

MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES

Jennifer Schultz, Old Main 130
507-786-3080
schultzj@stolaf.edu
wp.stolaf.edu/middle-east

The Middle Eastern studies concentration introduces students to the study of the diverse, culturally rich, and increasingly complex part of the world that currently includes the Arab world, parts of Africa, Iran, Israel, and Turkey, recognizing the interconnectedness of peoples and cultures and locating their significance in wider global contexts. The concentration facilitates the interdisciplinary study of the Middle East, encouraging students to combine courses in a number of fields, particularly history, political science, religion, and sociology/anthropology.

Overview of the Concentration

The concentration in Middle Eastern studies provides students with the opportunity to study the ways in which members of Middle Eastern cultures have understood and interpreted the world, as well as the way in which others have interpreted the Middle East. As students explore the experiences, values, intellectual and artistic achievements, and economic, religious, political, and sociological systems and structures that influence Middle Eastern cultures, they gain a fuller understanding of the significance of the Middle East in its own right as well as in relation to the rest of the world.

Intended Learning Outcomes for the Concentration

Special Programs

Students are encouraged to take advantage of the many opportunities to study in the Middle East through St. Olaf's Smith Center for Global Engagement programs including Global Semester, Mediterranean Semester, the ACM Semester in Middle Eastern and Arabic Language Studies in Amman (Jordan), Semester at Bogazici University (Istanbul, Turkey), or Semester at American University in Cairo (Egypt).

Requirements

Requirements for the Concentration

The Middle Eastern studies concentration requires a minimum of five courses. Courses must deal in a significant and disciplined manner with one or more aspects of Middle Eastern culture or (medieval or modern) history. At least one course must be taken on campus. Typically, one course taken on Global Semester counts toward the concentration. Many courses offered by relevant departments at the American University of Cairo and Bogazici University, among other semester abroad destinations, count toward the concentration.

Courses taken abroad should be certified by the director of the Middle Eastern studies concentration as fulfilling the appropriate course requirements.

Courses

MEST 202: Topics in Modern Middle Eastern Studies

This course introduces students to different topics within the cultures and traditions of the modern Middle East. Students gain familiarity with significant moments, movements, voices, and trends in society, politics, architecture, and literature, and their interdependence. The course also acquaints students with intellectual debates and conflicts in and about the Middle East, and enables them to better think through those debates for themselves. May be repeated if topic is different. Offered annually in the spring semester.

MEST 294: Academic Internship

MEST 298: Independent Study

MEST 394: Academic Internship

MEST 396: Directed Undergraduate Research

This course provides a comprehensive research opportunity, including an introduction to relevant background material, technical instruction, identification of a meaningful project, and data collection. The topic is determined by the faculty member in charge of the course and may relate to their research interests. Offered based on department decision. May be offered as a 1.00 credit course or .50 credit course.

To see other courses, offered on-campus and as study abroad or away courses, from the current term that will count towards the Middle East studies concentration, please go to the Middle East Studies page. Previously offered courses that have counted towards the Middle East studies concentration may also be found in the archive page (a list still being compiled).

See also: Carleton Courses with Seats Reserved for St. Olaf Students (i.e., ARBC 101 Elementary Arabic, ARBC 102 Elementary Arabic, ARBC 103 Elementary Arabic); Contact Jamie Schillinger, Director of Middle East Studies, for more information.

Faculty

Program Director, 2024-2025

Jamie A. Schillinger

Associate Professor of Religion
Christian thought and ethics; Islamic thought and ethics

Ibtesam âl-Atiyat (on sabbatical fall semester 2024-25)

Associate Professor of Sociology/Anthropology
Arab society; gender; social movements; Islamic movements

Abdulai Iddrisu

Associate Professor of History
African history; Islam in Africa

Maria F. Vendetti

Associate Professor of Romance Languages - French
20th- and 21st-century French and Francophone literature; literature and testimony during and after the Algerian War of Independence; literary and filmic representations of torture, trauma, and war