *Prophethood and Revelation*

Aim: To understand how Said Nursi sees prophethood as an inevitable corollary of creation

Objectives: To examine Nursian ‘proofs’ of propethood; to gain insight into Nursi’s understanding of the role of revealed scripture in revelation.

Reading: *The Nineteenth Word* ; Chapter Six of *The Quran Revealed*

**Lecture Eight**

Unit Title: *Divine discourse: The Quran*

Aim: To familiarise students with Nursi’s approach to the Quran as a guide to creation

Objectives: To acquaint students with Nursian ‘proofs’ of the veracity of the Quran; to explore Nursi’s understanding of the inimitability of the Quran; to compare the Quran with what Nursi calls the ‘literature of civilisation’.

Reading: *The Twenty-Fifth Word*; Chapter Seven of *The Quran Revealed*

**Lecture Nine**

Unit Title: *The ‘human I’: Said Nursi’s theory of the self*

Aim: To understand the role of the ‘I’ in Nursian spiritual psychology

Objectives: To become familiar with the role of the ‘I’ as part of the psychospiritual make-up of humankind; to gain insight into the Nursian division of human history into two currents: the ‘line of prophethood’ and the ‘line of philosophy’.

Reading: *The Thirtieth Word* (First Aim); Chapter Five of *The Quran Revealed*

**Lecture Ten**

Unit Title: *Eternality and the Hereafter*

Aim: To explore Nursi’s understanding of resurrection and the hereafter

Objectives: To familiarise students with Nursian ‘proofs’ of resurrection and the hereafter; to explore the Nursian contention that the desire for immortality is hardwired in the human psyche; to gain insight into social-scientific understandings of human ‘immortality hunger’.

Reading: *The Tenth Word* ; Chapter Eight of *The Quran Revealed*; Colin Turner, ‘Wealth as an Immortality Symbology in the Quran: A Reconsideration of the māl/amwāl verse’ in *Journal of Quranic Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (2006), pp. 58-83.

**Lecture Eleven**

Unit Title: *Belief or Unbelief: The Most Important Choice of All*

Aim: To understand the place and significance of belief and unbelief in the Nursian worldview.

Objectives: To understand the difference between *īmān* and *islām*, and how one can obtain without the other; to appreciate the centrality of belief to the life and humanity of humankind; to explore the repercussions and implications of unbelief according to Said Nursi; to appreciate the ‘graded’ nature of belief and the difference between emulative and investigative faith; to appreciate the difference between nominal Islam and ‘small-i Islam’.

Reading: The Twenty-Third Word; Chapter Nine of *The Quran Revealed*.

**Lecture Twelve**

Unit Title: *If God is All-Powerful, Where Is My Freedom?*

Aim: To develop a sound understanding of the Nursian approach to Divine Determining and human freewill

Objectives: To reconcile Divine omnipotence with human freewill; to explore Nursi’s understanding of human freedom of choice (*ikhtiār juz’ī*) and to locate it within the general framework of Muslim theological discourse.

Reading: *The Twenty-Sixth Word*; Chapter Twelve of *The Quran Revealed*

**Lecture Thirteen**

Unit Title: *The ‘open doors’ of creation: Said Nursi, science and the magicians of the 21st century*

Aim: To locate science within the sphere of Said Nursi’s teachings and concerns

Objectives: To become acquainted with the significance of science and technology in the teachings and writings of Said Nursi; to understand the differences between science, pseudo-science and scientism; to explore and understand the notion of ‘scientific exegesis’; to understand the importance of science to the mindset of secular social engineers.

Reading: To be decided.

**Lecture Fourteen**

Unit Title: Summing Up

Aim: To recap the main features and outcomes of module as a whole

Objectives: To provide constructive criticism on the delivery of the module.

Reading: None