Middle Eastern Studies and Islamic Civilization

The broad goal of this concentration is to provide students with an opportunity to engage in the interdisciplinary study of the Middle East and the broader Islamic world. The concentration helps to cultivate in students:

- A basic familiarity with the culture, politics, religion, philosophy, literature, economy, and geography of both the Middle East and the wider Islamic world;
- An understanding of some of the major theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of both the Middle East and the Islamic world;
- An appreciation of the social, political, and cultural diversity/complexity of the Middle East and the Islamic world;
- A sympathetic understanding of a relevant worldview or cultural perspective different from their own;
- A capacity to engage thoughtfully and constructively in potentially difficult dialogues regarding some of the more contentious issues affecting the region/civilization (e.g., U.S. intervention in Iraq, the Arab-Israeli conflict); and
- Knowledge of a language that is spoken natively by people of the Middle East or Islamic world.

Given that students and faculty approach the study of Middle East and Islamic civilization from a variety of disciplinary perspectives, the program permits students to complete this concentration in conjunction with a wide array of majors. The program promotes breadth by requiring that students complete courses (in several departments) dealing with both the Middle East and the wider Islamic world; it promotes depth by requiring a capstone project focused on a relevant topic.

**Faculty**

**Andrew Overman**, program director and professor of Classical Mediterranean and Middle East, is the Harry M. Drake Distinguished Professor in the Humanities and Fine Arts. He specializes in religion, culture, and ethnicity in the Greco-Roman world, having earned a PhD at Boston University. He has written widely on the development of Judaism and Christianity in the Roman world, the interaction between cultures and races within the Roman Empire, diaspora Judaism, and archaeology of the Roman world. He teaches the courses Pagan Christians and Jews: India and Rome; Introduction to Archaeology; and Greek language courses. He directs Macalester's archaeological excavations in Israel, which began in 1999.

**Mahnaz Kousha**, professor of sociology, specializes in the sociology of race, ethnicity, and immigration, and sociology of the family. Kousha’s latest publication, *Voices from Iran: The Changing Lives of Iranian Women*, explores intimate family relationships between parents and daughters within the context of broader sociocultural changes during the last three to four decades. Her current work is an attempt to explore issues regarding men, women’s gender roles, and family relationships. She is a member of the board of directors and co-founder of the journal *Critique: Critical Studies of the Middle East*, and co-organizer of the annual conference “Life and Politics in the Middle East.”

**Andrew Latham**, professor of political science, teaches courses on international politics, comparative foreign and defense policy, and international security. His research includes the changing nature of war, the social construction of the landmine ban, and various issues related to Canadian foreign policy.

**David Chioni Moore**, associate professor of international studies and English, focuses on the literatures and cultures of the Black Atlantic world, with interests in both Africa and African America. He maintains allied interests in postcoloniality, the post-Soviet world, and globalization. He edited Martin Bernal’s 2001 *Black Athena Writes Back*, is currently completing an edition of Langston Hughes’ 1934 *A Negro Looks at Soviet Central Asia*, and has published a score of articles and two dozen reviews in journals such as *Callaloo, Diaspora, Frontiers, Genre, FMLA, Research in African Literatures, and Transition*.

**Khaledoun Samman**, professor of sociology, specializes in world historical comparative sociology, urban sociology, globalization, the sociology of religion, and classical and modern sociological theory. He received his BA from George Washington University in Washington, D.C., and completed his PhD at Binghamton University in New York. He is the author of *Cities of God and Nationalism: Mecca, Jerusalem and Rome as Contested World Cities*. His book *The Clash of Modernities: The Islamist Challenge to Arab, Jewish, and Turkish Nationalism* expands upon the line of reasoning advanced in *Cities of God*, analyzing nationalist discourses of Kernalists, Zionists, Arab nationalists, and contemporary Islamists in the context of the colonial encounter with European and American racial discourses. He also co-edited a book with Mazhar Al-Zo’by, *Islam and the Orientalist World-System*.

**Beth Severy-Hoven**, professor of Classical Mediterranean and Middle East, has a PhD from the University of California–Berkeley and is a specialist on Rome in the age of Augustus. She also has degrees from Oxford University and Bryn Mawr College and has taught in Rome at the Intercollegiate Center. She teaches the courses Women, Gender, and Sexuality in Ancient Greece and Rome; Greek Myths from Troy to Hollywood; and The Roman World; as well as Greek and Latin courses. She is the director of the popular January in Rome program.
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Joëlle Vitiello, professor of French and francophone studies, specializes in twentieth-century French literature and culture. She teaches contemporary French culture, cinema (French, North African, and Sub-Saharan African), Haitian literature and culture, and francophone literatures. Recent publications include articles on Haitian writers and artists, representations of friendship in literature, and representations of violence in contemporary literature. Her research interests include the study of colonial French representations and their legacies, and postcolonial identities in the francophone world.

Brett Wilson, assistant professor of religious studies, teaches courses on Islam, The Qur’an (Koran), and atheism. His research focuses on Islam in Turkey and the Ottoman Empire with particular interest in print history, translation studies, and modern understandings of Muslim identity.

Courses
Atheism Past and Present
Comparative Muslim Cultures
Hebrew Bible
Images of Women in the Middle East
Introduction to Islam: Formation and Expansion
Islam and the West
Islamic Civilizations
Islamic Readings in Arabic
Modern Islam
Pagans, Christians and Jews in Classical Antiquity: Cultures in Conflict
The Politics of Fear
Politics of the Middle East
Religion and War in World Politics
U.S. National Security Policy

After Macalester
Alysha Alloway ’17 (Cabin John, Md.) is pursuing a master’s degree in geographic information science at the University of Minnesota and working for the City of St. Paul’s Office of Technology and Communications.
Nick Bascuñan-Wiley ’17 (Raleigh, N.C.) is pursuing a PhD in philosophy at Northwestern University.
David Goldstein ’16 (Brookline, Mass.) works for the Defense Department in Washington, D.C.
Margaret McKenna ’16 (Palo Alto, Calif.) is a developmental trainee at Fraser Autism School in Minneapolis.
Kayla Sivak-Reid ’16 (San Diego, Calif.) is an analyst with the Defense Department in Washington, D.C.
Myriem Benkirane ’15 (Casablanca, Morocco) is pursuing a master’s in clinical psychology at the University of Maryland–College Park.
Irene Gibson ’15 (Carmel, Ind.) received a Fulbright research grant to travel to Kuwait.
Salman Haji ’14 (Albuquerque, N.M.) received a Pickering Fellowship and is pursuing a master’s degree in international affairs at American University before beginning work in the foreign service.
Marni Schreiber ’14 (Pittsburgh) is pursuing a master’s degree in Middle Eastern studies at Harvard University and now is director of the City Language School at Amicitia in Fes, Morocco.

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