



MIDDLE EAST
STUDIES
BROWN

middle east studies

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

MES focuses the passions and quest for knowledge 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.

"The Middle East Studies department is the sort of exemplary department that represents the best that Brown has to offer: interdisciplinary studies as a core tenet, a vibrant academic life beyond courses, access to leading scholars in the field. MES exercises its commitment to undergraduates in the best way possible: by supporting them with the resources to undertake real intellectual endeavors."

-Peter Makhlouf '16



about the concentration

Middle East Studies 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 for 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 and comparative understanding of Middle Eastern cultures, societies, states, and economies.

1x middle east studies seminar: HIST 1968 approaches to the middle east

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. Please check our website for the most current listing.

- mes cultures of the contemporary middle east
- hist history of the modern middle east 1800-1918
- hist history of the modern middle east since 1918
- hist civilization, empire, nation: competing histories of the middle east
- hist the making of the modern middle east, 1750 to the present
- rels introduction to islam
- pols middle east politics

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 are 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 in the humanities and social sciences, and between pre-modern (ancient and medieval) and modern and contemporary Middle East subject matters.

1x capstone project

The Capstone can take one of three forms:

1. an honors thesis
2. an independent study or project (artistic, research, or otherwise) supervised by at least one faculty member for at least one semester under the MES 1970 designation
3. enrollment in an MES x-listed WRIT designated course

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). This is typically done during senior year, and will raise the total number of courses to 13.



sample mes courses

mes 1350

israel/palestine: the one state condition

This course follows the formation and transformation of the Israeli Regime, since its inception in the last years of the British Mandate in Palestine. At the theoretical level, we shall explore the difference between State and regime, ask what is a political regime, how to classify types of regimes and how to determine the regime of any given state. At the historical level we shall reconstruct and question the structural transformations and continuities of the Israeli regime, giving special attention to the impact of Palestinians' civic status and almost half a century of "occupation" of Palestinian territories.

mes 0170

visual expressions of social change in the contemporary middle east

This course explores the relationship between the visual arts and social change in the contemporary Middle East. With a specific focus on visual art, architecture and cinema we examine how visual creativity expresses the desires of social and political groupings and, existing within historic traditions, give form and shape to larger social-political movements across the area. From the 20th century, we see the intertwining religious, political, and social movements, large and small, nationalist and separatist, embodied in visual expressions. This interdisciplinary course will uncover the iconographic origins of contemporary art to understand how visual expressions convey meanings in shaping our world.



undergraduate research awards

Grants are available to students concentrating in Middle East Studies to defray the costs of transportation for undergraduate research projects that focus on Middle East-related topics. Recent awards have supported student research into Palestinian Hebrew language acquisition via jail cell interactions and exposés of Yemeni life under drone warfare.

MES undergraduate fellowship

MES offers two competitive Undergraduate Fellowship awards of \$1,000 each to rising seniors writing an Honors Thesis and concentrating in Middle East Studies. The fellows are expected to play an active roll in MES life and assist with outreach efforts to current undergraduates and alumni.

undergraduate dug

The Middle East Studies Departmental Undergraduate Group (DUG) is run by MES concentrators to host events, plan activities, advise their peers, and build community both inside and outside of MES. The DUG Undergraduate Paper Series provides opportunities for MES concentrators to showcase their work with the Brown community. All students are welcome to attend and participate in the DUG regardless of concentration.

“To me, MES was more than a concentration -- it was almost a family, one in which my best friends were also my closest collaborators, professors and inspiring classmates.”

— Katherine Long '15.5



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 the Syrian Refugee Crisis that drew wide audiences of students, faculty, and community members; critically acclaimed films; lectures by prominent women in the Middle East; engaging luncheons and lectures on evolving geographies; and scholarly symposiums such as Distant Reading and the Islamic Archive and Sectarianism in Islam and Muslim Communities





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