

Middle Eastern Studies course descriptions 2022-23

Current students please note: Course Outlines are available on the AMES intranet <http://intranet.ames.cam.ac.uk/faculty/students/mes-course-outlines/>

Part II (fourth year)

Students are required to have spent a period of at least eight months in the Middle East during their third year.

Descriptions

MES.31 Advanced Arabic Language (Arabic Language teachers)

Supplementary Regulation

This paper aims to develop students' reading and writing skills in Modern Standard Arabic. Students are introduced to a range of academic and literary texts in order to develop their ability to follow complex discussions and improve their understanding of linguistic structures. Classes run completely in Arabic.

Course Description

This course aims to develop the skills of reading, writing and listening, and consolidate grammar and vocabulary to a sophisticated level, to encourage students to develop sensitivity to Arabic genre, style and text structure, to expose them to a variety of challenging and interesting text-types, academic and literary, and to stimulate them to express their own opinions. The language of the classroom is Educated Spoken Arabic, based on the dialect that each student speaks on their return from the Year Abroad.

Lectures and Classes

Taught in Michaelmas, Lent and Easter

Total of 60 language classes and 20 supervisions

MES.31 (oral and written combined) is weighted as one paper for examination purposes

Form and Conduct

The examination consists of two parts, a three-hour written examination (100 marks) and an oral examination (100 marks). The written examination, which will be taken at the end of the fourth year, will contain: one passage of Arabic on which candidates will be required to answer questions (35 marks); one passage of Arabic to be translated into English (25 marks); one passage of English to be translated into Arabic (20 marks); and one question requiring a piece of writing in Arabic (20 marks). All questions must be attempted.

The oral examination consists of three sections. Sections (a) and (b), liaison interpreting, and discussion, will be taken at the beginning of the fourth year, and section (c), listening comprehension, will be taken at the end of the fourth year. All timings are approximate and all oral examinations are recorded.

(a) Liaison interpreting. Candidates act as an interpreter for two examiners, one speaking Arabic and one English. (30 marks)

(b) Discussion. Candidates discuss a topic of their choice which has been approved in advance by the examiners. (40 marks)

The examination for sections (a) and (b) together will last approximately twenty-five minutes.

(c) Listening comprehension. Candidates answer questions on one recorded passage, which may be taken from a variety of sources. (30 marks)

MES.32 Advanced Persian Language (Dr Ghaffari)

Supplementary Regulation

This paper aims to develop students' reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills. The students will write essays and prepare presentations in Persian.

Course Description

This course consists of various forms of language work to improve the linguistic proficiency of the students in the four major language skills of reading, listening, writing and speaking. The students read and listen to a variety of texts in modern Persian as language exercises, for translation and vocabulary building. Students will also write essays and prepare presentations in Persian. The course seeks to give students a broad knowledge of Persian literary styles and includes a focus on Persian folklore and proverbs.

Form and Conduct

The examination consists of two parts: a three-hour written examination (70 marks) and an oral examination which is taken at the end of the fourth year (30 marks).

The written examination consists of three sections. Section A consists of one reading comprehension passage in Persian on which candidates will be required to answer questions in Persian (15 marks). Section B consists of two unseen passages of modern Persian for translation into English (10 marks each) and one unseen passage of English for translation into Persian (10 marks). Section C consists of four topics for an essay of about 400 words in Persian, of which one must be attempted (25 marks). All sections must be attempted.

The oral examination consists of three sections. All timings are approximate and all oral examinations are recorded.

(a) Liaison interpreting: Candidates act as an interpreter for two examiners, one speaking Persian and one English (10 marks, 10 minutes);

(b) Listening comprehension: Candidates listen to a short passage and answer questions about it (10 marks, 10 minutes);

(c) Discussion: Candidates discuss one topic selected at the time of the examination from a list of three, chosen and provided previously by themselves (10 marks, 20 minutes).

MES.33 Advanced Hebrew Language (Dr Hornkohl)

Supplementary Regulation

This paper enables students to develop their skills in writing and translating Hebrew and in critically assessing passages of Hebrew literature. There will be two sections, containing questions on classical Hebrew and Modern Hebrew, respectively. Students may take either section or both. Candidates taking the Modern Hebrew option will have an oral as part of their paper.

Course Description

This course enables students to develop their skills in writing and translating Hebrew and in understanding its grammatical structure. There will be two sections containing questions on Pre-Modern Hebrew and Modern Hebrew, respectively. Students choose one or both sections. Candidates taking the Modern Hebrew option will have an oral as part of their paper.

Lectures and Classes

Classical: 16 sessions per term for Michaelmas and Lent Terms; 8 sessions per term for Easter Term.

Modern: 16 sessions per term for Michaelmas and Lent Terms; 8 sessions per term for Easter Term.

Whether students opt for Classical, Modern or both sections, they are entitled to 8 supervisions per term during Michaelmas and Lent Terms and to 4 supervisions during Easter Term.

Form and Conduct

This paper will be divided into two sections, at least one of which must be answered.

Section A (Pre-modern Hebrew) will contain four questions on Hebrew language (15 marks each) and two questions on specified texts (20 marks each).

Section B (Modern Hebrew) will contain two questions on Hebrew language (15 marks each) and two questions on specified texts (20 points each). Question 1: unseen Modern Hebrew passage for translation and linguistic analysis. Question 2: Composition in Modern Hebrew from a choice of three topics. Questions 3–4: questions on specified texts (20 marks each). The oral examination (30 marks total) will consist of (a) reading precision and comprehension test (7 marks); (b) listening comprehension test (8 marks); and (c) general oral ability test (15 marks). Candidates offering one section only must answer all questions.

Candidates offering both Pre-modern Hebrew and Modern Hebrew must offer two language questions (15 marks each) and one specified text question (20 marks) from Section A and one language question (15 marks), one specified text question (20 marks), and the general oral ability component of the oral examination (15 marks) from Section B.

MES.34 Advanced Literary Arabic: *Animals and Nonhuman Creatures in Arabic Literature* (Professor Montgomery and Dr Kalousian)

Supplementary Regulation

This paper introduces students to a selection of advanced texts to enhance their understanding of textual analysis and linguistic expression and to develop their knowledge of literary historical and critical approaches.

Course Description

This paper combines classical and modern genres of Arabic literature, introducing students to intersections in theme and aesthetics, and the central place of pre-modern literary heritage in the emergence of modern literature. Students will be introduced to a wide range of poetry and prose, studying their contexts and how they might be read comparatively. In this respect, they will be expected to engage with a variety of historical and theoretical and critical readings in addition to their reading of the primary material. Through this focus on classical and modern intersections, the course is themed around the prominence of animals and nonhuman creatures, from the pre-Islamic qasida to the modern novel. We will read contemporary novels that employ animals to address the dystopia of war or the transition to the modern nation-state. We will also read pre-modern texts, from poetry to animal fables to philosophical fantasies, in which animals convey moral messages, reflect attitudes to

nature and culture, and embody broader Islamic views on cosmology and the place of humans within the world. More broadly, the course aims to expand students' knowledge of the different registers of literary Arabic, improve their ability to understand complex grammatical constructions, and develop their understanding of interpretive techniques. Set texts, excerpted from longer works and covered in each participatory seminar-style lecture, form the basis of the course content, and will be provided on Moodle. For pre-modern and contemporary works, students are expected to read the texts in full in translation, whenever possible.

Form and Conduct

This paper is assessed by one coursework essay (of a maximum of 3000 words, and minimum of 2,500 words, including footnotes and excluding bibliography) and one commentary (of a maximum of 3,000 words, and minimum of 2,500 words, including footnotes and excluding bibliography), to be handed in on the Thursday of fourth week in Easter term. A choice of four essay questions and four passages for commentary will be announced on the Wednesday of eighth week in Lent term. One of the assignments must be on a pre-modern text and one assignment on a modern text. Both exercises carry equal marks.

MES.35 Advanced Literary Persian (Professor van Ruymbeke)

Supplementary Regulation

This paper uses a selection of either classical or contemporary Persian poetry and prose, to study the treatment of particular themes and rhetoric techniques.

Course Description

This course covers classical Persian prose and poetry at an advanced level. Students are expected to be able to read, translate and analyse Persian prose and poetry, and to comment on the technical aspects of the work as well as its contents. They will also need to demonstrate their ability to scan the poetry. The course will focus on developments in the style and content of the theme of wine and drunkenness. We will analyse the rhetorical techniques in a chosen set of classical poems, *qasidehs*, *ghazals*, *roba'is*, *masnavis*, and emphasise particularly the lyric poetry of Hafez of Shiraz. We will also focus on the vexing questions of interpretation and translation of poetry in general, basing our analysis on different translations of Hafez's *ghazals*.

Form and Conduct

This paper is assessed in two parts – each part carries equal marks: (a) a research essay of between 6,000 and 7,500 words, including footnotes and excluding bibliography. Each student will develop the topic of the essay in consultation with the instructor. A one-page topic and paper outline will be due during the first week of Lent Term. **Two hard copies and one electronic copy (pdf) of the project shall be submitted to the Programmes Administrator in the Faculty Office so as to arrive not later than the fourth Friday of Full Easter Term;** (b) a viva voce examination which will contain the reading and translation of a seen passage, a commentary on given aspects of the piece, and a discussion of the research essay.

MES.36 Advanced Literary Hebrew (Dr Artman)

Supplementary Regulation

This paper focuses on themes of interest and importance in Modern and Medieval Hebrew literature.

Course Description

This course examines contemporary Israeli literature and culture from the last twenty or so years, primarily the transition from an ideological society to a capitalist, post-modern and post-Zionist society after the first intifada in 1987.

Form and Conduct

This paper is assessed by two coursework essays (of a maximum of 3,500 words, and minimum of 3,000 words, including footnotes and excluding bibliography), one to be handed in on the first Tuesday of Lent term and one **to be handed in on the first** Tuesday of Easter term. A choice of three essay questions will be announced on the first day (Thursday) of fifth week in Michaelmas term and on the first day (Thursday) of fifth week in Lent term. Both essays will be subject to a mini-viva voce examination, conducted in person or online, at the end of Easter term. Both essays carry equal marks.

Optional courses (additional Regulation 8 papers)

MES.37 History of the pre-modern Middle East: [not offered 2022-23]

MES.38 History of the modern Middle East: (To be confirmed)

Supplementary Regulation

This paper examines in some detail the history of the modern Middle East since the 19th century, focusing on particular regions or themes.

Course Description

Form and Conduct

This paper will consist of eight essay questions, of which candidates will be required to answer three. All questions will carry equal marks.

MES.39 Special subject in the pre-modern Middle East: *Power, Patronage, and Material Culture in the Islamic World* (Prof Marsham, Professor Bennison, Dr Gupta)

Borrowed by MML Tripos students as their Paper 162. For 2022-23 this paper will have shared teaching with History of Art (their Paper 25)

Supplementary Regulation

This paper provides a focused analysis of a particular subject relating to the pre-modern Middle East.

Course Description

This paper explores the production and reception of elite material culture in Islamic societies from Late Antiquity to the present. In Michaelmas Term, it will explore the material culture of early Islamic cities with particular attention to the role of rulers and elites in the Umayyad and Abbasid caliphates. It will also look at the formation of Islamic artistic practices and visual cultures in cities, monuments, and artefacts, and the further development of Islamic material expression in the cosmopolitan but often antagonistic Islamic polities of the tenth century onwards in the Middle East and North Africa. In Lent Term, the course will move to the early modern period and take a more diffuse, socially-driven approach to the study of Islamic art and material culture up to the present. It will begin with the Timurids in the east

and the Sa'dis of Morocco in the west, before looking at a geographically diverse set of artefacts, technologies, networks and buildings to show artistic interactions within and beyond the Islamic world. Throughout the course, we will ask in what ways Islamic elite material cultures are distinctive, and how and why they varied in the diverse societies of the Mediterranean, Africa, and Asia, during the 1,400 years between the Prophet Muhammad and modern times.

Form and Conduct

This paper will consist of nine questions. Question 1 will be a series of images for analysis and discussion, of which candidates must choose three. Questions 2-9 will be essay questions. Candidates will be required to answer Question 1 and two questions chosen from Questions 2-9. All questions will carry equal marks.

MES.40 Special subject in the contemporary Middle East [Not offered 2022-23]

Borrowed by MML Tripos students as their Paper 168.

MES.41 Comparative Semitic Linguistics (Dr Noorlander)

Borrowed by Linguistics Tripos students as their Paper Li.35

Supplementary Regulation

This paper will cover the principles of historical linguistics and the comparative method and their applications to the Semitic languages with respect to their phonology, morphology, syntax, and lexicon. A knowledge of at least one Semitic language (Arabic, Hebrew, Aramaic, Akkadian, Gə'əz) will be required.

Course Description

This paper offers the opportunity for students of the Semitic languages to contextualize their language work within the larger academic fields of language typology and historical linguistics and comparative Semitics. The scope of the comparison will include both the classical literary languages and the modern spoken dialects, ranging from Akkadian to Maltese and Ugaritic to Tigre. Students taking the course must have a knowledge of at least one Semitic language (e.g. Arabic, Aramaic, Hebrew, Akkadian). Upon completion of this course, students will (i) understand and describe linguistic evolution and linguistic relatedness, (ii) be familiar with the key debates and themes within Comparative Semitic Linguistics and (iii) will have mastered the basic concepts in linguistic typology and the basic principles of historical linguistics and the comparative method. Selected issues of the historical reconstruction, classification and comparative phonology, morphology and syntax of the Semitic languages will be examined through case studies.

Form and Conduct

This paper is assessed by a research essay of no more than 5,000 words, including footnotes and excluding bibliography. Each student will develop the research question of the essay in consultation with the instructor. Two hard copies and one electronic copy (pdf) of the project shall be submitted to the Programmes Administrator in the Faculty Office so as to arrive not later than the fourth Friday of Full Easter Term.

MES.42 Elementary Sanskrit (Dr Vergiani)

Supplementary Regulation

The course aims to cover the whole of Sanskrit grammar and introduce the students to some of the essential features and concepts of pre-modern South Asian civilisation and literary culture, providing them with a basic grounding for the academic study of classical Sanskrit literature.

Course Description

During the first term students familiarise themselves with the Devanāgarī script and begin learning Sanskrit morphology and syntax and acquiring the basic lexicon. From the second term they start reading selected passages of classical texts (two hours per week) namely the *Pañcatantra* (a collection of fables), the *Bhagavadgītā*, and the *Rāmāyaṇa* or *Mahābhārata*, while continuing with the grammar classes.

Form and Conduct

This paper will consist of four questions. Questions 1 to 3 will consist of a seen passage for translation into English (20 marks each) and grammar questions (5 marks each) on some of the forms found in the selected passage. Question 4 will consist of an unseen translation from Sanskrit into English for which a glossary will be provided (25 marks). All questions must be answered.

MES.43 Intermediate Hindi Language (Mr Kumar)

Supplementary Regulation

The aim of the course is to bring all students to a good level of proficiency in reading, writing, understanding, and speaking Hindi. However, only those students who have some prior knowledge of the language can join this course.

Course Description

The basic grammar of Hindi will be thoroughly reviewed, and detailed instructions will be given to aid the learning of both the Hindi script as well as grammar. This course will equip students with the tools which will help and encourage self learning of the language in the future. Teaching materials will include, in addition to published grammars and course books, video materials, film clips, film songs, and items taken from the print media.

Form and Conduct

This paper will consist of two parts: a written paper (70 marks) and an oral exam (30 marks). The written paper will consist of two sections: Section A will contain two passages in Hindi to be translated into English (35 marks). Section B will contain two passages in English to be translated into Hindi (35 marks).

The oral examination will consist of three sections. All timings are approximate and the oral examinations are recorded: (a) Listening and comprehension test (10 marks); (b) Role-play (10 marks); (c) Discussion on a given topic (10 marks). Ten minutes in total will be given for Sections (b) and (c).

MES.44 Economy/Culture in the Middle East and Beyond (Dr Anderson)

Supplementary Regulation

This paper explores critical anthropological approaches to the study of economy and culture. We will consider how an anthropological perspective can contribute to, and problematize, the study of economic life.

Course Description

The first half of the lecture series (classes 1 – 4) asks “what is the economy?” We will review anthropological theories of economic life, and explore in more detail the different ways that religion and economy have been co-produced in the case of Islam in the 20th and 21st centuries. The second four lectures consider the relationship between capitalist globalisation and culture in the Middle East, exploring themes of cultural production, consumption, tourism and the city. In Lent Term, students then write an extended essay with support from a supervisor. The main regional focus will be on the Middle East but the

themes will also be studied comparatively, drawing on ethnographic accounts from other parts of the world. The aims of the course are to enable students to: understand anthropological concepts and approaches to the study of economic life; analyse the relations between economy, religion and culture from an anthropological perspective; and understand their connection to social and political changes in the Middle East and wider Muslim world in the 20th and 21st centuries. The course is also intended to develop students' skills in written and oral communication, analysis, and critical thinking.

Form and Conduct

This paper is assessed by a research essay of 5000 words, including footnotes and excluding bibliography, relating to a topic taught on the course and using anthropological sources and approaches as taught on the course. A two-page topic and paper outline will be due by 5pm on Monday, LT week 0, and should be sent to psa27@cam.ac.uk. Two hard copies and one electronic copy (pdf) of the project shall be submitted to the Programmes Administrator in the Faculty Office so as to arrive not later than the fourth Friday of Full Easter Term.

Courses borrowed from other Faculties

X.9 The Jewish Tradition and Christianity: from antiquity to modernity (Paper C8 of the Theology, Religion and Philosophy of Religion Tripos) [not offered 2022-23]

X.10 Islam II (Paper C.9 of the Theology, Religion and Philosophy of Religion Tripos)

For details consult the Faculty of Divinity.

Candidates should refer to the Theology, Religion and Philosophy of Religion Tripos for information on the form and conduct of this examination.

X.15 The Politics of the Middle East (Paper POL.12 of the Human, Social and Political Sciences Tripos)

Candidates should refer to the Human, Social and Political Sciences Tripos for information on the form and conduct of this examination.