

## Student Profile

### Katherine Halls



“I’ll admit that I initially decided to study Arabic on a whim - but after a gap-year trip to Palestine, I became hooked! After a tough first year (lots of grammar!), spending time in Egypt gave my studies a real sense of purpose - not to mention many memorable experiences and lifelong friends - and so I really made the most of my final two years. I took up a second language, Hebrew, and the combination of the two subjects was wonderful, both because of the close connection between the languages and because of the chance the course gave me to look at Israeli literature alongside Arabic literature and grapple with their very different perspectives on the modern Middle East. The variety of subjects provides a solid grounding in all things Arabic and Islamic - and despite really battling with my history paper, I cracked it in the end!

Since graduating I’ve started out as a freelance translator, working on theatre, poetry, journalism, film, a bit of (less-exciting) legal stuff (it pays best!) and most recently, a novel. In September I’m starting an MA in translation at Manchester where I hope to train as an interpreter, as well as looking further at literary translation - and then I’ll head back to the Middle East and who knows what’s next after that...Arabic speakers are in serious demand and every day throws up a new opportunity!”

## Studying the Islamic World

There is no single course called Islamic Studies, this is a convenient umbrella term to cover the eight different courses in Arabic, Persian or Turkish, usually in combination with other subjects:

**ARABIC;** Arabic & Islamic Studies (T601) OR Arabic with a Subsidiary Language (T6T9) **PERSIAN;** Persian with a Subsidiary Language (T6TX) OR Persian with Islamic Studies/History (QT96) OR Persian with Islamic Art and Archaeology (QT46)

**TURKISH;** Turkish only (T600), Turkish with a Subsidiary Language (T6TY) OR Turkish with Islamic Art and Archaeology (TQP9)

**EUROPEAN & MIDDLE EASTERN LANGUAGES;** Arabic, Turkish, Persian OR Hebrew with a European language (please see course codes and full combinations on p.74 of the latest prospectus).

For more information please visit the Faculty of Oriental Studies website: [www.orinst.ox.ac.uk](http://www.orinst.ox.ac.uk)

For the latest University of Oxford prospectus and information on fees and scholarships please contact: Undergraduate Admissions Office, University Offices, Wellington Square, Oxford, OX1 2JD. Tel. 01865 288000.

Email: [undergraduate.admissions@admin.ox.ac.uk](mailto:undergraduate.admissions@admin.ox.ac.uk) or visit [www.admissions.ox.ac.uk](http://www.admissions.ox.ac.uk)

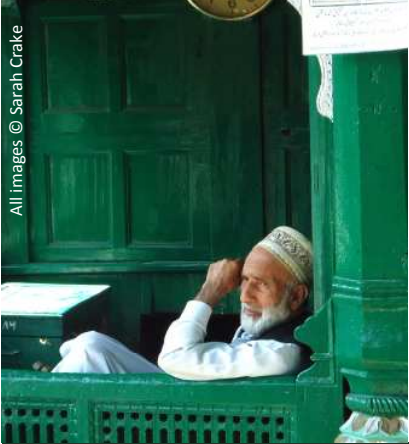


# Arabic

## at Undergraduate Level

Faculty of Oriental Studies





## Why study Arabic?

*“Most employers are looking for something unusual and Arabic is certainly that! It’s a major world language spoken by around 250-300 million speakers, so it’s bigger than European languages, and it certainly is an unusual degree to have on your CV. After leaving Oxford, quite a lot of people have gone into journalism or the civil service, and many more end up doing a job that involves the region. The basis of everything is the language – and learning Arabic is almost entirely what students do in the second year out, so they can get to a point where they are able to speak Arabic with ordinary people. Even as late as the fourth year, students still receive language tuition, but it’s really a means to an end, the end being the*

# Arabic at Oxford

Arabic is the main language of the band of countries running from Morocco to Iraq and is one of the main subjects taught within the Faculty of Oriental Studies. Learning Arabic provides a deeper insight into the hugely important role of the Arab World today. Arabic is also the prime language of Islam and is the essential key to understanding this great world religion, a fascinating and complex history and vast cultural riches. The B.A course in Arabic is not narrow and vocational. It aims to place linguistic proficiency in its proper cultural and religious perspective. The objectives of the course are: to give students a thorough grounding in the written and spoken language and to equip students with a knowledge of the history and culture of Arabs and Islam, partly through secondary literature, but mainly by exposing them to

selected original writings, prose and poetry, ranging from pre-Islamic times to the present century. Within the course there are opportunities for the specialised study of fields such as history, literature, art and archaeology, medieval Islamic thought, and the Middle East in modern times. Undergraduates studying for a B.A. in Oriental Studies may choose Arabic with an additional language, or Arabic and Islamic Studies. In addition to these courses, Arabic may also be studied as an additional language as part of other degrees within the Faculty and wider University. It is necessary to pass a Preliminary Examination after three terms. For this examination, students concentrate on acquiring a basic knowledge of the written language, and studying the fundamentals of Islam as a religious and social system and the history of the Arabs and the Islamic community. The course in Arabic is a four-year course, with the second year being spent on an approved course of study in the Middle East. Many students have recently spent their year abroad following the Arabic courses at academic institutes in Damascus, Cairo and Beirut. The syllabuses concentrate on Modern Standard Arabic (both spoken and written) and modern literature. Graduates may go on to find a variety of jobs in some way connected with the Middle East (e.g. diplomacy, journalism, broadcasting, banking and business) which tend to call on both their expertise in Arabic and their knowledge of the area.

*study of literature, history and culture. We do not use secondary sources to teach, so there is a very strong focus on learning the language. It’s essential that you can read Arabic, so that you can study subjects, such as Arabic literature in much more depth.”*

**Professor Clive Holes,  
Khalid bin 'Abdullah Al-Sa'ud Professor  
for the Study of the Contemporary Arab  
World.**

