

# Center for Middle East Studies

The Center for Middle East Studies (CMES) at Brown University promotes greater understanding of the cultural, social, and political dynamics that have impacted and continue to impact the Middle East and the people who inhabit it. MES seeks to increase knowledge and informed discussion of the region and its societies through research, teaching, and public engagement.

Since 2012, Middle East Studies has grown from an undergraduate concentration into one of the top centers in the country. Eschewing the hothouse legacy structures of the conventional Oriental and Area Studies models, CMES is driven by thematic research initiatives that tap into Brown's tradition of interdisciplinary, critical, and engaged scholarship. Organized through partnerships, CMES seeks to integrate Middle East and Islamic Studies into the larger streams of intellectual life at Brown University by building a cutting-edge research community, producing innovative programming, and offering an exciting array of courses and opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students.

For more information please visit: <http://middleeastbrown.org> (<http://middleeastbrown.org/>)

## Middle East Studies Concentration Requirements

The concentration in Middle East Studies (MES) seeks to build a strong, interdisciplinary understanding of historical and contemporary issues within the Middle East, broadly defined. Requirements are intentionally flexible to accommodate the focused interests of students in understanding the diverse dynamics, histories, and societies of this region. A variety of courses from departments across the University, addressing subjects from antiquity to the present day, expose students to methods and materials of different disciplines and help them build a framework for understanding the Middle East in historical and contemporary context. Concentration requirements are structured around four major cornerstones: language, foundational knowledge and methods, multidisciplinary area studies, and research.

A semester-by-semester roster of courses eligible for MES elective credit can be found on the Center for Middle East Studies (<http://middleeastbrown.org/>) website.

Foundational Course: All MES concentrators are expected to take the following foundational course. The foundational course requirement cannot be fulfilled via independent study, study abroad, or transfer credits.

HIST 1968A	Approaches to the Middle East
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Electives: Students must take at least five elective courses chosen in consultation with the Director of Undergraduate Studies (DUS) from among the courses listed by MES as approved electives on its website (<https://watson.brown.edu/cmec/academics/undergraduate-concentration/course-listing/all-courses>). Students may apply up to two Middle Eastern language credits (beyond those that fulfill the language requirement: see below) to the MES electives requirement. To allow for exposure of different disciplinary approaches to the Middle East, students must take at least one course in the humanities (offered within the departments of Archaeology and the Ancient World, Classics, Comparative Literature, History of Art and Architecture, Modern Culture and Media, Philosophy, or Religious Studies) and at least one course in the social sciences (offered within the departments of Anthropology, History, International Relations, Political Science, Sociology, or Urban Studies). Some examples of recent courses that would fulfill these requirements include:

Humanities	
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CLAS 0660	The World of Byzantium
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HIAA 0041	The Architectures of Islam
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RELS 0088	Judaism, Christianity, and Islam
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Social Sciences:	
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ANTH 1150	Middle East in Anthropological Perspective
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HIST 0244	Understanding the Middle East: A Modern History
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POLS 1822I	Geopolitics of Oil and Energy
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SOC 1871L	Migration, Displacement and Emerging Community Experiences: Contemporary Turkey
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URBN 1870K	Jerusalem Divided: Politics and Cultural Heritage
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Language Semesters: Middle East Studies concentrators are expected to reach a level of language proficiency consistent with completion of four semesters of Brown language coursework in at least one of the modern Middle Eastern languages, such as Arabic, Persian, Hebrew, or Turkish, or the equivalent through transfer or study abroad credits. Students who surpass the language requirement can apply up to two Middle Eastern language credits toward the MES elective requirements (see above). Students who have reached proficiency in a Middle Eastern language but have not received four credits at Brown (including transfer and/or study abroad credits) can fulfill this requirement:

- Through advanced reading and writing courses in that language. Recent examples include:

COLT 1310J	The Arab Renaissance
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COLT 1431B	Modern Arabic Poetry
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ARAB 0700	Advanced Arabic: Tales of the City
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- Through taking courses in a second Middle Eastern language.

- Or through courses in a non-Middle Eastern language to be used in a senior capstone project (for example, Spanish for the study of Andalucia or French for the study of North Africa).

Capstone/Honors Project: MES requires all concentrators to conduct a capstone project within their senior year (i.e., in their last two semesters before graduation). The purpose of the capstone is to synthesize and apply the skills and knowledge that MES concentrators have acquired through the MES curriculum—including disciplinary perspectives, methodological and theoretical approaches, background in the historical and contemporary dynamics of the region, and language competency—to particular interests developed through the concentration. Capstones offer students the opportunity to integrate and build upon their experiences within the concentration, while demonstrating intellectual creativity, research skills, and effective communication, and should serve in some sense as a culmination of or reflection on what one has gained in the concentration. All students are expected to present their capstone research in the final semester before graduation. Presentations of honors theses will be approximately twenty minutes long, and those of non-honors capstone projects will be approximately ten minutes long, both followed by a question-and-answer session. Capstone projects must fulfill the following requirements:

- Must be taken in the final two semesters before graduation (excluding summer and winter sessions)

- Must incorporate research in a Middle Eastern language.

- Must be approved or overseen by a MES or MES-affiliated faculty member.

- Must be presented in the final semester before graduation.

Capstones can take one of three forms:

a. A Middle East-focused research paper of at least 20 pages for an existing concentration-eligible (MES-coded or X-Listed) course, undertaken with the permission and supervision of the instructor.

b. An independent study or project (artistic, research, or otherwise), approved by the DUS and supervised by at least one faculty member for at least one semester under the MES 1970 - Independent Study designation.

c. A two-semester honors thesis, completed under the supervision of a primary reader (who is an MES or MES-affiliated faculty member) and a secondary reader (who can be from other Brown departments and programs), and in coordination with the DUS.<sup>4</sup>

**Total Credits** 11

<sup>1</sup> For concentrators graduating before 2023, courses designated "Foundational Courses" under previous concentration requirements may be used to fulfill this requirement. Please meet with the MES Director of Undergraduate Studies (DUS) to discuss any such arrangements.

<sup>2</sup> Previously HIST 1968 or HIST 1968A: Approaches to the Middle East. Any student who has taken HIST 1968 or HIST 1968A: Approaches to the Middle East, will have fulfilled this requirement.

<sup>3</sup> Concentrators are encouraged to discuss options for fulfilling language requirements with the DUS.

<sup>4</sup> Two semesters of Independent Study (MES 1970 & MES 1971) are required for honors and will raise the number of required courses to 13. One of these Independent Study courses should take the form of a thesis writing workshop supervised by the DUS or other designated MES faculty during the first semester of thesis writing. Students must declare their intention to write an honors thesis and submit a thesis prospectus (to include a thesis proposal, research plan, proposed thesis outline, initial literature review, and initial bibliography) by April 25<sup>th</sup> of their junior year (for May graduates) or November 20<sup>th</sup> of their junior year (for December graduates).

**\* Study Abroad**

Concentrators may apply up to two courses per semester of study abroad toward their MES concentration requirements, with a maximum of four courses (for two semesters abroad). Students must meet with their advisors and have them sign off on their specific course selections prior to embarking upon their program. Study abroad transfer credits may only be applied toward fulfilling elective and language requirements. Study abroad transfer credit may not be used to fulfill foundational course requirements.

**\*\* Dual Concentrators**

Middle East Studies concentrators may apply up to two courses that fulfill MES concentration requirements toward fulfilling the requirements of another concentration. Language courses do not count toward this two-course limit on overlapping courses.

## Honors

Students may graduate with honors in MES by completing an undergraduate honors thesis in MES. To be eligible for honors, students will have earned an 'A' (or 'S' with distinction) in the majority of courses for the concentration and will have submitted a thesis prospectus and secured a faculty advisor by the end of their junior year. Honors theses are substantial research projects driven by a deep interest in engaging with a selected topic of study. They require a time commitment and coordination between students, advisors, and the DUS to ensure completion. Honors students will undertake two semesters of thesis writing in their senior year, the first in a thesis writing workshop (MES 1971) supervised by the DUS or other MES faculty, followed by a second semester of Independent Study (MES 1970) to complete the thesis under the guidance of the thesis advisor. This is typically done during senior year and will raise the total number of required courses to 12.

## Courses

### MES 0100. The Middle East: Cultures & Societies.

This course highlights major cultural, social, and political developments in the amorphous region known, since the 20th century, as the Middle East. Covering expanses of space and time, this course attends to a diversity of peoples and polities, and considers different regional concepts that include some or all of the territories normally included in the Middle East (including the Fertile Crescent, the Mediterranean world, the Indian Ocean world, the Arab world, and the Muslim world) and addresses the region's coherence in terms of shared historical and political experiences, religious and cultural references or practices, and/or socialities and ways of being.

Spr MES0100 S01 20001 Arranged (A. Winder)

### MES 0155. Cultures of the Contemporary Middle East.

In our exploration of Middle Eastern social movements, this course addresses the role of culture and art in social change; the relationship between faith and politics; as well as the impact of national, regional, and transnational discourses on identity, ethics, and citizenship. The study of social movements in the region will address the impact of technology, media, women's rights and LGBT movements, as well as economic liberalization, entrepreneurship, and the politics of oil. Finally, we will trace the emergence and consequences of the "Arab Spring."

### MES 0165. How Did We Get Here: Middle East City from Antiquity to the Present.

This course examines the origins, evolutions, and radical transformations of Middle Eastern cities. By combining essential and original texts in religion, law, and politics with studies of architectural form and urban morphology we explore the cultural significance and ethical claims from historically situated cities. From the ancient Levantine household to the contemporary Gulf megalopolis, analysis of the relationships between subtle and articulated cultural meanings and corresponding concrete architectural embodiments reveals rich depth in each case. While we might see ancient hierarchies long buried by modernity's desire for a capitalist city, our analysis shows they are very much alive and struggling.

### 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.

### MES 0750. Forced Displacement: History, Ecologies and Impacts.

Course covers the basis, processes and consequences of forced displacement in an interdisciplinary and historical perspective. Forced displacement is unintended mobility of humans in large groups who move out of their place of origin for extended periods or often permanently. It has played a vital role in shaping our modern world. Drivers of forced displacement have persisted while others subsided. Wars, religious persecution and targeting of specific ethnic groups displace millions annually. Forced displacement is implicated in the creation of nation states, altering group identities and organizing people, and the responses of the host community, the state and wider world.

### MES 0825. From Blind Owls to Mute Dreams: A Introduction to Modern Iranian Literature (in translation).

This is a survey of the modern Persian literature of Iran (in translation) for students who have little to no background in the topic. Starting in the early twentieth century and continuing until the present day, we will examine the major themes and aesthetic techniques of some of the most important writers who have shaped modern Persian literature throughout the twentieth century, paying significant attention to the socio-political context and formal characteristics of texts. Prose-fiction (novels and short stories) will be the focus, also read a number of poems, essays and memoirs. All readings will be available in English translation.

**MES 0850. The Wall, the Drone and the Tunnel-Theaters of Sovereignty and Resistance.**

Israel/Palestine is a site for experimenting with technologies of security and warfare, including those serving resistance and insurgency. The seminar examines three technologies: drones used for collecting intelligence and "targeted killings;" heavily surveilled separation walls used to enforce a strict regime of movement; tunnels used by insurgency forces for undercover movement. We will study these technologies' modes of operation; the discourse that represent and justifies their actual deployment; the local and global economy of violence in which they are embedded; the system of state sovereignty which they enable or undermine; and the political regime which they help reproduce or destabilize.

**MES 0950. Cultures, Societies and Resistance in the Arab World.**

This course examines the manifestations of counter-hegemony, resistance and dissent in the Middle East and North Africa. It studies the ways in which dominant forms are countered in cultural production and every day cultural practices, analyzing how subcultures, social movements and individuals have negotiated with, subverted and resisted these forms of social and political hegemonies through the use of art forms such as writing, poetry, music, political film, political posters and pamphlets, performance art and public art and the mixed outcomes of many of these struggles. The readings cover major issues in cultural theory, cultural sociology, cultural studies.

**MES 1000. Tradition and Protest: Persian and Iranian Music.**

Examines Persian and Iranian musical approaches to tradition and protest. First half focuses on traditional Iranian music. Students will learn the basic cultural and musical traditions underpinning Persian/Iranian musical styles. Through directed reading and listening, and occasional in-class performance by the instructor, students will learn the primary characteristics of Iran's classical music traditions and instruments; relevant musical concepts and terminology, and develop critical listening skills. Second half examines how modern Iranian musicians are disrupting these traditional concepts as a form of protest, making the music relevant to modern listeners while fundamentally changing conceptions of classical poetry in the process.

**MES 1001. Revolution and Poets: Content and Form in Iranian Poetry.**

Explains classical rules of Persian poetry and development of poetic content by several different modern Iranian poets. Examines how modern poets such as Shamlou, Akhavan, and Forough have been influenced by Nima Yooshij, the father of modern poetry in Iran. We will explore different formalistic approaches to poetry in Iran from the 1960's to present, and examine various literary movements and their relation to the Islamic Revolution and post revolutionary context. We will examine the new postmodern poets from the 1990's to present and the ways in which classical form is repurposed to achieve social commentary in subversive ways.

**MES 1050. Israel/Palestine: A Critical Lexicon.**

This is an introductory course to the question of Israel/Palestine. The course uses a series of alphabetically ordered and carefully selected concepts as a way to cut through the dense history of the region and the conflicting forces that shape its present. From "Colonialism" to "Zionism", each concept will be surveyed with respect to its history, the pattern of its present usages, the discursive formations to which it belongs, and its political impact, taking into account the inevitable, conflicting ideological biases and discursive constraints of the many kinds of knowledge about Israel/Palestine.

**MES 1051. Israel-Palestine: Public Humanities.**

This seminar will engage current debates on heritage, traditions, and history in Israel-Palestine with a focus on shared as well as antagonistic cultural and artistic spheres. It will explore how contested narratives can produce diverse perspectives and positions with regard to past and current events. The focus will be on cultural productions in Israel-Palestine and on diasporic Israeli and Palestinian communities in Europe and the US. In addition, examples from the visual and performing arts, museums and public spaces, film and media will illustrate how cultural expressions and events can foster dialogue. Students will work individually and together to design and implement a public event for the Brown and larger Rhode Island community and beyond on the subject of Israel-Palestine, bridging the divides of the region's diverse ethnic and religious populations through cultural dialogue.

Fall MES1051 S01 18728 T 4:00-6:30(07) (K. Galor)

**MES 1055. Zionism and some of its Jewish Critics: Political, Philosophical, and Theological Perspectives.**

Zionism is an idea, an ideology, a national movement that sought to solve "the Jewish question" in Europe, a political project that morphed into a political regime, a mighty colonial force, a form of Jewish secularization and an engine for religious revival. As such Zionism has been accompanied with criticism from its inception. The first part of the seminar will study of Zionism through the eyes of some of the major thinkers who shaped its ideology and practices. The second part will look at Zionism through the eyes of some of its (more and less sympathetic) Jewish critics.

**MES 1100. Between the River and the Sea: Political Concepts from Israel/Palestine.**

This course will introduce some of the main aspects of the Israel-Palestine conflict, its history, and the recurring patterns of the unending violence that permeates it by paying close attention to some of the key concepts used to grasp and explicate the reality and history shared by those who were engaged in it. Our concepts – e.g., nationalism, colonialism, statelessness – will be drawn from the writings of engaged scholars, ideologues, and other participants. These concepts will be problematized twice: first, by the actors involved in the ongoing conflict who question their capacity to capture, illuminate, and make sense of the complex reality at stake, and second by us, as critical observers inquiring how these concepts have been used not only to understand and explain but to construct and reconstruct reality.

**MES 1111. The Modern Middle East: Struggles for Power and Justice.**

This course is an introduction to the modern Middle East, spanning from the 18th century to the present. It focuses on struggles—individual and collective—for power and justice. At times, these struggles overlap: when groups seek to overthrow the existing authority and install a more just one in its place. Other times, they diverge: when groups or individuals seize power for their own interests, or seek justice by reforming the existing order (rather than toppling it). These struggles illuminate the shifting material and ideological conditions within the Middle East over the past three centuries or so: in other words, over what are people struggling, and why? By focusing on struggles for power and justice, this course emphasizes the Middle East as a dynamic region shaped by numerous stakeholders and challengers, rather than a space with an essential or homogenous character.

**MES 1120. Art, Culture, and Society in Tehran.**

This course explores the city as physical and metaphorical space and aggregator of possibilities. It focuses on Tehran, in its historical, geographical, artistic and virtual specificity, and artists who have lived there, including: Kamal-al-molk (and his followers in the early twentieth century; artists associated with Saqqakhaneh (modern school of art) at mid-twentieth-century, artists of the Revolution and the Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s and 1990s, and contemporary urban and transnational artists. By examining urban participation, aesthetics, and politics in Tehran across more than a century, the course provokes critical reflection on experience and representations of urban space, citizenry and creativity.

**MES 1150. Labor and the Long Downturn in the Middle East.**

This course examines the question of labor in the contemporary Middle East. The 1970s saw a global economy defined increasingly by deindustrialization, intensified competition, financialization, and squeezes on profitability. For workers, these changes meant that technological development, agrarian change, debt, and increasing precarity have transformed who works, where they work, and the sorts of politics that work (or its absence) gives rise to. This course examines these wider concerns within the context of the Middle East. Through a focus on social history and ethnographic accounts, it illuminates the ways different groups of workers experience and grapple with these broader transformations.

**MES 1151. Middle East in Anthropological Perspective (ANTH 1150).** Interested students must register for ANTH 1150.

**MES 1170. Iranian Art: Sites and Sights.**

This course introduces students to the modern and contemporary history of art in Iran, including architecture, visual art, cinema, theatre, and politics. It starts with the transition from the Qajar period (1781-1925) and its visual culture to the modern 20th-century nation-state, addressing processes of urbanization; spread of modern technologies; revolutionary sentiment of 1979; displacement and formation of diasporic communities after the Islamic revolution; and the emergence of Internet technology in the 21st century. This historical backdrop informs investigation into artistic milieus, platforms, and the ever-changing notion of creativity. Course readings consist of excerpts from primary sources in addition to textbook assignments.

**MES 1171. Ethics and Politics of Intimacy in the Middle East.**

Intimacy is often a synonym for proximate, close relations, connected with the interior and the personal: sexual and romantic relations. It is associated with private embodied life, the realm of psychology, desires and emotions. Intimacy as an analytical concept in social sciences draws on these micro-level (private) meanings, but also introduces macro-level (public) socio-economic, cultural, and political dimensions, including power relations. This course explores the ethics and politics of intimacy in contemporary Middle Eastern societies. We examine these transformations in a comparative manner, including various countries (Afghanistan, Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Israel, Lebanon, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey, UAE, etc.), though Iran will be our main geographical focus. We will discuss marriage, family, kinship, gender, and sexuality and evaluate the impact of modernity, globalization, capitalism, and individualism on shifting notions of romantic love and companionate marriage in Muslim societies.

**MES 1172. Iranian Cinema: History, Aesthetics, and Politics.**

This course offers an introduction to Iranian cinema, moving chronologically from 1960 to 2024. While offering a historical account of Iranian cinema, this course addresses questions related to aesthetics, genre, style, and criticism, as well as sociopolitical and cultural categories such as gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, class, body, marriage and family, religion, national identity, language, power, politics and war. Rather than focusing exclusively on arthouse cinema, this course will draw attention to the heterogeneous body of Iranian cinema, including popular genres, exilic and diasporic films, as well as experimental, documentary films and visual anthropology. Examining Iranian cinema's cross-cultural references, its relation to cinemas of the region and to transnational and global aesthetics, this course critically examines the category of national cinema. No prior knowledge of Iranian cinema or Persian/Farsi required (films will be screened with English subtitles).

**MES 1198. Reflections on "The Jewish Question".**

In the mid-19th century, "the Jewish Question" became a galvanizing topic of debate among European thinkers with diverse political and theological orientations. In the wake of the French Revolution, and in an era of "questions" of minorities of all kinds, kindled by ideas of emancipation and equality, "the Jewish Question" centered on promoting or blocking Jewish "assimilation" and was driven by interpretations of Jewish otherness, the possibility of its transformation, and its meaning as a metonym for/ a symptom of a secularized civil society. The goal of this seminar is to become acquainted with the history of "the Jewish Question" to reframe it for the contemporary historical moment; to do so without adopting the terms of the 19th century's Question; and to understand the ways and meaning of asking "the Question" today without necessarily offering it any "solutions."

**MES 1199. Anti-Semitism, Racism, Anti-Zionism: Debates, Contexts, Stakes.**

Over the last two decades negative perceptions, conceptions, and treatment of Jews, and the effort to preempt and suppress them have been marked by fierce debates about "antisemitism." Everything about the term – what it designates, its historical, theological, and scientific origins, its current targets, how to trace and fight it, and its relation to racism, colonialism and anti-colonial struggles, anti-Zionism, and Islamophobia – is disputed among scholars, educators, and political actors, creating odd alliances and dividing old communities. The seminar offers a study of contemporary antisemitism in the context of these debates and their historical background, theoretical presuppositions, and political stakes.

**MES 1200. Ways of Seeing: The Arab World in Global Perspective.**

The course examines visual politics in contemporary Middle Eastern society and grapples with fundamental debates in the study of cultural politics and visual cultures of the Arab region in a global context. We will contextualise the region's contemporary visual cultures within wider debates and scholarship on the construction of subjectivities, the distribution of power, the formation of identity and belonging, and culture and representation. Emphasis is on translation and reception in a global context and transnational frame by focusing on how states and security, conflicts and displacements, social movements and revolution, aesthetics, art and global media are linked, characterized, analyzed.

**MES 1221. Palestine: A Comparative Ethnic Studies Approach.**

This course examines Palestine and the Palestinians through interdisciplinary ethnic studies optics and frameworks. The course begins by examining the Palestinian struggle from a historical and geographically contextual lens. It then engages the question of Palestine from an ethnic studies approach centering theories and ideas on indigenous sovereignty, transnational social movements, racial carcerality, sexual and gender politics, displacement and refugeehood, apartheid and international law. We will also examine Palestinian relationships with communities and causes of the global South in the past and present. Students with backgrounds training in Middle East studies, ethnic studies, and/or gender/sexuality studies are especially encouraged to enroll in this course. Students interested in intersectional and interdisciplinary to Middle East and ethnic studies are also encouraged to enroll. There are no prerequisites for this course.

**MES 1222. Modern Palestinian History.**

This course examines the origins of one of the longest running and most significant settler colonial realities in modern history. It explores social dynamics in late-Ottoman Palestine; the birth of the Zionist movement; the establishment of British imperial rule; the Palestinian revolt of 1936-39; the 1948 Nakba; the creation of the state of Israel; the dispossession of the Palestinian refugees; and the 1967 occupation and its aftermath. Students will consider questions of social, demographic, and cultural transformation as well as political dynamics. Using a range of primary sources, they will reflect upon the period in question on its own terms and search for the voices of its protagonists. This subject has attracted lively debate and contributed to major theoretical approaches such as post-colonialism and comparative settler-colonial studies. The course will engage these approaches and major historiographical debates in the field.

**MES 1235. Policing and Imprisonment in the Modern Middle East.**

Policing figured prominently in recent events, from the self-immolation of Tunisian street vendor Mohamed Bouazizi to the rise of the Islamic State. Repressive regimes relied heavily on police, prisons, and criminal law to maintain power and authority. This course examines recent uprisings and ongoing conflicts, and questions of state and non-state violence. Major topics are: the role of Islam in law and criminal justice; the imposition of European colonial rule; the rise of police states; the production and maintenance of a gendered social order; non-state and informal mechanisms of maintaining "law and order"; and the role of law and security.

**MES 1240. Middle East as Global History: Comparing and Connecting Theories and Approaches.**

This seminar explores a global history perspective to the Middle East and a Middle Eastern perspective to global history since the late eighteenth century to the twentieth century and beyond. This is a time in which shifting global orderings and ties between regions of the world become reconfigured around newly visible, large-scale processes and shifting flows of power: statesmen, thinkers, revolutions, war and migration render themselves to new forms of global imagination beyond imperialism and colonialism. The seminar intends to provide a rich expose on new trends in history writing focus on global history and transnational perspectives.

**MES 1243. Understanding Palestine-Israel: Ideologies and Practices.**

"Palestine-Israel" is a name designating a territory between the east shores of the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River. In addition to the two national movements that fight over this territory, the Jewish (Zionist) and the Palestinian, this land is a matter of ongoing engagement, investment, and entanglement for foreign powers, religious orders, and international organizations. This course will introduce main aspects of this ongoing struggle, its history, and its recurring patterns. Each of these perspectives will be part of what needs to be narrated and explained, not imposed as a framework for the narrative and the explanation at stake.

**MES 1244. Orientalism and the Question of Palestine: Theory, History, Literature.**

Edward Said's ground breaking work, *Orientalism*, was published in 1978 and soon became a founding moment for the field of postcolonial theory and a pivotal point of return within it. A year later, Said published *The Question of Palestine*. This was one of the first comprehensive accounts of the Palestinian condition as a stateless nation. The book's explicit goal was to present the Palestinian story and cause to an American and European audience, with a special effort to reach out to Jewish American intellectuals. The seminar first task will be to highlight and explore explicit and tacit links and divergences between the two books. The goal is to identify two, not entirely compatible frames for studying "Palestine," as a piece of land, a homeland, and above all a set of historically changing conditions of Jewish-Palestinian co-existence and co-habitation.

**MES 1250. Palestinians and Kurds: The Condition of Statelessness.**

This seminar seeks to achieve three interrelated goals: to introduce students to the condition of statelessness experienced by two ethnic groups in the Middle East, the Kurdish and Palestinian peoples; to examine the contours and potency of, and the problematics associated with, the concept of statelessness; and to offer the production and management of statelessness as a viable perspective for the study of the modern Middle East. We look for analogies and distinctions between the two cases, and qualify and multiply the condition of statelessness for each, guided by categories of Nation, State, Nationalism, Colonization, Settler Colonialism, Citizenship, and Precariousness.

**MES 1265. Culture and Politics in the Modern Middle East.**

This seminar examines the various cultural and artistic manifestations of protesting histories of violence in the Middle East. By studying the ways in which dominant understandings are countered in cultural production and everyday cultural practices, it will analyse how collective and personal memories have been appropriated by artists, writers and filmmakers throughout the region to protest social and political hegemonies. The readings cover major issues in cultural theory, cultural sociology, cultural studies and visual cultures. The seminar will theorize themes such as the aesthetics of resistance, memory, dissensus, social movements and global culture through specific case studies.

**MES 1270. Histories of Watching and Surveying.**

How are surveillance practices historically embedded in social fabric? How have surveillance technologies altered social life throughout history? This course explores these questions by mapping the complex ways that technologies and societies interact to produce security, fear, control, and vulnerability. Some of the areas covered include close-circuit television (CCTV) in public and quasi-public spaces, biometric technologies on the border, and a host of monitoring technologies in cyberspaces, workplaces, and the home. Readings are drawn from the critical theories in visual culture, science-fiction, and popular media.

**MES 1290. War and Cultural Representation in the Modern Middle East.**

This is an overview of contemporary Arabic and Persian literatures and cinemas through war in literature and film originating from the Eastern Arab World, Iran and Afghanistan. Using contemporary works of prose fiction, poetry and film, we interrogate the various ways in which the people of the region have grappled, through literature and film, with some of the most brutal conflicts that the world has witnessed in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. We will explore the Lebanese Civil War, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Iran-Iraq War, Iraq since 1991, Afghanistan since 1979 and the current Syrian Civil War. While this course is open all students it is especially geared towards students concentrating in MES and who have upper-level reading/ translations ability in Persian or Arabic. Students at the advanced language level will do translation in lieu of a second paper.

**MES 1291. Jerusalem Divided: Politics and Cultural Heritage.**

In 2016, UNESCO's director-general stated: "The heritage of Jerusalem is indivisible, and each of its communities has a right to the explicit recognition of their history and relationship with the city. To deny, conceal or erase any of the Jewish, Christian, or Muslim traditions, undermines the integrity of the site, and runs counter to the reasons that justified its inscription on the UNESCO World Heritage list." This reflects the reality of Jerusalem's Old City's intertwined historical, cultural, and religious legacies, but does not address the geopolitical conflict, in which ideological and territorial claims produce diverging heritage narratives. This seminar examines how Israeli, Palestinian, and international interests shape competing heritage narratives. It explores archaeological exploration, discovery, and interpretation in Jerusalem in the contexts of social, political, and religious debates from the mid-nineteenth century to the present, emphasizing its urban landscape.

**MES 1299. Rural Palestine: Natives, Peasants, and Revolutionaries.**

This course looks at how the inhabitants of rural Palestine were seen (and saw themselves) as natives, peasants, and revolutionaries. Over the 19th and 20th centuries, rural Palestine was understood as both isolated and globalized; timeless and transforming; unchangeable and critically vulnerable to forces of modernity. The native, the peasant, and the revolutionary emerged as different actors—European missionaries and Palestinian activists, international NGOs and local cooperatives, village cultivators and urban CEOs, seed banks and financial banks—draw on rural practices, knowledges, and histories. How, then, does the rural past become the basis for claims on, and struggles for, Palestine's future?

**MES 1300. Intellectual Change: From Ottoman Modernization to the Turkish Republic.**

A critical survey of Ottoman intellectual history in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Modernization, formation of the modern state and issues of nationalism and other ideologies of the time form the main framework, analyzing their political, social and cultural impact on intellectual production in the Ottoman Empire and through the making of Republican Turkey. It is a history of mentalities organized around thematic/chronological modules, each representing a set of concepts, ideas, movements as well as facts and problems, which will be compared to the larger world of modern state formation both in thought and practice.

**MES 1301. Interventions and Activism in the Contemporary Middle East.**

It is not uncommon to hear simplifying perspectives when it comes to analyses of politics and everyday lives of people in the Middle East. Instead of reducing lived experiences into binary categorizations (success or failure, authoritarian or democratic), this course examines the intricate relations between top-down political decisions, interventions and bottom-up resistance movements. It raises questions about the connections among economy, crises, democracy, and humanitarianism, and introduces diverse stories and perspectives. Using comparative historical and social scientific analysis, we will discuss topics ranging from struggles against colonial containment to the role of urban movements in social change; from the impacts of Global North-induced crises on Islamic mobilization to the use of humanitarianism as a governance tool; from LGBTQ+ movements to artistic and digital unrest; and from “Arab” Spring to the intersectionality of struggles across identities.

**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 1400. The Middle East in Berlin: Urban Spaces and Voices.**

This seminar explores the physical and human landscapes of post-war Berlin: its steadily expanding urban fabric and how it engages with the rapidly changing population make-up. The focus will be on the tension between past and present histories, new German identities, the recent massive migrations, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia, and how these social and geopolitical phenomena interact with the city’s urban spaces and monuments. As case studies we will explore the relationship among Germans and three other significant communities: Turks, Israelis, and Palestinians.

**MES 1450. The Archival of Gestures.**

Often people think about archives as static spaces. How to develop a gestural archive able to translate instances and desires of justice? This course provides students with a theoretical and practical background on the archival of gestures in performance and the role that artists-archivists can play in contributing to change through exploring and problematizing social and political memories. We explore how Arab artists have sought and investigated this role after the “Arab Spring” and of civil disobedience against Arab regimes. We then look closely at a series of performance works, by Arab, Israeli and international artists. No dance experience required.

**MES 1501. The Palestinian Revolution, 1948-1982.**

The phenomenon generally referred to in Arabic as the Palestinian Revolution (al-Thawra al-Filastiniya) was momentous by any standard. Unfolding over several decades between 1948 and 1982, it had profound implications for the history of Palestine, the Middle East, and global anti-colonialism. Traditionally, it is studied using top-down state, diplomatic and military themes in history and politics. In contrast, this course focuses on the grassroots level, approaching Palestinian revolutionaries as subjects, rather than objects, of politics and history. While taking account of the role of external historical forces, the focus here is on Palestinian popular structures, movements, cadres, philosophies, feminist initiatives, songs, poetry, art, tactics, and strategies. As such, the course explores the development of collective agency, political production, and active engagement with history. It also addresses transnational connections that bound the Palestinian revolution with other anti-colonial struggles and solidarity movements worldwide.

**MES 1550. Non-Jews in the Jewish State: A Study in the Constitution of Otherness.**

This course approaches multiple aspects of otherness by examining major sites where the work of “othering” takes place: debates relating to the “Jewishness” of the Jewish State; the legal and theological debates over the question who is a Jew; immigration and naturalization law; the regulation of marriage, burial, and religious conversion, and the recent racialization of non-Jewish aliens. The course materials are drawn from Zionist thinkers, legal documents, news items and analyses, and academic studies, as well as from literary and cinematic works. Students may concentrate on the more theoretical texts, the legal documents, or the literary and cinematic works.

**MES 1650. The Pen and the Gun: Literature and the Political Body.**

This course will examine the sphere and influence of literature and film as vehicles of expression and memory reconstruction during and following periods of dictatorship. We will explore themes such as history and/as fiction, the structuring of truth and national narrative, the intersection of human rights and medicine, and discourse of the nation as a body. Taking a transnational and cross regional approach, we will include prominent writers from Latin America (with a focus on the political ‘disappearances’ of the 1970’s), Africa (post-colonial and civil war texts), and the Middle East (writing of, within, and through the Arab Spring).

**MES 1968. Approaches to the Middle East (HIST 1968A).**

Interested students must register for HIST 1968A.

Fall	MES1968	S01	19223	Arranged	'To Be Arranged'
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**MES 1970. Individual Research Project.**

Limited to juniors and seniors. Section numbers vary by instructor. Please check Banner for the correct section and CRN to use when registering for this course. Required: all proposals for independent study must be approved by the faculty sponsor and the MES program director. Students should not register for any section of MES 1970 without this approval.

**MES 1971. Senior Honors Thesis.**

The purpose of this course is to guide you through the development and construction of your senior thesis project. It will provide you with empirical, methodological, and theoretical toolkits, as well as practical writing strategies, to help you bring your thesis to fruition. Open only to Senior students pursuing honors in Middle East Studies. Instructor permission required.

**MES 1985. Understanding Modern Iran.**

This course examines the history of modern Iran through primary historical documents, secondary studies and cultural production, beginning with an historical overview and attempts at historical narrative in the modern era, from the latter half of the Qajar dynasty (~1850) until today. Topics include modernist reform in the late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Iranian identity, attempts at political reform, women’s movement and foreign affairs. The course emphasizes the debates of Iranian intellectuals and artists and how cultural representations of major historical events and socio-political changes contribute to and challenge historical narratives and how contemporary history and politics affects cultural representation.

**MES 1990. Middle East Studies Pro-Seminar.**

This course explores the current state of Middle East Studies scholarship with an eye to its current moment of crisis. We will begin by situating MES within its institutional history, then survey classic works from its core disciplines. The second half of the course will trace contemporary debates over the significance and origin of political Islam.

**MES 1993. Middle East Politics.**

The Middle East and North Africa has consistently dominated global headlines as one of the most penetrated regional state systems in the world. Analyses of the MENA region are often bound by this monolithic rubric that has shaped how we view and understand state-society relations across the region. We examine historic and contemporary dynamics that have shaped domestic, regional, and international politics and analyze issues relating to comparative politics and international relations of the region, issues relating to colonialism and state formation, institutional configuration, authoritarianism and regime typologies, the politics of oil, identity politics, and social and economic development.

**MES 1994A. Islamic Economics.**

Despite the fact that the scriptural and early historical legacy of Islam is widely considered to be market-friendly, debates about the relationships between Islam and capitalism abound. This course moves beyond simplistic concerns of compatibility or conflict, and delves into the diverse ways by which Muslims from around the globe have devised a range of social, cultural, religious, legal and fiscal strategies that enable them to both remain true to their faith and live in today's swiftly-evolving economic context.

**MES 1995. Zionism: Political, Philosophical, and Theological Perspectives.**

Zionism has been an idea, an ideology, a national movement, a political project morphed into a political regime, and a colonial force that transformed the history of the Middle East and the landscape of Palestine. It was a Jewish response to the persecutions of Jews in Europe, a renaissance of the Hebrew language and Jewish culture, and a form of Jewish secularization that has yielded religious revival and transformation. The ideology and practice of Zionism, its politics and political theology will be studied from the perspectives of four great thinkers: Martin Buber, Hannah Arendt, Edward Said and Judith Butler.

**MES 1995B. Israel/Palestine: Holy Land – Profane Spaces.**

Seizing land in Israel/Palestine, colonizing it, shaping its boundaries, and reconstructing it as a governed space have played a major role in the struggles between Jews and Palestinians. Space has been a medium of domination and resistance, a scene of dispossession, construction and destruction, and its governmentalization has become a powerful state apparatus. Using concepts drawn from political theory, human geography, and postcolonial studies we shall examine and contrast the mental geographies and actual government of land and space(s) in Israel/Palestine and use space as a privileged perspective for understanding the history and structure of the Land's political predicament.

**MES 1996A. The Anglo-Arab Novel.**

This course examines a new development in the contemporary novel: the rise of the Arab-British novel from the late 1980s onwards. The aim is to understand this emerging genre in its historical and aesthetics specificity, and to determine how Arab immigrant writers responded to a time of profound cultural and political change. At the intersection of such processes, and in a literary culture marked by postmodernism and cosmopolitanism, does the Anglo-Arab novel develop a distinctive aesthetic form? Writers studied are: Ahdaf Soueif, Jamal Mahjoub, Leila Aboulela, and Hisham Matar.

**MES 1997A. Islam and Human Rights.**

Are Islam and human rights compatible? Both human rights and Islam raise universal claims that may conflict in some cases. 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. We will examine tensions arising from Muslims living in Europe and N.America, such as recent debates over secularism and religion, multiculturalism and the scope of tolerance.

**MES 1997B. Visualizing the Middle East.**

How has the capacity to visualize been both an enabling and limiting condition in relation to the post-colonial production of knowledge in the Middle East? The act of seeing is taken up in its practical dimension in the ways that it requires one to pay attention to the cultural and historical specificity of mechanisms of visibility and modes of representation. Through readings and discussions, we will take heed of the following questions: What is allowed to be seen? By whom? Under what circumstances? How is the visible structured?

**MES 1997C. Ethnographic Perspectives of Islam: Tradition, Religiosity and Modernity.**

Media coverage presents two ways of thinking and approaching modern Islam. One assumes Islam to be an entire way of life and single set of religious beliefs with compulsive adherence to the Quran and the Prophetic Sunna. The other reduces Islam to a set of essentialist principles, rules and spiritual values that even many Muslims have trouble grasping.

Recent anthropological scholarship makes every-day practical interpretations, practices and living social relationships central towards understanding Islam. This class will explore socio-historical and cultural specificities by which Muslims grapple with their faith, and how they shape these resources into every-day beliefs and practices.

**MES 1997D. The Politics of Heritage, Tradition and Culture in the Middle East.**

Western media has pervasively portrayed the Middle East as "a-historical", "timeless", an "Other" that is beyond the logic of modern time. Simultaneously, it is also considered the cradle of "Western Civilization" where vital elements of "world" patrimony may be traced. But how do those who inhabit the region relate to their past and what are the various ways by which its discourses are drawn upon to embody different socio-political and ethical life-worlds? This course explores recent texts on heritage and memory while offering insights of ways in which modalities of history and memory have shaped the postcolonial dynamics of this region.

**MES 1998. 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? These are central questions we will attempt to address in this course.

**MES 1999. Arab Youth: Movements, Cultures, and Discourses.**

"Youth" has become a central social concept in the contemporary global economy. In the wake of 9/11, the discussion of "youth" in the Arab world became a global priority. This course takes an anthropological and sociological approach to studying youth. Why has "youth" become a focus of concern now? How does this shape our thinking about social, economic, political, and historical issues in the Arab world, and what issues does it obscure? The course examines the historical emergence and transformation of categories of "youth," "teen" and "adolescent" in the contexts of capitalist industrialization, nationalism, post/colonialism, state formation and globalization. Enrollment limited to 20.

**MES 1999A. Cultures of Neoliberalism in the Middle East.**

The course focuses on debates in the social sciences in the Arab world around contradictions of the cultures of neoliberalization in contemporary Arab culture(s), society (ies) and economy (ies). We will explore the relevance of neoliberalism to the increasing relevance of consumption and consumerism, for citizens and scholars alike, in shaping selfhood, society, identity and even epistemic reality, the concomitant eclipse of such modernist categories as social classes, the burgeoning importance of generation, ethnicity, gender, identity and social movements. Also covered, the relation of political Islam to neoliberalism, and the rise of labour migration in/out of the Arab world.

**MES 1999B. Colonialism and Human Rights.**

Are anti-colonial struggles human rights struggles? Is emancipation the objective of these struggles? Where and when do anti-colonial and human rights discourses converge and diverge? What is the role of violence in the moral, political and discursive trajectories of anti-colonialism and human rights? This course takes up these questions, starting with the reconstruction of the historical relationship between colonialism, anti-colonial struggles and the post-World War II formation of the international human rights regime. We then turn to discuss different authors who developed their anti-colonial thought and dealt with, appropriated or ignored human rights in their different conceptions of anti-colonial justice.

**MES 1999C. Elites in Arab Culture and Society.**

Social science studies the marginalized while ignoring elites and their role. This is especially the case with “Arab” Elites. Yet, to understand the conditions of the poor and marginalized, one must study elites. Elites are a lens to historically understand class formation in the Arab World, and influences beyond. We will consider how and why we study elites, different theories and methodologies of studying elites, and focus on elites in Arab societies. The course will deal with elites in the mandate period and early independence. The last part of the course will focus on elites in contemporary Arab society.

**MES 1999D. Anthropology /Sociology of Development in the Arab World.**

After the Second World War, questions of economic growth, poverty, and inequality were internationalized, leading to the rise of national and international agencies which aimed to promote development in the “Third World.” This course examines the anthropological study of development. Touching on development theory (and the political context of each model), we examine connections to anthropological models of socio-cultural change, and consider the relationship between anthropology and the development industry. How can cultural relativist and applied anthropology approaches be reconciled? Can anthropologists and anthropological knowledge contribute to improving development interventions and outcomes, or are they merely critical of such interventions?

**MES 1999E. Displacement and Refugees in the Middle East.**

Displacement and refugees constitute one of the most significant sources of upheaval, instability, and uncertainty in our time. In 100 years, the Middle East saw waves of displaced persons, with no singular explanation and no end in sight: Armenians, Circassians, Palestinians, Iraqis, Yazidis, Kurds, and Syrians. The impetuses for displacement include wars, fall of empires and nations, crafting of new states, and modernization attempts and environmental disasters. These stories of displacement are distinctive for their multitude of causes and protracted defiance of resolutions. They challenge the narratives of the durability of nation-states, ascendancy of capitalism, and emplaced, “timeless” Arab populations.

**MES 2000A. Decolonizing the Racialized Female Subject: Black and Indigenous Women’s Self-Making Under Empire.**

This study grapples with conceptions of freedom and humanity emergent in Black and Indigenous women’s practices under empire. Colonialism is prefaced on construction of an “other.” Aimé Césaire refers to this as “thingification,” whereby colonial subjects are dehumanized and the colonizer “decivilized”. Totalizing dehumanizing forms are resisted by praxes and epistemologies which challenge the prevailing symbolic order and assert the humanity of those regarded as subhuman. We will examine how epistemological and political contestations of the human inform discourses on freedom and sovereignty and interrogate how various categories of identity refract and re-frame conceptions of humanity, freedom, and sovereignty.