

# Middle East Studies

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/cmesc/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
HIAA 0041	The Architectures of Islam
RELS 0088	Judaism, Christianity, and Islam

Social Sciences:	
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ANTH 1150	Middle East in Anthropological Perspective
HIST 0244	Understanding the Middle East: A Modern History
POLS 1822I	Geopolitics of Oil and Energy
SOC 1871L	Migration, Displacement and Emerging Community Experiences: Contemporary Turkey
URBN 1870K	Jerusalem Divided: Politics and Cultural Heritage

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:<sup>3</sup>

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

COLT 1310J	The Arab Renaissance
COLT 1431B	Modern Arabic Poetry
ARAB 0700	Advanced Arabic: Tales of the City

- 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 Andalucía 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 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.
- 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.
- 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>

<b>Total Credits</b>	<b>11</b>
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<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.