

B A Y Y I N A H

The Way Forward in Arabic Education

An Introduction to
The Fundamentals of Classical Arabic
ARA 201

Course Goals:

1. To build a strong foundation in understanding core principles governing the Arabic language through a study of examples taken exclusively from the Qur'an. Students are given the bigger picture of Arabic grammar so that they understand exactly what they know, what they need to know and what areas they need to work on individually.
2. To introduce students to the rich scholarly legacy of academic works on *إِعْجَازُ الْقُرْآنِ الْبَلَاغِيِّ*, loosely translated as the linguistic miracle of the Qur'an. This introduction is meant to inject students with inspiration and intrigue into the incredible literary majesty of the Arabic Qur'an so that they are motivated to continue their Arabic studies.
3. To make students understand the usage of critical vocabulary (roughly defined as vocabulary that shows up on virtually every page of the Qur'an) and to make them memorize it with meaning.

Course Content & Instructional Material:

1. The handout packet 201_handouts.pdf is a 60 page document that is made available to each registering student via email. Students are responsible to print their own packets and bring them to class. This represents the primary course material for the ARA 201. The course packet is designed in a proprietary fashion. This means that only students taking the course are actually able to benefit from it and it serves little to no benefit for non-students taking it up as self study material. In other words, it only works with the instructor specializing in how to teach it. For each grammatical concept taught in the course, there are at least 20 examples from the Qur'an. The concepts are taught in class, notes are taken *in English*, and then the course packet is used to go through and understand the examples pertaining to each individual concept.
2. Review Sheets for each of the 3 sections of the course, take-home exams and precise follow up study assignments are delivered to students during and at the conclusion of the course.
3. Students having completed the course work and exams are given access to a unique study aide which helps them proceed in their studies effectively after the course comes to its conclusion. The 'Color Coded Manual' comprises a hundred آيات from سورة البقرة, color coded to highlight the precise grammatical constructs covered in the original course. This manual allows students to apply what they learn in this course directly to the text of the Surah thereby solidifying their understanding of the theoretical concepts as well as their practical implementation in the Qur'an.

Scheduling Model:

The ARA 201 is taught over the course of 10 consecutive nights, 7PM -10PM each night. A lot of people ask, 'What can you possibly hope to learn in 10 nights?'. Interestingly those among them that take our course almost always end up saying something like, 'I never thought I could learn so much in 10 nights'. There are multiple reasons for which we employ and remain committed to this scheduling model:

1. It has served as the most feasible schedule for the most number of people in a given community. About three fourths of our student body comprises post graduate, full time workers and home makers. Such people have

enormous commitments during the day and can only afford an evening commitment. Furthermore, any prolonged commitment only enhances the chances of more and more students dropping out.

2. The program has been taught in over 30 locations and our student retention has never gone below 95%. This is remarkable for any class while Allah alone deserves all praise and appreciation. In recent cases we've even experienced a spike in the number of students comparing the first day to the last.
3. The experience of learning together as a community with a group of 70-100 students at a time at the local masjid is very motivational and energizes a community. A lot of people that don't usually come to the masjid now come there for 10 consecutive nights catching Maghrib, Isha or both in congregation. It has always been a powerful community experience. We have been told numerous times that such numbers are not seen with such consistency and enthusiasm any time other than Ramadhan!
4. Because there are no gaps in class sessions, the students get a continuous revision of the material. Every session begins with a solid review of the day before and then proceeds to the next concept.
5. We believe in this model most of all because of the student performance we have seen. Students are averaging above 85% on exams under this model. This is remarkable for large groups such as the ones that take our courses.

Instructional Methodology:

Our instructional methodology revolves around the following core principles:

1. Concepts are more important than terminology. If the terminology is intimidating, use simpler alternatives. For instance we don't use words like subjunctive, jussive, indicative, indirect object pronoun etc. in our classes.
2. The most important ingredient in Arabic learning is motivation and it is also the hardest ingredient to keep alive in the class room. Our sessions are fun, exciting and inspirational as well as being fused with hard work. We consider it the job of our teachers to make our students laugh, relax and engage themselves fully in the class.
3. The burden is on the teacher more than it is on the student. This implies that the teacher will do everything in his or her capacity to ensure that the concept is easy to understand. Questions are always welcome and never undermined.
4. The curriculum is Qur'an based because of point number 2. Most students want to learn Arabic for the Qur'an. If they start seeing results with the Qur'an from the very first day and begin to appreciate it in ways they didn't before, they have all the motivation they need to excel in the subject. Conversational Arabic is taught later on in our program simply because its practical value for a Muslim community in the West is limited at best. Furthermore, retaining conversational Arabic would require consistent exposure which is difficult if not impossible in the United States. On the other hand, Qur'anic Arabic can be retained so long as the student has a relationship with the Qur'an in prayer and recitation.
5. There is no writing or speaking in class because the goal of the class centers around the Qur'an and therefore listening and reading are more important. Anything that had to be written in Arabic is already made available through the student packet.
6. Each session is 20% lecture and 80% interactive discussion. The teacher asks questions and expects individual or collective answers. Students are to remain engaged throughout.

Exams

There are 3 exams administered during the course. 2 of them are written take-homes and one of them is oral. The oral exam comprises critical vocabulary and conjugations that are taught and memorized in class with the teacher's help. The written exams are 50-100 questions that are to be answered in T/F, multiple choice, matching letter etc. Scores for all three exams are tallied to determine final grade. Exams are the only measure of performance in class. Class participation & attendance are not considered because we don't expect students to be missing any days at all and simply too large a group and too short a span to gauge participation accurately.

Beyond the 201

In addition to the study aides provided in class at the end of the course, Bayyinah has constructed a thorough 90 hour follow up curriculum that is covered by means of online streaming videos and exercises. This follow up curriculum will be made available to students by September 2008 and will be on-demand. Students can view recorded videos, do the exercises and take the exams. They can also join a live webinar every two weeks with whatever questions they may have from anywhere in the material.

Concepts Taught in 201

The course is divided into three distinct parts. This list bears no indication as to how these concepts are taught. It is designed for the review of teachers or former students of Arabic to gain better perspective on what our fundamentals course comprises. Most of the Arabic terminology mentioned below is not used in the introductory course.

PART 1: GRAMMAR (75%)

- a. Properties of the Ism (العدد والقسم والجنس والإعراب)
- b. 5 fragments based on the Ism & the Ism based Sentence
(الإضافة والنعته والمنعوت وحروف الجر وحروف النصب واسم الإشارة ومشار إليه والجملة الاسمية)
- c. Pronouns (الضمائر المرفوعة والمتصلة المنصوبة والمجرورة)
- d. Past Tense (الفعل الماضي)
- e. Present Tense (الفعل المضارع)
- f. Passives & Transitivity (المجهول في الماضي والمضارع والتعدي واللزوم)
- g. Commanding & Forbidding (الأمر والنهي)
- h. The System of Word Patterns (صرف الأوزان في الثلاثي المزيد فيه)

PART 2: CRITICAL VOCABULARY(15%)

- a. The Pronouns
- b. The Ism Conjugations illustrating number, gender and status
- c. The past tense
- d. The present tense
- e. Pointing Words (Demonstrative Nouns)
- f. Harf of Jarr
- g. Harf of Nasb
- h. Special Mudhafs (ظرف and others)

PART 3: DIVINE ELOQUENCE OF THE QUR'AN(10%)

Students will be exposed to one example a night for ten nights of the incredible eloquence in the Qur'an with brief responses to some of the major Western criticism against the Qur'an such as its alleged incoherence, redundancy and grammatical inconsistency etc. Students will see how these claims are not only weak, but rather an inquiry into these claims actually reveals more of the miraculous beauty of the Qur'an.

Final Word

The Fundamentals of Classical Arabic is the flagship course of Bayyinah. It alone has over 3000 student across the nation and the count is increasing by the month. When Bayyinah visits a new community, the first course offered is usually this one. We feel that this course will greatly benefit communities and individuals aspiring to engage in higher learning; for what learning can be higher than the word of the Almighty.