



MIDDLE EAST
STUDIES
BROWN

middle east studies

Middle East Studies 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.

"Middle East Studies is a great complement to my Political Science degree. As a concentration, it also allows me to reflect my interests."

— Rafael Contreras '15



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 site 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

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

Language Study: 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

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.

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. Two students, Marc Briz '14 and Reva Dhingra '14, received undergraduate awards for winter break research in 2013.

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.

"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

"Because more and more students are now concentrating in Middle East Studies—or even just adding significant MES coursework to their other concentrations—I've had plenty of new chances to hear from my peers about their individual ways of engaging with the region. That cross-pollination has been very eye-opening."

—Sarah Forman '13



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.

Highlights from recent semesters include a teach-in on the Syrian conflict attended by hundreds of students and community members; the 20th anniversary of Oslo events with Hanan Ashrawi; the first national symposium on Digital Islamic Humanities; two major conferences on Syria and Iran; and the inauguration of a new initiative focusing on Palestinian studies.





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