



MIDDLE EAST  
STUDIES  
BROWN

## middle east studies

Middle East Studies (MES) at Brown University promotes knowledge, understanding, and informed discussion about the Middle East through research, teaching, and public engagement.

MES seeks to create a center that focuses the passions and interests of faculty and students interested in this region by building a cutting-edge research community, producing innovative programming, and offering an exciting array of courses and opportunities for undergraduate concentrators. Its goal is to integrate the Middle East into the DNA of Brown University through thematically driven collaborative initiatives that tap into Brown's tradition of interdisciplinary, critical, and engaged scholarship.

*"In my fourth year I am still just as excited to study the region as I was freshman year... It's really exciting to have the opportunity to take classes with visiting professors from a diverse array of backgrounds who teach niche subjects that I otherwise would never have been exposed to."*

— Talia Xefos '15



Photo courtesy of Lara Savenije

## about the concentration

Middle East Studies (MES) is an interdisciplinary concentration that draws upon courses offered by a distinguished core faculty in the humanities and the social sciences. Regardless of one's passions –whether history, religion, politics, culture, literature, modern media, philosophy or practices of everyday life — the Middle East is an ideal space for considering the diversity and complexity of the human experience.

The concentration requirements are designed to provide a broad knowledge of the region as well as a comparative understanding of Middle Eastern cultures, societies, states, and economies.

## 1x middle east studies seminar

This seminar introduces students to the interdisciplinary field of Middle East Studies in the broader context of the history of area studies in the humanities and social sciences. This reading seminar will be offered every year by the Middle East Studies faculty. It is designed to create an intellectual community of Middle East concentrators and potential concentrators by introducing them to the core texts and debates in the field as well as to new research trajectories.

## 2x foundational courses

At least two of the foundational courses in the field of the Middle East Studies, to be elected from the list of courses listed below. This list may change as new courses approved as foundational are added, or ones no longer taught are removed.

hist 0150 introduction to islam

hist 1270 middle east politics

hist 1450 history of the modern middle east 1800-1918

hist 1460 history of the modern middle east since 1918

hist 1453 empire, civilization, nation: contested histories of the middle east

hist 1455 the making of the modern middle east, 1750 to the present

## 4x intermediate language seminars

Basic competence in at least one of the modern Middle Eastern languages is required. This entails taking at least four semesters of coursework in one of the modern Middle Eastern languages such as Arabic, Persian, Hebrew, Turkish, etc.

## 4x electives

These courses should be chosen from the list of courses that are cross-listed by Middle East Studies and approved by the concentration advisor.

Students should acquire a good balance of courses by taking courses in the humanities and social sciences, and between courses whose primary subject matter is pre-modern (ancient and medieval) and modern and contemporary Middle East.

## 1x capstone project

The Capstone can take many forms, such as:

1. a paper of no less than 30 pages for an existing concentration-eligible class,
2. an independent study or project (artistic, research, or otherwise) supervised by at least one faculty member for at least one semester
3. an honors thesis.

## honors requirements in middle east studies

As above, with the following differences:

### a grades

To be eligible for Honors, students will have earned an 'A' in the majority of courses for the concentration.

### 6x language semesters

Honors students will be required to have at least six semesters of language study (advanced), two semesters of which may be counted towards the elective requirement.

### 1x honors thesis

Honors students will be required to take two semesters of independent study towards the Honors Thesis (MES 1970) with the thesis advisor(s) are required for Honors. This is typically done during senior year, and will raise the total number of courses to 13.



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offerings

## mes 1998 s01 the arab spring

The Middle East has witnessed significant socio-cultural, political, and economic transformations in recent decades. This seminar will explore the role of both state and non-state actors in these processes. In the face of globalization, liberalization, democratization, conflicts, and regional instability, what social movements have emerged and in what specific contexts? Additionally, how have civil society, mass media, global discourses, and Islamist groups and ideologies shaped the contemporary reality? What are the prospects for security, prosperity, and pluralism in the region?

## mes 1997a s01 islam and human rights

Are Islam and human rights compatible? We will consider various attempts by religious and legal theorists to reconcile these claims through reinterpreting Islam or deriving human rights from Islamic sources. We will explore the practical side of these issues by examining legal documents and legal practices in various Muslim countries, paying special attention to the status of women and non-Muslim minorities.



## undergraduate research awards

Middle East Studies offers two undergraduate awards each semester for students concentrating in Middle East Studies. Grants are available to defray the cost of transportation for undergraduate research projects that focus on Middle East-related topics. Recent awards have supported student research into local governance reform in Tunisia, refugees within Jordan's social geography, and gender studies in Morocco.

## undergraduate dug

The Middle East Studies Departmental Undergraduate Group is run by MES concentrators to host events, plan activities, and build community both inside and outside of MES. All students are welcome to attend and participate in the DUG regardless of concentration.

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*"I study the Middle East because it is one of the most relevant regions in the world right now. The concentration helps me understand it better."*

— Nasim Azizgolshani '14

*"Having the opportunity to learn about the Middle East from various angles has laid the groundwork in my quest to gain a comprehensive understanding of Middle Eastern history. Only a few students graduate with a degree in Middle East studies each year, thus providing an intimate community of support and exposure for those who are involved both within and beyond the classroom."*

—Nikhita Mendis '17



## highlighted events

Middle East Studies hosts a range of events featuring leading scholars, policymakers, and practitioners speaking on important issues in the study of Middle East and on developments in current events.

Recent highlights include teach-ins on Syria and Gaza that drew wide audiences of students, faculty, and community members; lectures and performances by prominent Iranian artists; faculty-curated film series; critical conversations on Israel/Palestine, and scholarly symposia on Iran then and now, Syria on the ground, landscapes of conflict, and new directions in Palestinian Studies.





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