MODERN MIDDLE EAST STUDIES

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The Modern Middle East Studies major focuses on the culture, history, religion, politics, and society of the modern Middle East in its full geographical breadth, using any of its four major languages, Arabic, Hebrew, Persian, and Turkish. Courses are selected from the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations and from other departments in the humanities and social sciences, including Anthropology, History, History of Art, Judaic Studies, Political Science, Religious Studies, and Sociology. The Modern Middle East Studies major gives students the language skills necessary to understand complex issues of the Middle East and serves as excellent preparation for graduate study or for business and professional careers in which an understanding of that region is essential.

REQUIREMENTS OF THE MAJOR

There are no prerequisites, but prospective majors should keep the language requirement in mind while planning their course schedules (see below). Twelve term courses are required for the major, including three foundational courses, one each in modern thought, classical thought, and the modern Middle East. Six electives on the modern Middle East examine culture and thought, history, religion, politics, and society. Elective courses must be spread geographically and substantively; they must focus on at least two different subregions and originate in at least two different departments. The proposed course of study requires the approval of the director of undergraduate studies.

Language requirement All students are required to complete two courses at the L5 level in a Middle Eastern language. The two courses may be applied toward the twelve-course major requirement. Typical courses include ARBC 150, 151, and PERS 150.

SENIOR REQUIREMENT

Students in the major undertake a one- or two-term senior essay that involves use of materials in one or more modern Middle Eastern languages. The student selects a faculty adviser with competence in an appropriate language. A prospectus and outline signed by the adviser must be submitted to the director of undergraduate studies by the end of the fourth week of classes in either term of the senior year. Senior essays are graded by the adviser and a second reader. See the course descriptions of the senior essay courses (MMES 491, 492, 493) for additional information. Alternatively, majors may take an additional seminar and write an essay in that course to fulfill the senior requirement.

REQUIREMENTS OF THE MAJOR

Prerequisites None

Number of courses 12 term courses

Distribution of courses 3 foundational courses, 1 each in modern thought, classical thought, and the modern Middle East; 6 electives spread geographically and substantively; focusing on at least 2 subregions and from at least 2 depts

Language requirement 2 courses at L5 level in a Middle Eastern language

Senior requirement Senior essay (MMES 491 or MMES 492, 493) or essay written in an addtl sem

FACULTY ASSOCIATED WITH THE PROGRAM OF MODERN MIDDLE EAST STUDIES

Professors Abbas Amanat (History), Gerhard Böwering (Religious Studies), John Darnell (Near Eastern Languages & Civilizations), Stephen Davis (Religious Studies), Steven Fraade (Religious Studies), Eckart Frahm (Near Eastern Languages & Civilizations), Frank Griffel (Religious Studies), Dimitri Gutas (Near Eastern Languages & Civilizations), Christine Hayes (Religious Studies), Hannan Hever (Comparative Literature), Marcia Inhorn (Anthropology), Anthony Kronman (Law School), Joseph Manning (Classics, History), Ivan Marcus (History), Alan Mikhail (History), A. Mushfiq Mobarak (School of Management), Robert Nelson (History of Art), Maurice Samuels (French), Lamin Sanneh (Divinity School), Shawkat Toorawa (Near Eastern Languages & Civilizations), Harvey Weiss (Near Eastern Languages & Civilizations)

Associate Professors Zareena Grewal (American Studies), Kaveh Khoshnood (Public Health), Mark Lazenby (School of Nursing), Kishwar Rizvi (History of Art), Eliyahu Stern (Religious Studies), Jonathan Wyrtzen (Sociology)

Assistant Professors Rosie Bsbeer (History), Thomas Connolly (French), Robyn Creswell (Comparative Literature), Narges Erami (Anthropology), Jill Jarvis (French), Travis Zadeh (Religious Studies)

Senior Lecturers Geetanjali Singh Chanda (Women's, Gender, & Sexuality Studies), Tolga Köker (Economics), Kathryn Slanski (Near Eastern Languages & Civilizations)

Lecturers Karla Britton (Architecture), Karen Foster (History of Art), Supriya Gandhi (Religious Studies), Emma Sky (Global Affairs)

Senior Lector II Shiri Goren

Senior Lectors Sarab Al Ani, Muhammad Aziz, Jonas Elbousty, Dina Roginsky, Farhondeh Shayesteh
Foundational Courses

MODERN THOUGHT

* MMES 176a / PERS 161a, Cinema of Iran, Past and Present  Farkhondeh Shayesteh
A thematic survey of Iranian cinema, past and present. Prominent Iranian directors such as Kiarostami, Beyzai, Panahi, Banietemad, and Farhadi are explored through discussion and in-class viewing of clips from assigned films. Students enhance their awareness of Persian culture through Iranian films while advancing their language skills. L4 and instructor permission.  L5

* MMES 216b / HEBR 156b / JDST 405b, Dynamics of Israeli Culture  Shiri Goren
Controversies in Israeli society as revealed in novels, films, poetry, newspaper articles, Web sites, art, advertisements, and television shows. Themes include migration and the construction of the Sabra character; ethnicity and race; the emergence of the Mizrahi voice; women in Israeli society; private and collective memory; the minority discourse of the Druze and Russian Jews; and Israeli masculinity and queer culture. Conducted in Hebrew. Papers may be written in English or Hebrew. Prerequisite: HEBR 140 or permission of instructor.  L5, HU, RP

MMES 355a / HIST 343a, Political Islam from Origins to Modern Times  Abbas Amanat
Historical overview of the origins of political Islam and its development from pre-modern to contemporary times.  HU

CLASSICAL THOUGHT

* MMES 082a / RLST 082a, Representing Muhammad  Travis Zadeh
Interpretations of Muhammad’s life, including traditional and modern representations of Muhammad by pious Muslims, as well as an array of portrayals produced by non-Muslim polemicists and admirers, alike. Enrollment limited to freshmen. Preregistration required; see under Freshman Seminar Program.  WR, HU

MMES 125b / HSAR 265b, Art of Byzantium, 850-1200  Robert Nelson
A survey of the art of Byzantium, a multinational empire that considered itself the direct successor to ancient Rome. Mosaics, churches, icons, enamels, silks, and carved ivories are placed in the context of the empire, the theology of religious images, and the history of devotional practices.  HU

* MMES 170a / ARBC 168a, Modern Arab Writers  Muhammad Aziz
Study of novels and poetry written by modern Arab writers. Such writers include Taha Hussein, Zaid Dammatj, Huda Barakat, Nizar Qabbani, al-Maqalih, and Mostaghanimi. Prerequisite: ARBC 140 or permission of instructor.  L5

MMES 192a / RLST 170a, The Religion of Islam  Gerhard Böwering
The rise of Islam in Arabia; Muhammad and the Qur’an; Muslim tradition and religious law; crucial issues of Islamic philosophy and theology; basic beliefs and practices of the Muslim community; Sufism and Shi’ism; religious institutions and modern trends; fundamentalism and violence; freedom and democracy.  HU

MMES 201a / HUMS 233a / LITR 178a / NELC 156a, Classics of the Arabic-Islamic World  Shawkat Toorawa
Survey of the literary tradition of the Arabic-Islamic world (West Asia, North Africa, and Muslim Spain), a textual conversation among diverse authors from late antiquity to the Mamluk period. Prose and poetry from the Qur’an to the Arabian Nights; attention to the interdependence of the works and their cultural setting, the agendas authors pursued, and the characters they portrayed.  HU, TR

* MMES 342a / HIST 232Ja / HUMS 443a / JDST 270a / RLST 201a, Medieval Jews, Christians, and Muslims In Conversation  Ivan Marcus
How members of Jewish, Christian, and Muslim communities thought of and interacted with members of the other two cultures during the Middle Ages. Cultural grids and expectations each imposed on the other; the rhetoric of otherness—humans or devils, purity or impurity, and animal imagery; and models of religious community and power in dealing with the other when confronted with cultural differences. Counts toward either European or Middle Eastern distributional credit within the History major, upon application to the director of undergraduate studies.  WR, HU, RP

* MMES 490a / NELC 490a, Introduction to Arabic and Islamic Studies  Dimitri Gutas
Comprehensive survey of subjects treated in Arabic and Islamic studies, with representative readings from each. Methods and techniques of scholarship in the field; emphasis on acquiring familiarity with bibliographical and other research tools. Enrollment limited to senior majors in Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, except by permission of instructor.

THE MODERN MIDDLE EAST

* MMES 042a / HIST 042a, Oil and Empire  Rosie Bsheer
The political and social history of oil since the late nineteenth century, including global trends and processes. Oil’s impact on the rise and fall of empires and the fates of nation-states; its role in war and its impact on social and cultural life. Focus on the Middle East, with some attention to Venezuela, Indonesia, and the Niger Delta. Enrollment limited to freshmen. Preregistration required; see under Freshman Seminar Program.  WR, HU
MMES 102a / NELC 102a, Introduction to the Middle East  Benjamin Foster
Introduction to the history and cultures of the Middle East from the rise of Islam to the present, including the Arab world, Iran, Turkey, and Israel. Emphasis on factors important for understanding the Middle East today.  HU

MMES 290a / PSLC 435a / RLST 290a, Islam Today: Jihad and Fundamentalism  Frank Griffel
Introduction to modern Islam, including some historical background. Case studies of important countries in the contemporary Muslim world, such as Egypt, Iran, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia. Islam as a reactive force to Western colonialism; the ideals of Shari’a and jihad; violence and self-sacrifice; and Islam as a political ideology.  HU

MMES 314b / HIST 319b / NELC 317b, Islam in Asia  Valerie Hansen and Michael Rapoport
Examination of the three countries with the largest Muslim populations (Indonesia, India, and Pakistan) and China. Case studies on how the history of Islam in these countries helps us to understand present-day controversies regarding violence (jihad), gender, law (Shari’a), and governance (caliphate). Exploration of similarity and diversity in beliefs and practices.  HU

MMES 346a / HIST 344a, Making of the Modern Middle East  Rosie Bsheer
Introduction to narratives and debates in the history of the Middle East from the mid-eighteenth century to the present. Local, regional, and global events and processes; political, social, cultural, and intellectual realities. Readings from the fields of history, anthropology, politics, and literature.  HU

* MMES 347b / HIST 385Jb, Reformers and Revolutionaries in the Arab World  Rosie Bsheer
Major social and intellectual trends of the Arab world and their relation to major events and movements of the twentieth century. The influence of colonial, postcolonial, and neocolonial thought; issues faced by activists, lawyers, feminists, leftists, nationalists, Islamists, secularists, liberals, and unionists; ways in which such struggles shaped people’s social lives and futures; the causes and implications of current uprisings.  WR, HU

* MMES 349a / AFAM 420a / FREN 417a, Postcolonial Cities  Staff
Critical study of literature and film that charts urban spaces in the French colonial empire and the Francophone postcolonial world. Readings and topics include: Paris as imperial capital and site of anti-imperial movements; Dakar, Senegal in Sembene Ousmane’s “Black Girl” (novel and film); Fort-de-France, Martinique in Césaire’s Notebook and Chamoiseau’s Soliloque de magnifique; Algiers in Assia Djebar’s Women of Algiers and Samir Toumi’s Alger le cri; Tunis in Abdelwahhab Meddeb’s Talisman; Casablanca in Mahi Binebine’s Les étoiles de Sidi Moumen; and Abderrahmane Sissako’s film Timbuktu. Reading knowledge of French required (FREN 160 or above).  HU

Elective Courses

* MMES 139a / RLST 427a, Islam, Conquest, and Conversion  Travis Zadeh
Through examination of conquest and religious conversion in the formative periods of Islamic history this course interrogates the idea that Islam was spread by violent domination. Case studies are drawn from the Middle East, South and South East Asia, the Indian Ocean, Iberia, and West Africa.  HU

* MMES 139a / RLST 427a, Islam, Conquest, and Conversion  Travis Zadeh
Through examination of conquest and religious conversion in the formative periods of Islamic history this course interrogates the idea that Islam was spread by violent domination. Case studies are drawn from the Middle East, South and South East Asia, the Indian Ocean, Iberia, and West Africa.  HU

MMES 148b / HIST 345b / JDST 265b / RLST 202b, Jews in Muslim Lands from the Seventh to the Sixteenth Centuries  Ivan Marcus
Jewish culture and society in Muslim lands from the time of the Prophet Muhammad to that of Suleiman the Magnificent. Topics include Islam and Judaism; Jerusalem as a holy site; rabbinic leadership and literature in Baghdad; Jewish courtiers, poets, and philosophers in Muslim Spain; and the Jews in the Ottoman Empire.  HU, RP

MMES 149a / ER&M 219a / HIST 219a / JDST 265b / RLST 148a, Jewish History and Thought to Early Modern Times  Ivan Marcus
A broad introduction to the history of the Jews from biblical beginnings until the European Reformation and the Ottoman Empire. Focus on the formative period of classical rabbinic Judaism and on the symbiotic relationships among Jews, Christians, and Muslims. Jewish society and culture in its biblical, rabbinic, and medieval settings. Counts toward either European or non-Western distributional credit within the History major, upon application to the director of undergraduate studies.  HU, RP

MMES 156a / HEBR 161a / JDST 407a, Israeli Popular Music  Dina Roginsky
Changes in the development of popular music in Israel explored as representations of changing Israeli society and culture. The interaction of music and cultural identity; modern popular music and social conventions; songs of commemoration and heroism; popular representation of the Holocaust; Mizrahi and Arab music; feminism, sexuality, and gender; class and musical consumption; criticism, protest, and globalization. Conducted in Hebrew. Prerequisite: HEBR 140 or equivalent.  1.5

* MMES 159a / HEBR 159a / JDST 409a, Conversational Hebrew: Israeli Media  Shiri Goren
An advanced Hebrew course for students interested in practicing and enhancing conversational skills. Focus on listening comprehension and on various forms of discussion, including practical situations, online interactions, and content analysis. Prerequisite: HEBR 140 or permission of instructor.  1.5, RP

* MMES 166b / HEBR 164b / JDST 417b, Biblical to Modern Hebrew for Reading Knowledge  Dina Roginsky
Instruction in the linguistic needs of students who have reading knowledge of Biblical Hebrew but cannot read or converse in Modern Hebrew. Concentration on reading comprehension of Modern Hebrew for research purposes, particularly scholarly texts tailored to students’ areas of interest. Two years of Biblical or Modern Hebrew studies, or permission of the instructor.  RP
MMES 197a / HIST 216a / JDST 332a / RLST 193a, Zionism  Eliyahu Stern
Introduction to the core ideas of the Zionist movement from the mid-nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth. Focus on internal Jewish debates and criticism of the movement by European and Middle Eastern intellectuals. Social, political, cultural, and messianic ideological strands within the movement and their interpretations of various historical experiences and ideas located in the Jewish tradition.  HU

* MMES 23b / JDST 23b / NELC 23b / RLST 147b, Introduction to Judaism in the Ancient World  Steven Fraade
The emergence of classical Judaism in its historical setting, Jews and Hellenization; varieties of early Judaism; apocalyptic and postapocalyptic responses to suffering and catastrophe; worship and atonement without sacrificial cult; interpretations of scriptures; law and life; the rabbi; the synagogue; faith in reason; Sabbath and festivals; history and its redemption. No prior background in Jewish history assumed.  HU

* MMES 28b / AFST 373b / GLBL 362b / SOCY 339b, Imperialism, Insurgency, and State Building in the Middle East and North Africa  Jonathan Wyrtzen
The historical evolution of political order from Morocco to Central Asia in the past two centuries. Focus on relationships between imperialism, insurgency, and state building. Ottoman, European, and nationalist strategies for state building; modes of local resistance; recent transnational developments; American counterinsurgency and nation-building initiatives in the region.  SO

* MMES 29b / AFST 348b / SOCY 232b, Islamic Social Movements  Jonathan Wyrtzen
Social movement theory used to analyze the emergence and evolution of Islamic movements from the early twentieth century to the present. Organization, mobilization, political process, and framing of political, nonpolitical, militant, and nonmilitant movements; transnational dimensions of Islamic activism. Case studies include the Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas, Hizbollah, Al-Qaeda, Gulen, Al-Adl wa-Ihsann, Islamic State, and others.  SO

* MMES 31b / ANTH 31b, Anthropological Theory and the Post Colonial Encounter  Narges Erami
Key texts in the theoretical development of sociocultural anthropology. Theorists include Emile Durkheim, Marcel Mauss, A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, Bronislaw Malinowski, E. E. Evans-Pritchard, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Mary Douglas, Clifford Geertz, Sherry Ortner, Michele Rosaldo, Talal Asad, and Edward Said.  SO

* MMES 31b / JDST 31b / LITR 196b, Hebrew Poetry in Muslim Spain  Peter Cole
Introduction to the Golden Age of Hebrew poetry in Muslim Andalusia from the tenth century through the twelfth. Major figures of the period and the cultural and philosophical questions they confronted. The Judeo-Arabic social context in which the poetry emerged; critical issues pertaining to the study and transmission of this literature. Readings from the works of several poets. Readings in translation. Additional readings in Hebrew available.  HU

* MMES 41b / ANTH 41b, Artisanal Capitalism  Narges Erami
The art of making things, with a focus on the recent popularity of handcrafted goods from around the world. Theories on modernity and technology, movement and action, and aesthetics. The practice of making Persian carpets, including their history, color and design, and relation to Islamic art.  HU, SO

* MMES 418b / JDST 339b / LITR 418b / RLST 203b, Politics of Modern Hebrew Literature  Hannan Hever
Overview of the Poetics, Culture, History and Political dynamics of Modern Hebrew Literature as a national literature over the last 300 years. The course will trace the literary development of its diasporic condition in Europe through the Hebrew Literature that is created in the Israeli Jewish sovereignty. Readings in translation. No background in Jewish literature, Hebrew literature, or Jewish culture is required.  HU

* MMES 45a or b / ARBC 15a or b, Arabic Seminar  Staff
Study and interpretation of classical Arabic texts for advanced students. Prerequisite: ARBC 146, 151, or permission of instructor. May be repeated for credit.  1.5

Directed Study and Senior Essay Courses

* MMES 471a and MMES 472b, Independent Directed Study  Staff
Independent research or directed reading under the direction of a faculty member in the program on a special topic in Modern Middle East Studies not substantially covered by an existing undergraduate or graduate course. A proposal describing the nature of the program and the readings to be covered must be signed by the adviser and submitted to the director of undergraduate studies by the end of the second week of classes. The student should meet with the adviser regularly, typically for an hour a week, and write one term essay or several short essays.

* MMES 491a or b, Senior Essay  Staff
The one-term senior essay is a research paper of at least thirty pages prepared under the supervision of a faculty member in accordance with the following schedule: (1) by the end of the second week of classes of the term, students meet with advisers to discuss the essay's topic, approach, sources, and bibliography; (2) by the end of the fourth week of classes a prospectus with outline, including an annotated bibliography of materials in one or more modern Middle Eastern languages and of secondary sources, is signed by the adviser and submitted to the director of undergraduate studies. The prospectus should indicate the formal title, scope, and focus of the essay, as well as the proposed research method, including detailed indications of the nature and extent of materials in a modern Middle Eastern language that will be used; (3) at the end of the tenth week of classes, a rough draft of the complete essay is submitted to the adviser; (4) by 4 p.m. on the last day of reading period, two copies of the finished paper must be submitted to the MMES registrar, 115 Prospect
St., room 344. A late essay will receive a lower grade. Senior essays are graded by faculty associated with the Modern Middle East Studies program unless, for exceptional reasons, different arrangements for another reader have been made in advance with the director of undergraduate studies and the faculty adviser.

**MMES 492a and MMES 493b, The Yearlong Senior Essay**  
Staff

The yearlong senior essay is a research paper of at least sixty pages prepared under the supervision of a faculty member in accordance with the following schedule: (1) by the end of the second week of classes of the first term, students meet with advisers to discuss the essay’s topic, approach, sources, and bibliography; (2) by the end of the fourth week of classes a prospectus with outline, including an annotated bibliography of materials in one or more modern Middle Eastern languages and of secondary sources, is signed by the adviser and submitted to the director of undergraduate studies. The prospectus should indicate the formal title, scope, and focus of the essay, as well as the proposed research method, including detailed indications of the nature and extent of materials in a modern Middle Eastern language that will be used; (3) at the end of February, a rough draft of the complete essay is submitted to the adviser; (4) by 4 p.m. on the last day of reading period in the spring term, two copies of the finished paper must be submitted to the MMES registrar, 115 Prospect St., room 344. A late essay will receive a lower grade. Senior essays are graded by faculty associated with the Modern Middle East Studies program unless, for exceptional reasons, different arrangements for another reader have been made in advance with the director of undergraduate studies and the faculty adviser. Credit for MMES 492 only on completion of MMES 493.