

## Middle Eastern Studies course descriptions 2020-21

**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 (Mrs El-Keiy, Dr Harris)

##### 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 (to be confirmed)**

#### 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. 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, Dr Miller, Dr Webster)**

#### 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. One or more types of Arabic writing from one or more periods will be the focus of sustained study.

#### Course Description

This paper moves between 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 literary 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 nonhuman animals and fantastical creatures, from the pre-Islamic qasida to the modern novel. We will read contemporary short stories and 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 produce successful translations in English. Set texts, excerpted from longer works and covered in each participatory seminar-style class, 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, wherever possible.

#### 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 four 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 online, at the end of Easter Term. Both essays carry equal marks.

### **MES.35 Advanced Literary Persian [Not offered 2020-21]**

### **MES.36 Advanced Literary Hebrew (Dr Peleg)**

#### 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)<sup>6</sup>

### **MES.37 History of the pre-modern Middle East: After Tamerlane: The Persianate World from Timur to the Qajars (Dr Ashraf)**

#### Supplementary Regulation

This paper examines in some detail aspects of the history of the Middle East, either in a particular region and period, or addressing particular themes.

#### Course Description

This paper serves as an introduction to the history of the Persianate world—the region stretching from the Tigris and Euphrates to the Oxus rivers, and including the Iranian plateau and northern India—from Timur to the Qajars. Although the Persianate world was and continues to be ethnically, linguistically, and religiously diverse, from the fourteenth until the nineteenth century, the empires which ruled much of the area—the Timurids, Safavids, Mughals, Afsharids, and Qajars—used Persian as their courtly and administrative language, and were all deeply influenced by the political and cultural legacy of Timur (known in the West as Tamerlane).

The paper asks students to grapple with the following questions: To what extent did a Persianate world exist, ca. 1300–1800? How were the political cultures of the empires that ruled during that period similar, and how were they different? Did shared language and culture unify this region or, on the other hand, was the Persianate world a ‘zone of contact’ between disparate cultures, religions, and ideas? What impact did trade and commodities have on politics and society? How did religious differences shape society? What can art and architecture tell us about imperial ideology?

The lectures in Michaelmas Term move chronologically. We begin by introducing the ‘Persianate world’ as a category of analysis, before devoting seven weeks to the political history of the region between 1300 and 1800.

Then, in Lent Term, the lectures shift to a thematic and comparative approach, and introduce students to various topics of importance in the Persianate world, including the use(s) of Persian language, political culture, the economy and society, and religious and cultural life.

An organising thread that runs through this paper is the question of what the Persianate world was, and how best to conceptualise it. Through the readings, lectures, and supervisions, we will evaluate the category of the Persianate world and how various historians have interpreted its history.

#### Lectures and Classes

Taught in Michaelmas, Lent, and Easter.

Total of 16 participatory lectures and 5 supervisions.

#### 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.

---

<sup>6</sup> The Department reserves the right not to offer a Regulation 8 paper that is undersubscribed.

### **MES.38 History of the modern Middle East: The politics and culture of the contemporary Middle East (Dr Monier, Dr Peleg, Dr El Khachab)**

#### 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

This paper offers an introduction to the contemporary politics and culture of the Middle East, with emphasis on the Arab World and Israel from 1945 until the present day. The course will build on and complement the modern history courses offered by the department through developing themes such as nationalism, mass media, revolution and identity politics and examining their trajectories using cultural, anthropological and political science approaches. The main aim is to explore the relationship between society and state and how they shape each other. A variety of source materials will be examined, including film and social media. Two different but complementary perspectives are utilised; a cultural studies approach and a political science approach. The lectures in Michaelmas will largely focus on cultural studies and will introduce and develop an understanding of the relationship between cultural production and politics. In Lent term the focus will be on examining some of the most pressing themes in contemporary politics, their impact on society and how people have responded to and interacted with major political developments since 1945. By the end of the course, students will develop new ways of thinking about interactions between culture, state and society, thereby giving them a broad set of tools with which to examine the politics of the contemporary Middle East.

#### 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: Islamic Cities and Muslim Kings? Monarchy, Legitimacy and Urbanism in the Medieval Islamic World (Dr Marsham and Dr El-Merheb)**

Borrowed by MML Tripos students as their Paper 162.

#### Supplementary Regulation

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

#### Course Description

The 'royal city' is an ancient expression of political power and authority, with origins in the Ancient Near East. This course examines the relationship between the city and power in the Islamic world from the origins of Islam down to the Ottoman era. Archaeology and architectural history are emphasised as sources for the 'Islamic city', alongside relevant texts from the period. How far, and in what ways, Islamic urban political cultures are distinctive, and how and why they varied in the diverse societies of the Mediterranean and the Middle East during the 1,000 years between the Prophet Muhammad and Murad IV are all questions that will be explored through the course.

#### Form and Conduct

This paper will consist of nine questions. Question 1 will be a series of texts and 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: Israel: Invention of a culture (Dr Peleg)**

Borrowed by MML Tripos students as their Paper 168.

#### Supplementary Regulation

Focusing on the Zionist revolution of the 20th century and the many cultural innovations it inspired, this course explores the new ideas and practices about language, literature, body, sexuality, visual culture, music, art, and architecture that shaped the modern Israel we know today.

#### Form and Conduct

This paper is assessed by 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 class session 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.

### **MES.41 Comparative Semitic Linguistics [Not offered 2020-21]**

### **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.

#### 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) 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. 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. The main regional focus is on the Middle East but the themes are also studied comparatively, drawing on ethnographic accounts from other parts of the world.

#### Course Description

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: practices of production, exchange and consumption. The first four lectures review classical and modern anthropological and sociological theories of the basic social and cultural nature of the economy, and explore in more detail the different ways that Islam has been articulated through economic processes in the 20th and 21st centuries. The second four lectures focus on topics such as consumption and identity, trade and the morality of exchange. 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 aim of the course is to enable students to gain a familiarity with anthropological concepts and approaches to the study of economic life, and an awareness of key debates. The course is also intended to develop students' skills in written and oral communication, analysis, research, and critical thinking.

#### Lectures and Classes

Taught in Michaelmas and Lent.

Total of 8 participatory lectures, 8 student seminars and 4 supervisions.

#### Form and Conduct

This paper is assessed by 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 class session 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.

## **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)**

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.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.11 Judaism and Western Philosophy (Paper D2(C) 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) [Not offered 2020-21]**