Over the past few years, the Qur’an, the sacred scripture of Muslims, has received heightened public attention around the world. Yet it is hard for most ordinary Americans to understand Muslims’ passion about the way the Qur’an is treated, and to make sense of Muslim outrage over such acts like the 2010 “International Burn a Qur’an Day” or the desecration of Qur’ans at Guantanamo, because we tend to understand the Qur’an as the Islamic equivalent of the Bible. This comparison is vexing for Muslims. For Muslims, the Qur’an is not only a book, but rather the text of a message that must be read or recited. That message, however, is deposited in a material object called the mushaf, comprised of pages, binding, and print. Based on fieldwork in Egypt, Natalia Suit will address some of the practical implications of how the immaterial message of the Qur’an must still be conveyed through a material object.

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