Description and objectives. This class introduces students to the poetry and oratory associated with the jāhiliyyah (pre-Islamic paganism). We will read a selection of major texts and learn how to use commentaries, grammars, and other reference materials to understand them as fully as possible. To help us address questions of historicity and interpretation, we will also read several 20th and 21st-century studies of pre-Islamic Arabic literature.

Prerequisite: Ability to read Arabic. This generally means three years of instruction or the equivalent.

Materials: Our six secondary studies are on reserve at YRL. All other materials will be posted on the course website.

Grades: Grading will be based on (1) your coming to class prepared to discuss the readings or present on an assigned topic (50%), and (2) five short writing assignments (10% each).

Readings: For Arabic texts, read a portion of the text each day rather than tackling the whole thing at one sitting. Read each portion over twice before looking anything up. Focus first on syntax--Where is the verb? What is its subject? Does it have an object?--before worrying about the meanings of
unfamiliar words. After two readings, look up any unknown words that occur more than once or seem especially important. (If you find yourself looking up the same word more than once, consider using flash cards to study recurrent words.) If a passage still makes no sense, mark it and move on. You may come across something later that helps you figure it out. If not, make sure to ask about it in class.

**Class activities:** If I ask you to read in Arabic, I am asking you to focus on sound (articulation, stress, rhythm, etc.), not meaning. If I ask you to translate, I do not expect perfect results. An acceptable class translation might sound like this:

‘Īsā bnu Hishām (is that a name?) verbed us. He said (but who is "he"?): word-I-don't know, "I'm in the city of peace," doing something "from the harām town," then verbing the verb of some noun, "on the shore of Dijlah," whatever that is.

As this example shows, the point is to figure out the basic structure and then isolate the words that need more attention.

**Writing assignments (5).** These include book reviews, grammar exercises, and translations, and short essays, as specified in the schedule. They should be 3-5 pages in length, and use complete and correct references to any resources used. They are due electronically on the dates below. Any one assignment except for the last one may be turned in up to a week late, no questions asked. You do not need to explain why it is late; just email it to me. Once your one free lateness has been used up, do not ask for any more. Provided any of the first four assignments has been turned in on time (or not, once), it may be rewritten and resubmitted for a higher grade by 5 PM on Monday, December 14 (no late submissions possible).
CLASS SCHEDULE (subject to adjustment)

For Oct. 1: 'Amr, Mu ‘allaqah, lines 1-12
Hoyland, Arabia, Ch. 1-5

For Oct 8: 'Amr, Mu ‘allaqah, lines 1-22
Introduction to prosody
Drory, "Abbasid Construction..."
Hawting, "Pre-Islamic Arabia..." (EQ)
Lecomte, "al-Mu’ allakāt" (EI2)

For Oct 15: 'Amr, Mu ‘allaqah, lines 23-51
Borrut, "Vanishing Syria"
Jallad, "The Earliest Stages"
WRITING ASSIGNMENT 1:
(1) Critical summary of Hoyland Chs. 1-5, Drory, Borrut, or Jallad
(2) Further research on jāhiliyyah in the Qur’an

For October 22: ‘Amr, Mu ‘allaqah, lines 52-74
Meeker, Literature and Violence (selection TBA)

For October 29: ‘Amr, Mu ‘allaqah, lines 75-end
Stetkevych, Mute Immortals (selection TBA)
WRITING ASSIGNMENT 2:
(1) Critical summary of Meeker
(2) Grammatical exercise 1

For November 5: Ibn al-Kalbi, Kitāb al-Asnām (selection TBA)
Hoyland, Arabia, Chs. 6 and 7

For November 12: al-Mas‘ūdī, "Diyānāt," from the Murūj
Hoyland, Arabia, Chs. 8 and 9
WRITING ASSIGNMENT 3:
(1) Critical summary of Stetkevych
(2) Critical summary of Hoyland, 6 and 7 or 8 and 9
(3) Further research on idols in the Qur’an
(4) Further research on jinn and demons in the jāhiliyyah
For November 19: Opening lines of the muʿallaqāt of Imruʿu l-Qays and Ṭarafah
Montgomery, "The Empty Hijaz"

For November 26: Opening lines of the muʿallaqāt of Zuhayr and Labid
Peter Webb, Imagining the Arabs (selection TBA)
WRITING ASSIGNMENT 4:
(1) Critical summary of Montgomery
(2) Grammatical exercise 2

For December 3: Opening lines of the muʿallaqāt of ʿAntarah and al-Ḥārith
Secondary reading TBA

For December 14: WRITING ASSIGNMENT 4:
(1) Critical summary of Webb
(2) Any previous assignment you haven’t already done
(3) Topic of your choice, to be cleared with me first
(4) An annotated translation of any Arabic text read in the class, to be cleared with me first
PLUS
(4) Rewrites of Assignments 1-4 (optional)

All the above are due electronically by 5 PM (submit early to avoid crashes!)