

# MIDDLE EASTERN AND ISLAMIC STUDIES

## Department Website:

<https://www.haverford.edu/meis>

The Concentration in Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies gives students basic knowledge of the Middle East and broader Muslim world, and allows students to employ discipline-specific tools for advanced work in this area.

The faculty at Haverford College who research and study the Middle East and Islam are committed to educating students about the politics, histories, and socio-cultural formations of the Middle East and broader Muslim world. We believe that our students must have basic knowledge about the Middle East and Islam if they are to participate thoughtfully and constructively in the many contentious debates that frame public discourse about Muslims and the Middle East today.

## Learning Goals

Students in Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies will:

- learn the politics, histories, and socio-cultural formations of the Middle East and broader Muslim world.
- gain knowledge of key political, economic, and social issues in the contemporary Middle East.
- demonstrate basic knowledge of a language pertinent to the students' areas of research.

Haverford's Institutional Learning Goals are available on the President's website, at <http://hav.to/learninggoals>.

## Curriculum

An "Area of Concentration" at Haverford is designed to facilitate the pursuit of an area of study distinct from a major, but which a student can use the disciplinary tools of the major to pursue. To that end, at least two courses, and no more than three, may fulfill both the student's major requirements and the concentration requirements. In practical terms, this means that students who want to concentrate in Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies usually major in anthropology, comparative literature, history, political science, or religion.

In some cases, students may find that they can combine other majors with a concentration in MEIS (for example, History of Art and Growth and Structure of Cities at Bryn Mawr are two departments that sometimes have two or three course offerings that could count for Middle Eastern and Islamic

Studies). Students who can demonstrate that at least two courses in their major are about Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies can petition the concentration coordinator and faculty to approve their major as one that can be linked to the MEIS concentration.

We strongly encourage students with interests in the Middle East and Islam to meet with the concentration coordinator early in their college program (during their first and second years). We also invite students to take advantage of Haverford's study abroad programs in Jordan, Morocco, Israel, and other appropriate locations to advance their work in the concentration.

## Concentration Requirements

The MEIS concentration is normally available to students majoring in anthropology, history, political science, religion, or comparative literature. Courses from their major must represent at least two but no more than three of the requirements detailed below. Proposals to concentrate on the basis of other majors must be approved in advance by concentration coordinator.

### Language Competence

Students must demonstrate competence above the basic level in a language pertinent to their area of research:

- In cases where a student has selected Arabic as their relevant language, this means completion of ARAB H002/ARAB S002.
- If a student is doing research for which another language is more appropriate, they may need to study at the University of Pennsylvania (Pashtu, Persian, Turkish and Swahili) or Bryn Mawr (Hebrew), or take other Haverford language classes (e.g., Chinese, French).

Some study abroad programs are also suitable for gaining language competence. Students should consult with the concentration coordinator about the course of language study to fill this requirement.

### Core Courses

Students must take two of the core courses listed below, in which they learn about the Middle East and Islam. Students must choose from two of the four departments listed (e.g., history and political science, anthropology and religion, political science and religion). Students should consult the concentration coordinator to ensure they fill this requirement.

By completing this core requirement, students gain broad exposure to the history and politics of the Middle East, and to Islam as a major world religion

and social and political force that began in, and continues to be affected by, the Middle East.

The core course options are:

Code	Title	Credits
<b>Anthropology</b>		
ANTH H253		1.0
ANTH H259	Ethnography of Islam	1.0
<b>History</b>		
HIST H117		1.0
<b>Political Science</b>		
POLS H256	The Evolution of the Jihadi Movement	1.0
POLS H357	International Relations Theory: Conflict and the Middle East	1.0
<b>Religion</b>		
RELG H106	Introduction to Islam	1.00
RELG H107		1.00
RELG H259	Gender and Sexuality in Islamic Texts and Practices	1.00

### Elective Courses

Students should pursue areas of inquiry related to the Middle East and/or Islam and specific to their interests by taking four electives, at least one of which is at the 300 level. Examples might include anthropological approaches to the study of Islam or Middle East, Middle Eastern Nationalism, Islam in African politics, Israeli politics, evolution of the Jihadi movement, modern Arabic literature, etc.

To fulfill their elective credit, students may select from a list of designated electives at Bryn Mawr and Swarthmore, or request approval from the concentration coordinator to take other appropriate courses at Bryn Mawr, Swarthmore, or the University of Pennsylvania's Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations Program. Students may also petition the concentration coordinator and MEIS faculty for approval of a course that is not on the electives list but which the student feels provides important content for their specific research topic.

See the end of this section of the Catalog for a sampling of courses that count toward the MEIS concentration. For more information about core and elective courses, contact the concentration coordinator.

No more than four of the six concentration credits may come from institutions outside of the Tri-Co.

### Senior Thesis

Students must write a thesis in their major department (anthropology, history, political science, or religion) that addresses Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies and that the concentration coordinator (as well as the major advisor) approves.

The concentration coordinator must approve this thesis topic in advance to count for the MEIS concentration. To request approval, students should submit a brief (one page) thesis proposal to the concentration coordinator and arrange a meeting to discuss the proposal.

### Study Abroad

Students may fulfill some of the required courses for the Concentration in Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies in study abroad programs. Some such programs that offer intensive language training can also count toward fulfilling the language requirement. Students are encouraged to consult with Rebecca Avery and the concentration coordinator about study abroad options.

### Affiliated Faculty

#### Ezgi Guner

Mellon Post-Doctoral Fellow and Visiting Assistant Professor

#### GT H

Associate Professor of Religion

#### Anita Isaacs

The Benjamin Collins 1920 Professor of Social Science; Professor of Political Science; Coordinator of Latin American and Iberian Studies

#### Alexander Kitroeff

Professor of History

#### Naomi Koltun-Fromm

The Burton Pike 1952 Professor in the Humanities; Professor of Religion

#### Anne McGuire

The Kies Family Professor of Humanities; Associate Professor of Religion; ; Coordinator of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies

#### Barak Mendelsohn

Professor of Political Science

#### Zainab Saleh

Associate Professor of Anthropology; Director of HCAH

#### Bethel Saler

Associate Professor of History

## Zeynep Sertbulut

Visiting Assistant Professor of Anthropology and Visual Studies

## Courses

### Africana Studies Courses

#### AFST H341 RACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND AFRICA I (1.0 Credit)

*Ezgi Guner*

**Division:** Social Science

**Domain(s):** B: Analysis of the Social World

This is an interdisciplinary course offered over two semesters, focusing respectively on the African continent (I) and the Middle East (II). While the course examines race-making in these regions separately, it nonetheless highlights their interconnectedness. Both semesters, we will explore premodern conceptualizations of social difference, intersectionality of race and religion, racialization within the contexts of slavery, colonialism, apartheid, and postcolonial nation-states. Students are encouraged but not required to enroll in both courses. Crosslisted: AFST. **(Offered:** Fall 2025)

### Anthropology Courses

#### ANTH H277 MEDIA AND THE MIDDLE EAST (1.0 Credit)

*Zeynep Sertbulut*

**Division:** Social Science

**Domain(s):** B: Analysis of the Social World

What can we learn about the Middle East by examining media? What can we about media by studying institutions of production and practices of consumption in the Middle East region? In this course, we will read ethnographies of media from the Middle East and look at and listen to media. We will explore cases from different countries, from Egypt to Syria, Turkey to Afghanistan, from Lebanon to Palestine/Israel. Crosslisted: VIST. Pre-requisite(s): 100-level course in social sciences, or humanities. Lottery Preference: Senior anthropology students have a priority to take the class.

#### ANTH H339 ANTHROPOLOGY OF EMPIRE (1.0 Credit)

*Ezgi Guner*

**Division:** Social Science

**Domain(s):** B: Analysis of the Social World

This advanced seminar is an anthropological exploration of empire both as an analytic category and a historical phenomenon. It begins by introducing the discipline's historical entanglements with empire and the anthropological critique of this

epistemological legacy. Focusing on cases from the Caribbean, Africa, America, and the Middle East, it discusses the emergence of the anthropology of empire. Key concepts and debates for this course are race, genocide, settler colonialism, security, diaspora, material culture and museums.

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### Arabic Courses

#### ARAB B103 CONVERSATION ON CULTURE IN MSA MIXED WITH EGYPTIAN DIALECT (1.0 Credit)

*Amira Ghazy*

The main focus of this conversation course is the development of speaking and listening skills of students at the Advanced Level of Arabic. This will be achieved through the introduction of multimedia materials in Modern Standard Arabic. The materials selected will aim to help the students acquire socio-cultural competence while advancing their aural and oral communication skills. The selected audio-visual materials are meant to engage students, help them explore varied topics relating to the Middle East and its culture, and entice them to communicate their thoughts and express themselves in the language. Students will work individually and in pairs and groups to prepare skits and reports for oral presentations. This class is conducted entirely in Arabic. Prerequisite: Two years of Intensive Arabic or their equivalent.

**(Offered:** Spring 2026)

### History Courses

#### HIST H341 TOPICS COMPARATIVE HISTORY (1.0 Credit)

*Bethel Saler*

**Division:** Social Science

**Domain(s):** A: Meaning, Interpretation (Texts); B: Analysis of the Social World

Seminar meetings, reports and papers. May be repeated for credit with change of topic. The Al Qaeda attacks on the Twin Towers on 9/11/01 and U.S. military strikes and warfare in Iraq, Afghanistan and Syria over the last seventeen years mark only the most recent American encounters with (Sunni and Shiite) Islamic nations. Indeed, since the rise of trans-Atlantic commercial economies and European “New World” colonies tying Europe, the Americas and Africa together, peoples of the Americas have encountered and learned of Islam and of Islamic societies, including from enslaved Muslim Africans forcibly captured from their homelands and sold in the Americas. This class will explore different aspects of those encounters as related in North Americans’ fictional and experience-based writings and imagery of different parts of the Islamic world. It will also examine the stories of enslaved Muslim Africans and African-Americans. From the colonial period through the early nineteenth century, Euroamericans paid the greatest attention to the Ottoman Empire and the small Islamic states of North Africa (Morocco, Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli). In the case of the latter, the United States fought its first foreign wars; and their interactions with those “Barbary” states inspired a great deal of domestic fiction, plays, poetry as well as absorbing U.S. foreign policy and domestic politics. While adhering to a chronological frame, this course takes a topical approach in its exploration of early American encounters with Islam. **(Offered: Spring 2026)**

### Political Science Courses

#### **POLS H151 INTERNATIONAL POLITICS (1.0 Credit)**

*Barak Mendelsohn*

**Division:** Social Science

**Domain(s):** B: Analysis of the Social World

This course offers an introduction to the study of international politics. It considers examples from history and addresses contemporary issues, while introducing and evaluating the political theories that have been used by scholars to explain those events. The principal goal of the course is to develop a general set of analytical approaches that can be used to gain insight into the nature of world politics – past, present and future.

**(Offered: Fall 2025)**

#### **POLS H241 IMMIGRATION POLITICS AND POLICY (1.0 Credit)**

*Anita Isaacs*

**Division:** Social Science

**Domain(s):** B: Analysis of the Social World

Examines the causes and rights of forced migrants and refugees along with the responses and responsibilities of the international community. Focus

on Mexico and Central America. Prerequisite(s): One political science course or instructor consent **(Offered: Fall 2025)**

#### **POLS H256 THE EVOLUTION OF THE JIHADI MOVEMENT (1.0 Credit)**

*Barak Mendelsohn*

**Division:** Social Science

**Domain(s):** B: Analysis of the Social World

This course explores the evolution of the jihadi movement, focusing on its ideological development throughout the twentieth century, and the structural changes it has gone through since the jihad to drive the Soviets out of Afghanistan during the 1980s.

#### **POLS H298 FROM NATIONAL-LIBERATION REPUBLIC TO POPULIST STATE: THE STATE AND ECONOMY IN TURKEY (1.0 Credit)**

**Division:** Social Science

**Domain(s):** B: Analysis of the Social World

This course offers a comprehensive review of modern Turkish history, delving into the origins and consequences of its current challenges. It examines these issues in the broader context of semi-peripheral countries and dependence. The topics encompass various social, political, and economic challenges that Turkey has faced since late Ottoman times, including underdevelopment, problems in democratic consolidation, relations with the West, industrialization, class conflict, military coups, economic liberalization, economic crises, political cleavages, and the rise of AKP’s authoritarian populism. Pre-requisite(s): One semester of Political Science is recommended but instructor’s permission is sufficient.

#### **POLS H351 INTERNATIONAL SECURITY (1.0 Credit)**

*Barak Mendelsohn*

**Division:** Social Science

**Domain(s):** B: Analysis of the Social World

This course offers an introduction to the study of international security. It considers examples from history and addresses contemporary issues, while introducing and evaluating the political theories that have been used by scholars to explain those events. The principal goal of the course is to develop a general set of analytical approaches that can be used to gain insight into the nature of world politics - past, present and future. The first section introduces key conceptual issues and review main theoretical approaches in the field. The second section addresses specific issues in international security such as war, military doctrines, alliances, crisis, deterrence, grand strategy, and proliferation. **(Offered: Fall 2025)**

## Religion Courses

### **RELG H106 INTRODUCTION TO ISLAM (1.0 Credit)**

*GT H*

**Division:** Humanities

**Domain(s):** A: Meaning, Interpretation (Texts); B: Analysis of the Social World

This course is a general survey of the religion of Islam, encompassing history, beliefs, sacred texts (Qur'an and ?adith) and their interpretation, religious law, Sufism, philosophy, art, and science. Particular attention is given to Muslim practice and to Islam as a total way of life. Salient topics include modernity and modernism; statism, nationalism and imperialism; as well as gender, sexuality, marriage, and the family.

**(Offered:** Spring 2026)

### **RELG H110 SACRED TEXTS AND RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS (1.0 Credit)**

*Anne McGuire*

**Division:** Humanities

**Domain(s):** A: Meaning, Interpretation (Texts); B: Analysis of the Social World

An introduction to Religion through the close reading of selected sacred texts of various religious traditions in their historical, literary, philosophical, and religious contexts.

### **RELG H150 SOUTH ASIAN RELIGIOUS CULTURES (1.0 Credit)**

**Division:** Humanities

**Domain(s):** B: Analysis of the Social World

An introductory course covering the variegated expressions of Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Islam, and Sikhism in South Asia.

### **RELG H202 THE END OF THE WORLD AS WE KNOW IT (1.0 Credit)**

*Naomi Koltun-Fromm*

**Division:** Humanities

Why are people always predicting the coming endtime? This course will explore the genre of apocalypse, looking for common themes that characterize this form of literature. Our primary source readings will be drawn from the Bible and non-canonical documents from the early Jewish and Christian traditions. We will use an analytical perspective to explore the social functions of apocalyptic, and ask why this form has been so persistent and influential.

### **RELG H212 JERUSALEM: CITY, HISTORY AND REPRESENTATION (1.0 Credit)**

*Naomi Koltun-Fromm*

**Division:** Humanities

**Domain(s):** A: Meaning, Interpretation (Texts)

An examination of the history of Jerusalem as well as a study of Jerusalem as religious symbol and how the two interact over the centuries. Readings from ancient, medieval, modern and contemporary sources as well as material culture and art.

### **RELG H259 GENDER AND SEXUALITY IN ISLAMIC TEXTS AND PRACTICES (1.0 Credit)**

*GT H*

**Domain(s):** B: Analysis of the Social World

This course introduces students to the different views of gender and sexuality in Islamic thought, and situates these views within Muslim histories and societies. We will draw on primary sources, historiographical work, ethnographies of Muslim societies, fiction, poetry, and play. One major focus will be on homosexuality in Islam and Muslim societies. In the course of this examination we will also have a chance to question what "homosexuality" is and whether this term can be applied cross-culturally and cross-religiously. To think critically about homosexuality in Islam will thus compel us to reconsider homosexuality and Islam at once.

**(Offered:** Spring 2026)

## Visual Studies Courses

### **VIST H277 MEDIA AND THE MIDDLE EAST (1.0 Credit)**

*Zeynep Sertbulut*

**Division:** Social Science

**Domain(s):** B: Analysis of the Social World

What can we learn about the Middle East by examining media? What can we about media by studying institutions of production and practices of consumption in the Middle East region? In this course, we will read ethnographies of media from the Middle East and look at and listen to media. We will explore cases from different countries, from Egypt to Syria, Turkey to Afghanistan, from Lebanon to Palestine/Israel. Crosslisted: VIST. Pre-requisite(s): 100-level course in social sciences, or humanities. Lottery Preference: Senior anthropology students have a priority to take the class.