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, while developing expertise in any of the major languages associated with the region, namely Arabic, Hebrew, Persian, and Turkish. Courses are drawn from departments in the humanities and social sciences, including Anthropology, History, History of Art, Judaic Studies, Political Science, Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, Religious Studies, and Sociology. The Modern Middle East Studies major gives students the analytical and linguistic skills necessary to master the complex issues of the Middle East and serves as excellent preparation for graduate study or for professional careers in which an understanding of that region is essential.

REQUIREMENTS OF THE MAJOR

The major allows students to develop highly individualized courses of study, tailored to their own academic, intellectual, and linguistic interests. There are no prerequisites. Twelve term courses are required for the major, including one course at the L5 level in a Middle Eastern language and two survey courses on the modern period, taken at the introductory level. Beyond those requirements, students take eight distribution courses focusing on any aspect of the culture, thought, history, religion, politics, and society of the region. These eight distribution courses must be spread geographically and temporally and include two courses from two different regions or countries within the Middle East, two courses from different departments or programs, and two that focus substantially on the period before 1750. These courses must draw from distinct methodological or disciplinary approaches and must include two advanced seminars. Up to two language courses below L5 in a Modern Middle East language may count toward the distributional requirement with approval of the director of undergraduate studies (DUS). The proposed course of study also requires DUS approval.

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. Each student selects a faculty adviser with competence in the appropriate language. A prospectus and outline signed by the adviser must be submitted to the DUS 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 further information. Alternatively, under supervision of the instructor, 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 2 intro survey courses on the Middle East, focusing on the modern period; 2 courses from different Middle Eastern regions or countries; 2 courses from two different departments or programs; 2 courses with focus on pre-1750; 2 adv seminars; and 1 course at L5 level in a Middle Eastlanguage

Substitution permitted With DUS approval, up to 2 language courses below L5 in Modern Middle East language may count toward distrib requirement

Senior requirement One term senior essay (MMES 491), two term senior essay (MMES 492, 493), or essay written in additional seminar

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), Christine Hayes (Religious Studies), Hannan Hever (Comparative Literature), Marcia Inhorn (Anthropology), Anthony Kronman (Law School), Joseph Manning (History), Ivan Marcus (History), Alan Mikhail (History), A. Mushfiq Mobarak (School of Management), Robert Nelson (History of Art), Kishwar Rizvi (History of Art), Maurice Samuels (French), 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), Elyahu Stern (Religious Studies), Jonathan Wyrtzen (Sociology), Travis Zadeh (Religious Studies)

Assistant Professors Thomas Connolly (French), Robyn Creswell (Comparative Literature), Jill Jarvis (French), Elizabeth Nugent (Political Science), Eda Pepe (Women’s, Gender, & Sexuality Studies), Evren Savci (Women’s, Gender, & Sexuality Studies)

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

Lecturers Karla Britton (Architecture), Karen Foster (History of Art), Nicholas Lolito (Political Science), Emma Sky (Global Affairs)

Senior Lectors Shiri Goren

Senior Lectors Sarab Al Ani, Muhammad Aziz, Jonas Elbousty, Dina Roginsky, Farkhondeh Shayesteh
Lector Orit Yeret

Introductory Survey Course

MMES 191a / RLST 100a, Introduction to World Religions  Gerhard Bowering
Introduction to the literature, ideals, concepts, practices, rituals, and institutions of four major world religions as they have appeared in history: Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam. A historical survey combined with a phenomenological treatment of principal topics. HU

Courses

MMES 121a / PLSC 121a, International Relations of the Middle East  Nicholas Lotito
This course explores the multiple causes of insecurity in the Middle East and North Africa, a region of paramount geostrategic interest, whose populations have suffered from armed conflicts both within and across national borders. The first half of the course interrogates traditional security concepts like war, terrorism, and revolution, as well as the political, economic, and social contexts which give rise to these phenomena. The course then turns to foreign policy analysis in case studies of the region’s major states. Previous coursework in international relations and/or Middle East politics or history recommended but not required. SO

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 150a / HEBR 150a / JDST 213a, Advanced Modern Hebrew: Daily Life in Israel  Orit Yeret
An examination of major controversies in Israeli society. Readings include newspaper editorials and academic articles as well as documentary and historical material. Advanced grammatical structures are introduced and practiced. Conducted in Hebrew. Prerequisite: HEBR 140 or equivalent. L5 RP

* MMES 161a / HEBR 162 / JDST 319a, Israel in Ideology and Practice  Dina Roginsky
An advanced Hebrew class focusing on changing ideology and politics in Israel. Topics include right and left wing political discourse, elections, State-Religion dynamics, the Jewish-Arab divide, and demographic changes. Materials include newspapers, publications, online resources, speeches of different political and religious groups, and contemporary and archival footage. Comparisons to American political and ideological discourse. Prerequisite: HEBR 140 or permission of instructor. L5 RP

* MMES 162b / HEBR 169b / JDST 403b, Languages in Dialogue: Hebrew and Arabic  Dina Roginsky
Hebrew and Arabic are closely related as sister Semitic languages. They have a great degree of grammatical, morphological, and lexical similarity. Historically, Hebrew and Arabic have been in cultural contact, especially in medieval Spain, the Middle East, and North Africa – as evidenced by the Judeo-Arabic languages. In modern Israel, Arabic is the native tongue of about 20% of its population, yet lack of communication exists today between Hebrew speakers and Arabic speakers for mainly political reasons. This L5 advanced Hebrew class explores cultural and linguistic contacts between the two languages and relationships between the communities, including both Jewish and non-Jewish Arabic speakers and Hebrew speakers. Additionally, students benefit from regular meetings with a parallel L5 Arabic class which discusses similar topics. The shared meetings enable Hebrew learners and Arabic learners to participate together in one class, to promote social interaction based on mutual respect and to focus on cultural and linguistic aspects of the material. L4 Hebrew or equivalent (placement test). L5 TR RP

* MMES 166a / HEBR 167a / JDST 402a, Creative Writing in Hebrew  Orit Yeret
An advanced language course with focus on creative writing and self-expression. Students develop knowledge of modern Hebrew, while elevating writing skills based on special interests, and in various genres, including short prose, poetry, dramatic writing, and journalism. Students engage with diverse authentic materials, with emphasis on Israeli literature, culture, and society. Prerequisite: HEBR 140 or placement exam. L5 RP

* MMES 167b / 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 168b / HEBR 158b / JDST 309b, Contemporary Israeli Society in Film  Shiri Goren
Examination of major themes in Israeli society through film, with emphasis on language study. Topics include migration, gender and sexuality, Jewish/Israeli identity, and private and collective memory. Readings in Hebrew and English provide a sociohistorical background and bases for class discussion. HEBR 140 or permission of instructor. L5, HU RP

* MMES 178b / ARBC 176b, Languages in Dialogue: Arabic and Hebrew  Sarah Al Ani
Arabic and Hebrew are closely related as sister Semitic languages. They have a great degree of grammatical, morphological, and lexical similarity. Historically, Arabic and Hebrew have been in cultural contact, especially in medieval Spain, the Middle East, and North Africa – as evidenced by the Judeo-Arabic languages. Arabic is the native tongue of about 20% of the population that resides in Israel, yet lack of communication exists today between Hebrew speakers and Arabic speakers. This L5 advanced Arabic class explores cultural and linguistic contacts between the two languages as well as parallel aspects between the communities. Additionally, students benefit from regular
meetings with a corresponding L5 Hebrew class, which discusses similar topics. The shared meetings enable Arabic learners and Hebrew learners to participate together in one class, to bring to light the similarities between the two sister languages and to explore key social issues based on mutual respect while focusing on cultural and linguistic aspects of the material. L5 in Arabic, or equivalent (placement test). L5

**MMES 193b / HIST 351b / RLST 155b, The Golden Age of Islam** Gerhard Bowering
The development of Islamic civilization in the Middle East, North Africa, Spain, Iran, and India from Muhammad through the Mongol invasions to the rise of the Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal empires (600–1500 C.E.). Emphasis on the intellectual and religious history of Islam in the age of the caliphs and during the rule of regional dynasties. HU

* **MMES 236a / JDST 256a / NELC 232a / RLST 400a, The Dead Sea Scrolls: The Damascus Document** Steven Fraade
Study of the Damascus Document, one of the most important of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Attention to the document’s place in the history of biblical interpretation and ancient Jewish law; the nature and rhetorical function of its textual practices; both narrative and legal; and its relation to the central sectarian writings of the Qumran community. Prerequisite: reading proficiency in ancient Hebrew. L5, HU

* **MMES 262a / ARBC 162a, Modern Arabic Political Thought** Sarab Al Ani
Works by influential Arab thinkers, leaders, and politicians who represent liberal nationalism, Arab nationalism, Islamism, and critiques of contemporary Arab society. Ways in which the authors use language both to portray their beliefs and to shape new social concepts in the Arab world. Prerequisite: ARBC 151 or equivalent, or with permission of the instructor. L5, RP

* **MMES 271a / GLBL 271a, Middle East Politics** Emma Sky
Exploration of the international politics of the Middle East through a framework of analysis that is partly historical and partly thematic. How the international system, as well as social structures and political economy, shape state behavior. Consideration of Arab nationalism; Islamism; the impact of oil; Cold War politics; conflicts; liberalization; the Arab-spring, and the rise of the Islamic State. SO

**MMES 290a / PLSC 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 321b / ANTH 321b / WGSS 321b, Middle East Gender Studies** Marcia Inhorn
The lives of women and men in the contemporary Middle East explored through a series of anthropological studies and documentary films. Competing discourses surrounding gender and politics, and the relation of such discourse to actual practices of everyday life. Feminism, Islamism, activism, and human rights; fertility, family, marriage, and sexuality. SO

* **MMES 342a / HIST 233Ja / 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 442a / HIST 347Ja, From the Great Game to the Great Satan: Iran, Afghanistan, and Central Asia in the Age of Empires** Abbas Amanat
Encounters of Iran and its neighbors with Britain, Russia, and the United States since the nineteenth century. Special attention to Western imperial interests in the region and to indigenous forms of resistance to imperial hegemony. Topics include travel, diplomacy, war and hegemony, postcolonial sovereignty, the Cold War and regional power, and the Islamic Republic’s demonizing of America. WR, HU

**Directed Study and Senior Essay Courses**

* **MMES 471a and MMES 472b, Independent Directed Study** Jonathan Wyrtsen
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;
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**  
Jonathan Wyrtzen

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.