Bachelor of Arts in Arabic

Course Handbook

Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies

Academic Year 2026-27

Course Co-ordinator – Professor Christian Sahner

This handbook applies to students who, in Michaelmas 2026, are starting their course (for information relating to the FPE), or are entering the Final Honour School (for information relating to the FHS). The information in this handbook may be different for students starting in other years.

The Examination Regulations relating to this course are available here. If there is a conflict between information in this handbook and the Examination Regulations then you should follow the Examination Regulations. If you have any concerns please contact the Senior Academic Administrator, Edmund Howard (edmund.howard@ames.ox.ac.uk).

The information in this handbook is accurate as at Michaelmas Term 2026. However, it may be necessary for changes to be made in certain circumstances, as explained here. If such changes are made the department will publish a new version of this handbook together with a list of the changes and students will be informed.

General faculty-wide information can be found in the General Undergraduate Handbook.

This Handbook

The handbook sets out the basic framework for the BA in Arabic. You should consult the current edition of the Examination Regulations for information regarding your course. The information in this handbook should be read in conjunction with:

- the Faculty's general Undergraduate handbook;
- the Examination Conventions and Rubrics;
- the Examination Regulations;
- the University Student Handbook
- your college handbook.

If there is a conflict between information in this handbook and the Examination regulations, then you should follow the Examination regulations.

Comments and criticism of the handbook are always welcome; they should be sent to the Director of Undergraduate Studies or the Senior Academic Administrator, Edmund Howard.

Version history

1	October 2026	Original publication
2	November 2026	New options added pp. 24 and 30. Option sign-up process updated p. 31.

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Introduction

This handbook includes information relating to the BA in Arabic, and the study of Arabic as part of the BA in European and Middle Eastern Languages. It also includes information for students in the BA in Religion and Asian and Middle Eastern studies focusing on Islam with Arabic.

Information relating to the study of Arabic as a subsidiary language can be found in the AMES UG Subsidiary Languages Handbook for this year.

The aims of the BA **Arabic** are:

1. to give you a thorough grounding in written and spoken Modern Standard Arabic;
2. to introduce you to selected texts in both classical and modern Arabic;
3. to provide you with a general knowledge of the historical development of Middle Eastern and Muslim cultures and societies;
4. to enable you to deepen your knowledge of literature, history, religion or learn another discipline through a Further and a Special Subject;
5. to develop your general skills of description, interpretation and analysis of literary, historical, religious and cultural material.

The aims of the BA in EMEL and BA in RAMES are detailed in the corresponding handbooks for those degrees.

BA Arabic: Course Outline

Year 1 (First Preliminary Examination)

Arabic Prelims comprise three written examination papers of 3 hours each plus one Oral/Aural examination.

- Arabic I: Translation and Precis into English
- Arabic II: Comprehension, Composition and Grammar
- Arabic III: Oral/Aural Examination
- Islamic History & Culture

Students will take 10 hours of language classes per week, as detailed below and will also be expected to prepare for these classes and consolidate their learning in their own time. The course integrates the four language skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking in Modern Standard Arabic. Periodic tests are set and are intended to provide feedback on your progress.

The Islamic History and Culture paper covers the Middle East from Late Antiquity to the present, provides exposure to different disciplines, and is taught through lectures and tutorials. You will write a total of 10 essays (4 in each of Michaelmas and Hilary Terms and 2 in Trinity Term).

The exam regulations for Prelims can be found here.

Year 2

You will spend Year 2 (approximately September to June) studying Arabic in the Arab world, on a course approved by the Faculty Board. All students currently attend an approved course in Jordan or Tunisia.

Information on the centres for Arabic language study is available from the Year Abroad Coordinator, currently Dr Husam Haj Omar, and from returning students. Please also refer to the Year Abroad handbook which can be found on the Student Hub's Handbooks page (SSO required).

Addresses are given below. You must finalise plans for your year abroad, in consultation with the Year Abroad Coordinator, early in Trinity Term, Year 1. **You must have passed Prelims in order to attend the Year Abroad.**

Addresses of centres offering courses recognised by the Faculty Board (Please note that the possibility of studying at each centre is pending faculty review each year).

Institut français du proche-orient (I.F.P.O), Amman,
Jabal Amman
3, Ibrahim A. Zahri Street
Amman 11183
Jordan
Tel: +962 (0)46 111 71

Qasid Institute
22 Queen Rania Street next to Mukhtar Mall
Tel: +962 6 515 4364
E-mail: info@qasid.com

Bourguiba Institute of Modern Languages (IBLV)
47 Avenue de La Liberté,
Tunis 1002, Tunisia
Tel: +216 71 832 418
E-mail: iblv@iblv.rnu.tn

Years 3 and 4 (Final Honour School)

In your third year, on your return from the Year Abroad, you may either continue with Arabic as your only language or you may take a subsidiary language along with Arabic.

All students will broaden and deepen their command of written and spoken Modern Standard Arabic and will begin to acquire an overview of Arabic literature from the seventh to the seventeenth centuries, of twentieth-century and contemporary Arabic literature and of the historical and cultural development of Middle Eastern and Islamic societies.

BA Arabic students will submit a dissertation and take a total of nine examinations in Trinity Term of Year 4, for a total of ten papers at FHS.

Arabic	**Arabic with a subsidiary language**
Compulsory papers: **1.** Arabic Unprepared Translation into English and Comprehension **2.** Composition in Arabic **3.** Arabic Oral/Aural Examination **4.** Arabic Literature **5.** Islamic History 570-1500 **6.** Islamic Religion **7.** Dissertation Options within Arabic: **8.** Further Subject Option **9-10.** Special Subject Option	Compulsory papers: **1.** Arabic Unprepared Translation into English and Comprehension **2.** Composition in Arabic **3.** Arabic Oral/Aural Examination **4.** Arabic Literature **5.** Islamic History 570-1500 **6.** Islamic Religion **7.** Dissertation A Subsidiary Language: **8-10.** Three papers in a subsidiary language

Students should note that not all Further Subject, Special Subject, or subsidiary language options may be available in a given year.

All BA Arabic students, whether taking Arabic sole or Arabic with a subsidiary language, will study the following compulsory FHS papers:

- Arabic Unprepared Translation into English and comprehension
- Composition in Arabic
- Arabic Oral/Aural Examination
- Arabic Literature
- Islamic History, 570 – 1500
- Islamic Religion
- Dissertation

Arabic sole

If you continue with **Arabic as your only language, the degree will be called "BA Arabic"**.

In addition to the compulsory papers above, you will take the following three papers:

- In Y3, a Further Subject
- In Y4, a Special Subject examined in two papers (a three-hour examination and an extended essay).

These are selected from the options listed in this Handbook. In your third year, there will be a meeting to discuss your choice of Further Subject and Special Subject. The course coordinator and other tutors will be available then to advise you on your choice of papers.

Students should note that not all Further Subjects and Special Subjects may be available in a given year.

Arabic with a subsidiary language

If you take a **subsidiary AMES language** (see the list below for permitted options), your degree will list both languages, e.g. **BA Arabic with Persian.**

In addition to the compulsory papers listed above, you will take three papers in the additional language and its culture, which will vary according to the subject chosen (please consult the AMES UG Subsidiary Languages Handbook for more details).

In order to take a subsidiary language, you must contact the course coordinator for that language to discuss the availability and practicalities of teaching, and obtain their permission. You should also obtain the agreement of the Arabic course coordinator, and of your college tutor. Candidates wishing to take a subsidiary language would normally be expected to achieve a good 2:1 in the Return from Year Abroad Collection. If candidates score below that, they must contact the course coordinator for Arabic and individual situations will be assessed contextually.

The deadline for requests to take a subsidiary language is 12 noon 31st August, before you start your third year. You must confirm your choice with the AMES Academic Office via email at undergraduate.administrator@ames.ox.ac.uk or by filling the relevant online

form. If you go on to achieve a good 2:1 or above in your Return from Year Abroad Collection your choice will be confirmed by the start of 2nd week Michaelmas Term.

It is your responsibility to contact your college administrator and inform them of the change of degree (from BA Arabic or BA Arabic with Akkadian/Persian/Turkish etc.) so that it can be updated on your official record.

Available subsidiary languages:

- Akkadian
- Aramaic and Syriac
- Classical or Modern Armenian
- Biblical and Rabbinic, Medieval, or Modern Hebrew
- Early Iranian (including Avestan, Old Persian, and/or Middle Persian)
- Hindi/Urdu
- Persian
- Turkish

For more information on the papers taken for these subsidiary languages, please consult the AMES UG Subsidiary Languages Handbook, available on the Student Hub.

If you would like to learn either Latin or Ancient Greek it may be possible to transfer to the Joint Honours course Asian and Middle Eastern Studies with Classics, which would enable you to take one of these classical languages as a subsidiary language.

Students should note that not all subsidiary languages may be available in a given year.

The Dissertation

In Year 4 all BA Arabic students will write a dissertation. EMEL students will write a similar but distinct Bridging Essay (for relevant information, see the Bridging Essay section within the EMEL course outline below.) Hilary Term of Year 4 will normally be devoted to these.

The dissertation is an opportunity to undertake original research on a topic of a student's own choosing. Students ought to begin thinking about their dissertations and supervisors in Trinity Term of their third year, when there will be a workshop on the process, organised by the course co-ordinator.

Students will have 3 tutorials to discuss method, bibliography, and other aspects at the beginning of Hilary term of Year 4, then review what they have come up with near the end of the term with the same tutor. However, it is important to underline that this is the students' project. They will be solely responsible for the final draft, which will not be read by their tutors.

A guide to Undergraduate Dissertations can be found here. Please note that Students may not ordinarily seek supervisors from other Faculties or Departments within the University and if this is done, it is with the input and approval of the course co-ordinators and their

personal tutor. Note that the deadline for the approval of your dissertation title is 12 noon Monday 0th week of Hilary term. Submit your dissertation title by filling the Thesis Title Approval Form which is available on the Student Hub.

The dissertation must be submitted by 12 noon Friday of week 10 of Hilary Term.

Papers for FHS

The exam regulations for FHS can be found here.

The deadline for exam entry is Friday 4th week Michaelmas term of your final year. This is done via Student Self Service.

Be aware that if you enter late or change an option outside of the entry window you will have to pay an additional charge.

Compulsory Papers

These papers are compulsory for students of Arabic and Arabic with a subsidiary language.

EMEL students are required to take all of these papers except for Islamic History 570 – 1500.

RAMES students have different compulsory papers; please look at the Religion and Asian and Middle Eastern Studies section for more details.

Arabic Unprepared Translation into English and Comprehension

Type of Paper	Compulsory Paper (BA Arabic, BA EMEL)
For Examination	Final Honour School
Year of Study	Years 3 and 4
Term Taught	MT, HT, TT
Taught by	Arabic Language Lecturers*

*For further information, please contact Dr Marco Brandl.

This paper is mandatory for students of Arabic as the sole language, Arabic with a subsidiary language, and EMEL.

Description

The course serves language papers 1 and 2 and develops the skills of speaking, writing and listening in Modern Standard Arabic through analysis of a variety of authentic materials, enabling you, for Paper 1 (Arabic Unprepared Translation etc.) to translate from various registers of Arabic into English, and to summarise or otherwise demonstrate comprehension of Arabic passages in English.

Delivery

2 hours of language development per week and bi-weekly tutorials. In year 4 teaching will stop in week 5 of Trinity Term to allow time for exam revision.

Examination

In the examination, students will be asked to translate one piece of Modern Standard Arabic and one piece of pre-modern Arabic into English, to answer questions (in English) on a passage of Modern Standard Arabic and to write a summary of no more than 120 words in English based on a passage of Modern Standard Arabic. Students are advised to look at past papers to familiarise themselves with the examinations. Students taking EMEL have different requirements; please see the EMEL section below.

Textbooks and Grammars

Your **grammar** reference will be:

Abu-Chakra, Faruk. 2018. *Arabic: An Essential Grammar*. London: Routledge.

Your **textbooks** will be:

Year 3

- Brustad, Kristen et al. *Al-Kitaab fii Taʿallum al-ʿArabiyya, Part 3: A Textbook for Arabic*. Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press.

Year 4

- Frangieh, Bassam K. 2005. *Anthology of Arabic literature, culture, and thought from pre-Islamic times to the present*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Composition in Arabic

Type of Paper	Compulsory Paper (BA Arabic, BA EMEL)
For Examination	Final Honour School
Year of Study	Years 3 and 4
Term Taught	MT, HT, TT
Taught by	Arabic Language Lecturers*

*For further information, please contact Professor Christian Sahner and/or Dr Marco Brandl.

This paper is mandatory for students of Arabic as the sole language, Arabic with a subsidiary language, and EMEL.

Delivery

Terms in which language is taught and hours of teaching: Years 3 and 4, through all three terms. 2 hours of language development per week and bi-weekly tutorials. In year 4 teaching will stop in week 5 of Trinity Term to allow time for exam revision.

Examination

In this examination, students will translate one passage (out of a choice of two) of English into idiomatic Modern Standard Arabic and write an essay of no more than 400 words in Modern Standard Arabic responding to one of three prompts. Students are advised to look at past papers to familiarise themselves with the examinations. Students taking EMEL have different requirements; please see the EMEL section below.

Oral/Aural Arabic

Type of Paper	Compulsory Paper (BA Arabic and EMEL)
For Examination	Final Honour School
Year of Study	Years 3 and 4
Term Taught	MT, HT, TT
Taught by	Arabic Language Lecturers*

*For further information, please contact Professor Christian Sahner and/or Dr Marco Brandl.

Delivery

Throughout Years 3 and 4, there are 2 hours per week devoted to spoken Modern Standard Arabic, alternating weekly between aural and oral.

Online oral work prepares students to demonstrate aural comprehension of Arabic and the ability to read aloud in Arabic supplying correct grammatical and other vocalisation, and to present a prepared topic in Arabic and hold a guided conversation on it. The medium of instruction and examination is Modern Standard Arabic, but educated dialect may also be used as appropriate.

Examination

The oral examination in year 4 consists of two sections, a listening test lasting approximately 40 minutes and a conversation test lasting approximately 15 minutes. The topics for discussion will be released 24 hours prior to the exam. Candidates will be required to present and discuss their chosen topic from 3 options, and discussion will proceed to general conversation with the examiners.

Arabic Literature

Type of Paper	Compulsory Paper (BA Arabic and EMEL)
For Examination	Final Honour School
Year of Study	Year 3
Term Taught	MT (Modern), HT (Classical)
Taught by	Sonja Mejcher-Atassi (Modern) Tahera Qutbuddin (Classical)

Description

This **modern component** of the paper highlights the rich legacy of modern Arabic literature from the Nahda in the mid-nineteenth century to the present day through dynamic lectures, seminar discussions, and close readings. Students will analyze set texts in Arabic alongside parallel English translations and secondary critical scholarship in both languages. Coursework emphasizes historical context, social transformation, literary theory, and comparative analysis. Adopting an expansive definition of "text," the syllabus spans diverse creative practices – including life writing, the novel, the short story, the essay, poetry, drama, film, and multimedia storytelling – and engages directly with key Arabic terminology to unpack the synthesis of classical traditions and global trends.

Core authors include, but are not limited to, Ahmad Faris al-Shidyaq, Muhammad al-Muwaylihi, Mayy Ziadah, Taha Hussein, Ghassan Kanafani, Abd al-Rahman Munif, Saadallah Wannous, Elias Khoury, and Iman Mersal. All course materials will be provided on Canvas, and a comprehensive syllabus and weekly schedule will be distributed at the beginning of the term.

Below is a list of background reading students should peruse before the start of the paper:

A. ANTHOLOGIES:

- **Salma Khadra Jayyusi** (ed.), *Modern Arabic Fiction: An Anthology*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2008.
- **Salma Khadra Jayyusi** (ed.), *Modern Arabic Poetry: An Anthology*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1987.
- **Salma Khadra Jayyusi** (ed.), *Anthology of Modern Palestinian Literature*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1992.
- On Salma Khadra Jayyusi, see Palquest here
- For bilingual anthologies and books, see here

B. BACKGROUND READING:

- **Michael Allen** and **Zeina G. Halabi** (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Arabic Literature*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2026.
- **Roger Allen**, *The Arabic Literary Heritage: The Developments of its Genres and Criticism, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press*, 1998.
- **M. M. Badawi** (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature: Modern Arabic Literature*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.
- **Samir Kassir**, *Being Arab* trans. Will Hobson, introduction: Robert Fisk, London: Verso Books, 2006.
- **David Tresilian**, *A Brief Introduction to Modern Arabic Literature*, London: Saqi Books, 2008.

C .SET TEXTS AND TRANSLATIONS (SELECTION):

- **غسان كنفاني،** *أرض البرتقال الحزين* (١٩٥٨)

Translated by Hilary Kilpatrick as "The Land of Sad Oranges" in *Men in the Sun and Other Palestinian Stories* (1999).

- **عبد الرحمن منيف،** *سيرة مدينة* (١٩٩٤)

Translated by Samira Kawar as *Story of a City: A Childhood in Amman* (1998).

- **سعدالله ونّوس،** *حفلة سمر من أجل ٥ حزيران. الأعمال الكاملة* (٢٠٠٤)

Translated by by Robert Myers and Nada Saab as *An Evening's Entertainment of the Fifth of June*. *Sentence to Hope: A Sa'dallah Wannous Reader* (2019).

- **إيمان مرسال،** في أثر عنايات الزيات (٢٠١٩)

Translated by Robin Moger as *Traces of Enayat* (2023).

Showcasing an extraordinarily rich heritage spanning seven centuries and three continents, the **classical component** of the paper introduces major genres of Arabic prose and poetry from the pre-Islamic to the late medieval period, 7th through 13th centuries AD, which laid down conventions in form and style that continue to the present day. It provides a direct window into the culture and thought of the medieval Arabic-speaking world, in which literary productions played an integral part in most aspects of life, social, political, military,

economic, performative, ethical, philosophical, legal, and religious. The paper focuses on key genres—the Qur'an, oration (*khuṭba*), narrative prose (*adab*), Sufi literature, popular literature (1001 Nights), and various subgenres of poetry, including *mu'allaqa*, love and wine, religio-political *qaṣīda*, and mystical odes—from which excerpts from iconic Arabic texts are read and analysed; other genres and texts are read in translation. Classes are a combination of lecture, discussion, and close reading of set texts. For EMEL students who have no prior exposure to Islamic history, it is recommended that you sit in on the lectures on Islamic history in MT and early HT given by Professor Sahner. Please also see the historical background reading recommendations listed below.

Tutorial assignments for both parts of the paper include the further literary analysis of set texts as well as additional primary texts, and discussion of secondary reading, all through student essays.

All set texts for both parts of the paper will be supplied.

Note: This is not the same paper as Additional Arabic: Literary Texts. If you are taking Arabic as a subsidiary language, please see the AMES UG Subsidiary Languages handbook for more information on the papers you will be taking.

Delivery

In Year 3, students will attend 2 weekly hours of class, 3 tutorials, and write 3 tutorial essays, in each of Modern and Classical Arabic Literature (Modern: MT, Classical: HT).

Recommended Readings

Overall reference:

- *Encyclopaedia of Islam* 3rd ed. (*EI3*), Kate Fleet, Gudrun Krämer, Denis Matringe, John Nawas, and Devin J. Stewart, eds. Brill, 2007—; 2nd ed. (*EI2*), P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel and W.P. Heinrichs, eds. 1954-2009. (The most important reference work for the study of Islamic civilization, including Arabic literature.)
- Julie Scott Meisami and Paul Starkey (eds.). *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature.* London; New York: Routledge, 1998 and reprints (2 vols.).
- The Qurʾan in a bilingual edition (many available, in print and online; N. J. Dawood in Penguin Classics is well indexed and easy to use; recent translations include Shawkat Toorawa, *The Devotional Qurʾan;* Muhammad Abdel Haleem, *The Qurʾan*; S.H. Nasr et al, *The Study Quran*).

Recommended anthologies and overviews (Classical):

Available on SOLO, except Irwin and Arberry; read/skim first four ahead of term (all set texts and readings provided on CANVAS).

- Robert Irwin, *The Penguin Anthology of Classical Arabic Literature*, 2006; the exact work with the same pagination is also published as *Night & Horses & the Desert: An Anthology of Classical Arabic Literature*, 2001.

- Geert Jan van Gelder, *Classical Arabic Literature: A Library of Arabic Literature Anthology*, 2013.
- Julia Bray. "Arabic literature" = chapter 4 of *The New Cambridge History of Islam*, vol. 4, ed. Robert Irwin, *Islamic Cultures and Societies to the End of the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 383-413.
- Tahera Qutbuddin. *Arabic Oration: Art and Function*. Brill, 2019.
- A.J. Arberry, *Arabic Poetry: A Primer for Students*, 2010 (reprint of 1965 1st ed.)
- *The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature*. University of Cambridge Press, 1983-2008; multiple editors and volumes.

For social and historical background (Classical):

- Vernon Egger. *A History of the Muslim World to 1750: The Making of a Civilization*. Routledge, 2018. Read ahead of term.
- Hugh Kennedy. *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates*. Third edition. London: Routledge, 2015.
- Roger Allen and Shawkat Toorawa, eds. *Islam: A Short Guide to the Faith*. Eerdmans, 2011.
- Dimitri Gutas. *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture: The Graeco-Arabic Translation Movement in Baghdad and Early ʿAbbāsid Society* (2nd– 4th/8th-10th centuries). Routledge, 1998.

Examination

3-hour written paper in Trinity Term of the final year.

Islamic History 570 – 1500

Type of Paper	Compulsory Paper (BA Arabic only)
For Examination	Final Honour School
Year of Study	Year 3
Term Taught	MT, HT
Taught by	Christian Sahner

Description

This course provides a chronological and thematic introduction to the history of the late antique and medieval Middle East (and neighbouring areas such as the Iberian Peninsula, North Africa, and Central Asia). Its primary goal is to train students to think critically about the emergence of Islam, the foundation of various Muslim states and dynasties, and the surrounding non-Muslim cultures of the region. Discussion classes are focused on the reading of primary sources in Arabic and English, along with key scholarly books and articles. Throughout the twelve-week course, students will write six essays on a variety of topics. These range from the Byzantine and Sasanian empires, to the life of the Prophet Muhammad, the conversion of non-Muslims, relations between Sunnis and Shiʿis, the

Mongol conquest, and Islamic historiography. Arabic set texts and primary texts are supplied and there is a bibliography of secondary reading.

This paper is mandatory for students of Arabic as the sole language and Arabic with a subsidiary language; EMEL students are not required to take this course, but the lectures are recommended.

Delivery

In Year 3, students will attend an hour-long lecture and a two-hour discussion class each week in Michaelmas Term and the first half of Hilary Term, as well as 6 tutorials for which they write 6 essays.

Examination

3-hour written paper in Trinity Term of the final year.

Recommended Readings

- Cook, ed., *The New Cambridge History of Islam*, 2010
- Cook, *A History of the Muslim World*, 2024
- Berkey, *The Formation of Islam: Religion and Society in the Near East*, 2003
- Kennedy, *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates*, 2004
- Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies*, 2014
- Lewis, *The Arabs in History*, 2002

Islamic Religion

Type of Paper	Compulsory Paper (BA Arabic and EMEL)
For Examination	Final Honour School
Year of Study	Year 3
Term Taught	HT, TT
Taught by	Fitzroy Morrissey Nicolai Sinai

Description

This course is an introductory survey of the Islamic religious tradition, especially in Arabic. Lectures will provide an initial overview of important genres, themes, and concepts, while the reading seminars will be devoted to translating and analysing complementary primary sources. Tutorials and associated essays will involve some additional primary texts and current scholarship.

Delivery

In Year 3, students will attend a total of 36 hours of lectures and seminars in Hilary and Trinity Terms and 6 tutorials and write 6 essays.

Examination

3-hour written paper in Trinity Term of the final year.

One-third of the final exam will consist of translation from Arabic into English. The other two thirds of the final examination will consist of essay questions.

Recommended Readings

- Brown, Jonathan A. C. *Hadith: Muhammad's Legacy in the Medieval and Modern World*. Oxford: Oneworld, 2009.
- Morrissey, Fitzroy. *A Short History of Islamic Thought*. London: Head of Zeus, 2021.
- Karamustafa, Ahmet T. *Sufism: The Formative Period*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007.
- Schacht, Joseph. *An Introduction to Islamic Law*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964.
- Sinai, Nicolai. *The Qur'an: A Historical-Critical Introduction*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017.

Further Subjects

Teaching for Further Subjects, usually in weekly classes or seminars with tutorials and essays every other week, is normally given in Trinity Term of Year 3. Exceptions will be noted in the list of options.

Examination for all Further Subjects will be through one three-hour written paper at the end of Trinity Term of Year 4.

In 2025-26, the following Further Subjects will be on offer:

- Art and Architecture in the Early Modern Empires of Islam
- The Global Arabian Peninsula
- The Middle East in the Age of Empire, 1830–1970
- Mountains, Religion, and Revolution
- Qur'an
- Society and Culture in the Middle East
- Sufism
- Writing Middle Eastern Lives

More details on each of these papers are available below.

Further Subject options for 2025/26 will be confirmed by Michaelmas Term 2025.

Art and Architecture in the Early Modern Empires of Islam

Type of Paper	Further Subject
For Examination	Final Honour School
Year of Study	Year 3
Term Taught	TT
Taught by	Günseli Gürel

Description

This paper covers the art and architecture of the early modern period in the eastern Islamic world from the beginning of the fifteenth century to the end of the seventeenth century.

Delivery

Trinity Term, seven weekly classes in Weeks 1–7 + four tutorials for essays.

Weekly discussion sessions in Weeks 1–7 focus on the material presented in pre-recorded lectures, as well as assigned readings, which are made available online in advance. Tutorials are based on four essay topics chosen from a list. Weekly topics may change from year to year.

Recommended Readings

- Sheila S. Blair and Jonathan M. Bloom, *The Art and Architecture of Islam, 1250–1800*, New Haven and London: Pelican History of Art and Yale University Press, 1994.
- Sheila S. Blair and Jonathan M. Bloom, *Islamic Art*, London: Phaidon, 1997.

- Richard Ettinghausen, Oleg Grabar, Marilyn-Jenkins-Madina, *Islamic Art and Architecture 650–1250*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, Pelican History of Art, 2001.
- Markus Hattstein and Peter Delius, *Islam: Art and Architecture*, Cologne: Könemann, 2001.
- Robert Hillenbrand, *Islamic Art and Architecture*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1999.
- Robert Irwin, *Islamic Art in Context: Art, Architecture and the Literary World*, New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1997.
- Fairchild D. Ruggles, *Islamic Art and Visual Culture: An Anthology of Sources*, Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011.

The Global Arabian Peninsula

Type of Paper	Further Subject
For Examination	Final Honour School
Year of Study	Year 3
Term Taught	TT
Taught by	Pascal Menoret

Description

This further subject is an introduction to the study of the contemporary Arabian Peninsula in a global perspective. Western diplomats dubbed Yemen "the Tibet of the Red Sea" on account of its isolation, while Central Arabia was until recently seen as remote and featureless. Yet if arid landscapes tend to dominate the ecology of the Arabian Peninsula, dryness does not equate to isolation. Quite the opposite: Arabia is sometimes described by its inhabitants as a "repellent country" (*mintaqa tārida* or *bilād tārida*) which drives away people in search of a better life. Many who went abroad came back; some founded states in Southeast Asia while others created an empire spanning the Indian Ocean, with its capital in Zanzibar.

The Arabian Peninsula did not wait until British and U.S. oil companies came to its shores for its inhabitants to join wider networks of trade. In the early contemporary period, they trafficked enslaved people from Africa and Asia while exporting dates, pearls, and horses as far as India and North America. Long distance routes were key to the emergence of religious revivals, including Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb's reform movement ("Wahhabism") and, more recently, salafism and the Islamic Awakening of the 20th century.

In sum, contemporary Arabia is defined by the mobility of people, goods, and ideas across its ranges and along its shores: it is a Global Peninsula. This course is an exploration of these mobilities and of how they gave birth to states, markets, creeds, and deeds.

Delivery

Students will attend weekly one-hour lectures followed by one-hour seminar sessions. There will be fortnightly tutorials.

Recommended Readings

- Madawi al-Rasheed and Robert Vitalis (eds.), *Counter-Narratives: History, Contemporary Society, and Politics in Saudi Arabia and Yemen*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2004
- Engseng Ho, *The Graves of Tarim: Genealogy and Mobility across the Indian Ocean*, University of California Press, 2006.
- Matthew S. Hopper, *Slaves of One Master: Globalization and Slavery in Arabia in the Age of Empire*, Yale University Press, 2015.
- Michael Christopher Low, *Imperial Mecca: Ottoman Arabia and the Indian Ocean Hajj*, Columbia University Press, 2020.
- Fahad Bishara, *Monsoon Voyagers: An Indian Ocean History*, University of California Press, 2025.
- Nicholas P. Roberts, *A Sea of Wealth: The Omani Empire and the Making of an Oceanic Marketplace*, University of California Press, 2025.

The Middle East in the Age of Empire, 1830-1970

Type of Paper	Further Subject
For Examination	Final Honour School
Year of Study	Year 3
Term Taught	HT, TT
Taught by	Eugene Rogan

Description

This course will introduce students to the modern history of the Middle East and North Africa, focusing on the social and political history of the Arab world in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. From the occupation of Algiers in 1830 to the partition of the Ottoman empire in 1919, the Arab world struggled to come to terms with its changing position in a new imperial world order. The struggle to establish state sovereignty and national self-determination would prove no easier in the twentieth century. The course emphasises how Arab men and women adapted to changing circumstances and articulated their aspirations. The region will be approached from its 'peripheries' in the Gulf and North Africa, beginning with the changing commercial and political relations between British India and the coasts of the Arabian Peninsula, and between the Maghrib and southern Europe, in the early nineteenth century, and concluding with the independence of the Gulf states in 1971. Along the way, we shall consider the internal transformation and eventual breakup of the Ottoman empire, European colonisation of North Africa, the emergence and ambiguities of Arab nationalism, the struggle over Israel and Palestine, and the Suez war, the Algerian revolution, and the 'Black September' expulsion of the PLO from Jordan.

Delivery

In Hilary Term of Year 3, students will attend 8 hours of lectures. In Trinity Term of Year 3, students will attend 4 tutorials and write 4 essays.

Mountains, Religion, and Revolution

Type of Paper	Further Subject
For Examination	Final Honour School
Year of Study	Year 3
Term Taught	TT
Taught by	Christian Sahner

Description

This Further Subject explores the mountainous peripheries of the early Islamic empire, with special emphasis on North Africa, Syria, and Iran. In this paper, we will see how the empire faced tremendous difficulties in conquering mountains; how it depended on the cooperation of local elites, who jealously guarded their independence, to control these areas; how, once the empire began to fragment in the eighth and ninth centuries, mountains gave rise to some of the earliest independent Muslim dynasties; and how mountain communities resisted integration and domination by clinging to old religions (chiefly Christianity and Zoroastrianism) or by embracing forms of Islam premised on political and/or theological opposition to the imperial authorities (chiefly Shiʿism and Kharijism).

Along with its regional focus, this paper explores the origins of several religious groups who still play a major role in North Africa and the Middle East today, including the Maronites, Ibadis, Ismaʿilis, Druzes, Zaydis, and Nusayris (ʿAlawis). The major themes of the paper are geography, empire, and religion and as such, there will be occasional forays into other places and periods of world history where similar phenomena can be seen.

Delivery

Students will attend weekly classes as well as fortnightly tutorials. The classes will involve close reading of primary sources in Arabic.

Recommended Readings

- Patricia Crone, *Preindustrial Societies: The Anatomy of the Premodern World*, 2009
- Heinz Halm, *The Empire of the Mahdi: The Rise of the Fatimids*, 1996
- Xavier de Planhol, *The World of Islam*, 1959
- Wilferd Madelung, "The Minor Dynasties of Northern Iran," in *The Cambridge History of Islam, Volume 4*, 1975
- Kamal Salibi, *A House of Many Mansions: The History of Lebanon Reconsidered*, 1988

Qur'an

Type of Paper	Further Subject
For Examination	Final Honour School
Year of Study	Year 3
Term Taught	TT
Taught by	Nicolai Sinai

Description

This Further Subject will allow students to explore the Qur'anic corpus and its interpretation by later Muslims, going in much greater depth than the Islamic Religion paper.

The paper will begin by reviewing recent debates on the controversial question of where and when the Qur'anic corpus originated and achieved textual closure. We will then turn to a detailed, textually based study of some of the Qur'an's principal theological doctrines and themes, such as eschatology (the end of the world and the afterlife) and monotheism. Throughout, we will pay some attention to how the later Islamic tradition has interpreted and, arguably, creatively transformed foundational Qur'anic concepts – for instance, by extending the idea of *shirk* (meaning the illicit "association" of other beings with God) to include not only the outright worship of deities other than Allāh but also various spiritual flaws exhibited by nominally Muslim believers.

Delivery

Students will attend weekly classes combining informal lectures and tutorial discussions. They will write four essays over the course of the term.

Recommended Readings

- Durie, Mark. *The Qur'an and Its Biblical Reflexes: Investigations into the Genesis of a Religion*. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2018.
- Neuwirth, Angelika. *The Qur'an and Late Antiquity: A Shared Heritage*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019.
- Reynolds, Gabriel S. *Allah: God in the Qur'an*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020.
- Sinai, Nicolai. *The Qur'an: A Historical-Critical Introduction.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017.

Society and Culture in the Middle East

Type of Paper	Further Subject
For Examination	Final Honour School
Year of Study	Year 3
Term Taught	HT, TT
Taught by	Walter Armbrust

Description

Society and Culture in the Middle East is an undergraduate version of the graduate option Social Anthropology of the Middle East. The paper surveys anthropological literature on the region, touching on both "classic" ethnography and works published within the last few years. Social anthropology, identical with "cultural anthropology" as it is often called in the United States, is predicated on a long and often critical engagement with both a method ("fieldwork," or "participant observation") and a concept ("culture"). Readings touch on longstanding preoccupations of anthropology such as family, kinship, gender and religion, as well as more contemporary topics such as anthropology of nationalism, the state, neoliberalism and revolution. Vernacular language materials relevant to the scholarly literature can be provided. These include films, television shows and music, mostly in

Egyptian colloquial (in a few instances available with subtitles); students may also find it beneficial to link anthropological themes to literature.

Delivery

In Hilary Term Students will attend weekly lectures delivered jointly by Professor Armbrust and colleagues in the School of Anthropology and Museum Ethnography. Four tutorials and essays can be done in Hilary Term in conjunction with the lectures, or in Trinity Term. Students should attend the entire 8-week lecture series in Hilary Term whether they do the tutorials in Hilary Term or in Trinity Term. Students will be expected to write an essay for each tutorial.

Sufism

Type of Paper	Further Subject
For Examination	Final Honour School
Year of Study	Year 3
Term Taught	TT
Taught by	Fitzroy Morrissey

Description

This paper offers students the opportunity to concentrate deeply on Sufism, the mystical dimension of Islam. Special attention will be given to the philosophical Sufism of the later Middle Ages, particularly the Sufi metaphysics of Ibn al-ʿArabī and his followers. We will read extracts from *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* and its commentaries, assess the impact of Ibn ʿArabian thought in the Arab and Persianate worlds in the late medieval and early modern periods, and consider the relationship between this kind of philosophical Sufism and philosophy, *kalām*, and the law.

Delivery

The paper will be taught through eight seminar-style lectures, with an emphasis on the close reading of primary sources in Arabic, and four tutorials, for which students will prepare essays.

Writing Middle Eastern Lives

Type of Paper	Further Subject
For Examination	Final Honour School
Year of Study	Year 3
Term Taught	TT
Taught by	Sonja Mejcher-Atassi

Description

Discover the power of personal real-life narrative: This paper introduces students to life writing at the intersection of modern Arabic literature and the cultural and social history of the modern Arab world. Rather than offering a dense historical overview, this paper zooms in on specific texts from the late Ottoman period to the present day. These case studies serve as unique windows into larger literary and historical movements.

Throughout the term, students will explore several key questions: What defines life writing, and how does it intersect with classical Arabic, modern Arabic, and world literature? How does personal narrative challenge or complement traditional historiography? Who narrates Middle Eastern lives, and what do these stories reveal about the region? In what ways does life writing counter Western media misrepresentations by restoring human faces and names to histories often reduced to numbers. How do personal journeys construct and shape our perception of the world?

Course materials feature diverse selections from autobiographies, biographies, memoirs, diaries, and letters in both Arabic and English translation alongside relevant academic writing across literary studies and the social sciences.

Delivery

Students will attend weekly two-hour classes as well as fortnightly tutorials. The classes will involve close reading of primary sources in Arabic and English translation.

Recommended Readings

• Muhsin J. al-Musawi, Arabic Disclosures: The Postcolonial Autobiographical Atlas, Notredam, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2022.

• Robin Ostle, Ed de Moor, and Stefan Wild (eds.), Writing the Self. Autobiographical Writing in Modern Arabic literature, London: Saqi Books, 1998.

• Laila Parsons, "Some thoughts on biography and the historiography of the early 20th-century Arab World," Journal of the Canadian Historical Association, 21.2 (2010): 5–20.

• Al-Qadi, Wadad, “In the Footsteps of Arabic Biographical Literature: A Journey, Unfinished, in the Company of Knowledge.” Journal of Near Eastern Studies, 68.4 2009: 241–252.

• Sherene Seikaly, “How I Met My Great-Grandfather: Archives and the Writing of History,” Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East 38.1 (2018): 6–20.

• Salim Tamari, Mountain Against the Sea: Essays on Palestinian Society and Culture, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009.

Special Subjects

Teaching for Special Subjects will normally be given in Michaelmas Term of Year 4. The type and amount of teaching and tariff of written work varies between subjects but normally consists of weekly lectures and 6 tutorials with associated essays.

- Anthropology of Arabia
- Art and Architecture in the Age of the Caliphates (ca. 622-1000)
- Islam and the Study of Religion
- Islamic Law
- Mass Media in the Middle East (not available in 2026-27)
- The Politics of the Maghreb

Special Subjects will be examined as two papers:

a. One extended essay of no more than 6,000 words
b. One three-hour written paper sat at the end of Trinity Term of Year 4

The extended essay is due on the last Friday before the beginning of HT; the list of questions is published at the end of MT Week 4.

Anthropology of Arabia

Type of Paper	Special Subject
For Examination	Final Honour School
Year of Study	Year 4
Term Taught	TT
Taught by	Pascal Menoret

Description

Western travelers, political agents, and journalists have often reduced Arabia to a vast desert where Islam originated in the 7th century and oil was struck in the 20th century. This class builds on forty years of field research conducted by Saudi, Malaysian, Norwegian, U.S. American, and French anthropologists to deconstruct received wisdoms and understand the societies and cultures of the Arabian Peninsula on their own terms. The class will also introduce students to anthropological methods, including participant observation, thick description, and archival research. After a general introduction to the study of the Arabian Peninsula, students will be trained in thinking anthropologically about gender relations, urban spaces, poetry and nomadism, genealogy and tribalism, environment and conservation, labor relations, and race.

Delivery

Students will attend weekly one-hour lectures followed by one-hour seminar sessions, as well as fortnightly tutorials.

Recommended Readings

- Unni Wikan, *Behind the Veil in Arabia: Women in Oman*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982.
- Fredrik Barth, *Sohar: Culture and Society in an Omani Town*, Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1983.
- Saad Abdullah Sowayan, *Nabati Poetry: The Oral Poetry of Arabia*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2022 [1985].
- Nadav Samin, *Of Sand or Soil: Genealogy and Tribal Belonging in Saudi Arabia*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015.
- Natalie Peutz, *Islands of Heritage: Conservation and Transformation in Yemen*, Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2018.
- Andrea Wright, *Between Dreams and Ghosts: Indian Migration and Middle Eastern Oil*, Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2021.
- Amelie Le Renard, *Western Privilege: Work, Intimacy, and Postcolonial Hierarchy in Dubai*, Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2021.

Art and Architecture in the Age of the Caliphates (ca. 622-1000)

Type of Paper	Special Subject
For Examination	Final Honour School
Year of Study	Year 4
Term Taught	MT
Taught by	Umberto Bongianino

Description

The course explores the architecture and material culture of the first four centuries of Islam through the study of mosques, palaces, calligraphy, and coinage. Essay topics include: the formation of Islamic art and architecture under the Umayyads; the archaeology of early Islam; Umayyad elite establishments and palatial iconography; numismatics, epigraphy, and administration; Abbasid Samarra and Tulunid Egypt; early Quranic calligraphy and illumination; early Islamic Ifrīqiya and the Aghlabids; The Umayyad Caliphate of Córdoba.

Please contact Dr Umberto Bongianino for the full syllabus and other queries.

Delivery

In Michaelmas Term of Year 4, students will attend weekly seminars at the Khalili Research Centre, write fortnightly essays, and sit four tutorials.

Recommended Readings

See the list for the Art and Architecture Further Subject above.

Islam and the Study of Religion

Type of Paper	Special Subject
For Examination	Final Honour School
Year of Study	Year 4
Term Taught	MT
Taught by	Nicolai Sinai

Description

The concept of religion is notoriously difficult to define and has emerged as a heavily contested category in recent debates. Some authors go so far as to argue that the concept serves to conceal substantial theological commitments that ought to have no place in descriptive historical scholarship or that it indefensibly subjects non-Western cultures to an alien conceptual matrix. Islamicate culture provides a fascinating test case for the question of whether the notion of religion is indeed nothing more than a construct of modern Western discourse, as maintained, e.g., in Brent Nongbri's 2013 monograph *Before Religion*. Beginning with the Qur'an, Muslims confronted a rich array of existing religious communities and traditions, including not only Judaism and Christianity but also Iranian religions such as Manichaeism and Zoroastrianism as well as the rich cultic and theological life of India. Muslim scholars also took a keen interest in the rituals of pre-Islamic Arabian polytheism, which served as an effective counterfoil to Qur'anic monotheism. The hypothesis to be examined throughout this paper is that from this wide range of exposure emerged the most conceptually sophisticated and empirically rich efforts at a descriptive account of human religion prior to the 19th century.

The paper will begin by discussing some recent publications that problematise the concept of religion and will then survey the gestation of this concept in modern European thought and review how 19th-century Western scholars taxonomised the religion of Islam. From roughly Week 4 onwards, we will be studying a number of pre-modern Islamic texts that engage with the extraordinary religious plurality of the Middle East and may be taken to presuppose or articulate different understandings of religion as an analytically identifiable sphere of human culture. These case studies include the Qur'an, Arabophone philosophers such as al-Fārābī (d. ca. 950) and the Jewish thinker Maimonides (d. 1204), the polymath al-Bīrūnī (d. after 1050) and his work on Indian religion, and al-Shahrastānī's (d. 1153) celebrated *Book of Religions and World Views* (Kitāb al-Milal wa-l-Niḥal).

Delivery

This paper will be taught in Michaelmas Term of Year 4. Students will attend weekly classes combining informal lectures and tutorial discussions. They will write six essays over the course of the term.

Recommended Readings

- Abbasi, Rushain. 2021. "Islam and the Invention of Religion: A Study of Medieval Muslim Discourses on *Dīn*." *Studia Islamica* (2021) 116: 1–106.
- Nongbri, Brent. *Before Religion: A History of a Modern Concept*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013.
- Smith, Jonathan Z. "Religion, Religions, Religious." In Jonathan Z. Smith, *Relating Religion: Essays in the Study of Religion*, 179–196. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004.
- Smith, Wilfred Cantwell. *The Meaning and End of Religion*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991 (originally published New York: Macmillan, 1963).

Islamic Law

Type of Paper	Special Subject
For Examination	Final Honour School
Year of Study	Year 4
Term Taught	MT
Taught by	Fitzroy Morrissey

Description

The paper offers students the opportunity to gain further exposure to Islamic legal literature following the introduction to Islamic law in the core Islamic Religion module. We will read works of Islamic legal theory (*uṣūl al fiqh*), both Sunni and Shi'i, including passages from the *Risāla* of al-Shāfiʿī (d. 204/820), *Ikhtilāf uṣūl al-madhāhib* by al-Qāḍī al-Nuʿmān (d. 567/1171), and al-Shāṭibī's (d. 790/1388) *al-Muwāfaqāt fī uṣūl al-sharīʿa*. Students will consider, among other topics, the relationship between Islamic legal theory and theology and the ways in which particular jurisprudential principles (e.g. consensus, analogy, and the purposes of the law) are treated in these works. We will also read extracts from works on substantive law (*furūʿ*) and the differences between the schools (*ikhtilāf*), such as the *Muḥallá* of the Ẓāhirī Ibn Ḥazm (d. 456/1064), *Minhāj al-ṭālibīn* of the Shāfiʿi jurist al-Nawawī (d. 676/1277), and the Mālikī Ibn Rushd's (d. 595/1198) *Bidāyat al-mujtahid*. Students will look at how jurists from the different legal schools treat specific questions of substantive law, such as the laws around marriage, interaction with adherents of other religions, and chess. They will be asked to analyse the ways in which the different schools argue for their rules and to consider the influence of historical context on the development of the law. The paper will also cover fundamental questions such as the meaning of "law" in an Islamic context and the extent to which Islam should be considered a "nomocratic" religion.

Delivery

This paper will be taught in Michaelmas term of Year 4. Students will attend weekly seminar-style lectures and tutorials and will write six essays over the course of the term.

Mass Media in the Middle East

Type of Paper	Special Subject
For Examination	Final Honour School
Year of Study	Year 4
Term Taught	MT
Taught by	Walter Armbrust

(not available in MT 2026)

Description

Mass Media in the Middle East approaches the study of media in the region historically and ethnographically, under the assumption that all ways of understanding the modern history

and present condition of the region benefit from an appreciation of socially embedded media practices. The syllabus is structured by an analytic tension between technological and social determinism, and by focusing on "new media moments" in a historical sense: not a presentist fixation on such phenomena as "the al-Jazeera effect" or so-called "Facebook revolutions," but rather the local social, political and cultural effects of modern mechanical media that emerged globally over the past two centuries. Readings examine "orality and literacy," printing (with some attention to its relation to older manuscript traditions), early sound recording, cinema, terrestrial television broadcasting, the audio cassette, satellite broadcasting, and digital media. Most of the scholarly literature can be linked to written or audio-visual media accessible in either the library or from the internet.

Delivery

In Michaelmas Term of Year 4, students will attend weekly lectures, 6 tutorials and write 6 essays.

The Politics of the Maghreb

Type of Paper	Special Subject
For Examination	Final Honour School
Year of Study	Year 4
Term Taught	TT
Taught by	Michael Willis

(Not available in 2027/28)

Political Islam and Islamic Political Movements

Type of Paper	Special Subject
For Examination	Final Honour School
Year of Study	Years 3 and 4
Term Taught	TT Year 3, MT Year 4
Taught by	Raihan Ismail

Description

This special subject explores political Islam and Islamic political movements. It examines the concepts of 'political Islam' and 'Islamism', alongside the intellectual, social and political histories that have shaped their emergence and development. It analyses specific movements, including the Muslim Brotherhood, Ennahda, Hamas and Hezbollah, within their national contexts and across transnational networks. Through these case studies, the option engages with diverse national settings, key thinkers and political figures, and major trends in Islamism and the broader field of Muslim politics.

Delivery

Students will attend weekly lectures in Trinity Term of Year 3 and tutorials in Michaelmas Term of Year 4. They will write six essays over the course of Michaelmas Term.

How to sign up for a Further or Special Subject

The form to submit your choices will be sent to you by email. We will ask you to confirm your Special Subject choices over the Long Vacation before starting Year 4.

You are strongly encouraged to discuss your option choices with the course coordinator and any relevant tutors in advance of submitting the form.

In order to spread the teaching load between staff members, options are nominally capped at 5 students each, although exceptions can be made depending on the yearly student intake, capacity of the individual tutor and the approval of the course coordinator.

Arabic as a subsidiary language

Also known as Additional Arabic or Subsidiary Arabic

Students taking the BA in Egyptology, BA in Assyriology, BA in Hebrew, BA in Persian, BA in Turkish, and BA in Classics and Asian and Middle Eastern Studies may take Arabic as a subsidiary language subject to approval by the course coordinator.

BA in RAMES students focusing on Islam also follow the same curriculum for Arabic language in their first and second years.

Please refer to the AMES UG Subsidiary Languages Handbook for more information.

BA Classics and AMES (with Arabic)

There are two versions of the course:

(a) Classics with Asian & Middle Eastern Studies, a four-year degree in which Classics is your main subject and you take up an Asian or Middle Eastern language in your seventh term (i.e., at the start of the third year); and

(b) Asian & Middle Eastern Studies with Classics, a four-year degree in which your main subject is drawn from Asian & Middle Eastern Studies and you take up Classics in your seventh term (i.e., at the start of the third year).

Students under (a) follow the Classics course up to Honour Moderations (First Public Examination), and for the Final Honour School they can choose Arabic as their subsidiary option (for other languages, see other handbooks).

Students under (a) choosing Arabic will follow the teaching and papers as for 'Arabic as a subsidiary language', described in the AMES UG Subsidiary Languages Handbook.

Students under (b) choosing Arabic as their main subject follow the teaching and papers for the BA in Arabic as described above, but with Classics taking the place of their subsidiary language option.

For all Classics options, see the relevant CAMES and/or Classics handbooks.

BA EMEL with Arabic

The BA in European and Middle Eastern Languages combines the study of Arabic with the study of a Modern European language. The course of Arabic study for EMEL students follows the same course as that for BA in Arabic students, and differs only in the number of papers taken.

Further information on the structure of the degree and the Modern Languages side of the course can be found in the EMEL handbook. Please contact catherine.pillonel@mod-langs.ox.ac.uk for access to the relevant handbook.

The below information relates to the Arabic side of the course.

Year 1

You will take the following FPE (prelims) papers:

- Arabic I: Translation and Precis into English
- Arabic II: Comprehension, Composition and Grammar
- Arabic III: Oral/Aural Examination

For details on teaching for these papers, please see the Papers for Prelims section within the BA Arabic course outline above.

You will not take the paper Islamic History and Culture, but are encouraged to attend all or any of the lectures in this course if they do not clash with their Modern Languages timetable, as they will help in preparation for both the Year Abroad and FHS.

Year 2

You will spend Year 2 studying Arabic in the Arab world, on a course approved by the Faculty Board. Please see the corresponding section in the BA Arabic outline above for more information.

Years 3 and 4

You will take the following Arabic language and discursive papers for your FHS examination:

- Arabic Unprepared Translation into English and comprehension
- Composition in Arabic
- Arabic Oral/Aural Examination
- Arabic Literature
- Islamic Religion
- A Further Subject, chosen from a list of available options OR Islamic History, 570 – 1500
- A Bridging Essay

The two written Arabic language papers and the Arabic oral count as half papers at FHS, but you will follow the same course of study for them as students reading Arabic sole. The two written papers will be shorter; students doing EMEL will take two 1.5-hour papers. For

Paper 1 (Unprepared Translation and Comprehension), EMEL students will translate one piece of Modern Standard Arabic and one piece of pre-modern Arabic into English. For Paper 2 (Composition in Arabic), EMEL students will translate one passage (out of a choice of two) of English into idiomatic Modern Standard Arabic. Students are advised to look at past papers to familiarise themselves with the examinations.

The Bridging Essay

The Bridging Essay is an extended essay on a subject of your own choice that brings together Arabic and the Modern European language around a common topic, co-supervised to the same tariff as a dissertation by a tutor in MML and a tutor in AMES. You will receive 2 hours of tutorials from AMES and 2 hours from Modern and Medieval Languages during Hilary term specifically for your bridging essay.

Please note supervisors should normally come from within the AMES Faculty for the Bridging Essay. In exceptional circumstances, students may be supervised by other individuals, but students must seek and obtain **explicit** permission from both the potential supervisor, the Arabic Course Coordinator and their individual college tutor by the beginning of Michaelmas Term of Y4.

BA Religion and Asian and Middle Eastern Studies

The BA in Religion and Middle Eastern Studies allows students to focus on the study of a particular world religion, taking papers from both the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies and the Faculty of Theology and Religion.

Students wishing to specialise in Islam will take AMES papers and options taught and examined through the Arabic subject group.

For information concerning the Theology and Religion part of the course, please refer to the Theology and Religion Course Handbooks page.

Year 1

For the FPE (Prelims), you will be required to take the following three papers in AMES:

- Translation and precis into English
- Comprehension, composition, and grammar
- Islamic History and Culture

In Year 1, RAMES students join the same Arabic language classes as AMES students taking Arabic as a subsidiary language. Please refer to the AMES UG Subsidiary Languages Handbook for more information.

In Year 1, RAMES students attend the “culture” half of the lectures and tutorials for Islamic History and Culture, a compulsory part of the Year 1 BA Arabic curriculum. For details on teaching for this paper, please see the Papers for Prelims section within the BA Arabic course outline above. Their examination is based on only this half of the paper.

Years 2 and 3

For the Final Honour School, you will be required to take at least 3 and no more than 5 papers in AMES relating to Islam. You will also need to write and submit either a thesis (in T&R), or a dissertation (in AMES).

The following two papers are compulsory:

- Translation from Classical Arabic
- Islamic Texts

In Year 2, RAMES students continue to be taught Arabic language together with AMES students taking Arabic as a subsidiary language. Please note, however, that RAMES students do not take the additional hour of Modern Standard Arabic that Subsidiary Arabic students do; this is because the language examinations for RAMES students focus exclusively on Classical Arabic. In Year 3, RAMES students have a language curriculum specific to RAMES with Islam.

The Islamic Texts paper will be the same as the Additional Arabic: Islamic Texts paper taken by Arabic as a subsidiary language students.

You will also have a choice of up to three additional papers. These will generally be drawn from the Further Subject and Special Subject papers listed in the 'Papers for FHS' section above, and selected for suitability for this course.

For details on which papers are available to RAMES students in any given year, please see the corresponding Course Statement available on the Student Hub or contact the course coordinator for Arabic. Not all papers will be available in all years.

If you chose to do an AMES dissertation, this will count as one of your AMES papers. For more information on the dissertation, please see the corresponding section in the BA Arabic course outline above. The deadline will be the same, 12 noon Friday of week 10 of Hilary Term of your final year.

Language Classes for FHS 'Translation from Classical Arabic'

Taught by Mr Taj Kandoura et al. (Ys 2&3)

Year 2

Arabic Language	Classical: 4 hours per week, MT and HT Modern: 1 hour per week

The second year of Arabic language teaching will correspond to the second year of the Arabic as a subsidiary language syllabus. For more information, please refer to the AMES UG Subsidiary Languages Handbook.

Year 3

Arabic Language	2 hours per week, TT

Year 3 focuses more specifically on texts that are relevant to the final examination; these will be a mixture of set texts and comparable material. Using a wealth of authentic literature, language instruction will focus on two weekly tutorials to translate from Classical Arabic into English, in addition to enhancing students' ability to provide grammatical commentary on these texts as well as to vocalise them.

Teaching in Years 2 and 3 prepares students for the FHS Arabic Language paper, which consists of translation into English from Arabic set texts that are relevant to Islamic Religion. The set texts are taken from Brünnow, Rudolph-Ernst, and Fischer, August, *Chrestomathy of Classical Arabic Prose Literature*, 8th edn., rev. Lutz Edzard and Amund Bjorsnos (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2008).

Collections

Collections are an integral part of the course and are an opportunity for you to assess your learning and identify any areas you may need to work on. Collections are usually sat in person within the Pusey Lane Building Friday of 0th week. The exception to this is the Additional Arabic Language collection which is usually sat in College.

Term	Name	Year	Students
MT	Islamic History C. Sahner	4	Arabic
MT	YA Return M. Brandl, T. Kandoura	3	Arabic/EMEL
HT	Islamic Religion F. Morrissey, N. Sinai	4	Arabic/EMEL
HT	Language M. Brandl	1	Arabic/EMEL/RAMES
HT	Arabic: Composition in Arabic M. Brandl, T. Kandoura	4	Arabic/EMEL
TT	Language M. Brandl	1	Arabic/EMEL/RAMES
TT	Arabic Literature T. Qutbuddin, M. Huang	3	Arabic/EMEL
TT	Additional Arabic Language M. Brandl, H. Haj Omar, T. Kandoura	4	Subsidiary Arabic (in college)
TT	Arabic: Unprepared Translation into English and Comprehension M. Brandl, T. Kandoura	3	Arabic/EMEL

You may also have collections arranged by tutors for your optional papers. Tutors will arrange these collections and inform you in advance.

Recommended Patterns of Teaching (RPT)

Below is an indication of the type and number of teaching hours on this course.

FPE Arabic

For students taking Arabic prelims, including BA Arabic, EMEL, and RAMES, as well as BA Asian and Middle Eastern Studies and Classics (with Arabic as the main subject).

BA Arabic and BA AMES and Classics students will take all four papers. EMEL and RAMES students will only take papers 1-3.

Paper	Term	Faculty		College		Comments
		Lectures	Classes	Tutorials	Classes	*Figures in this table are in hours unless otherwise stated.*
[1.] Translation and Precis into English	MT		80			The listed hours of teaching contribute to all three papers
[2.] Comprehension, Composition, and Grammar	HT		80			
[3.] Oral/Aural Examination	TT		80			
[2.] Islamic History and Culture	MT	16		4		Only for Arabic sole. This paper is not taken by EMEL or RAMES students.
	HT	16		4		
	TT	8		2		
Note: Tutorials are arranged by the Faculty.						

FHS Arabic

For students in the BA Arabic.

Students taking Arabic with a subsidiary language will have the same teaching for all compulsory papers (papers 1 to 7), but will take papers 8 to 10 in their subsidiary language instead. For information on subsidiary language papers, please refer to the handbook corresponding to the AMES UG Subsidiary Languages Handbook.

Paper	Term	Year 3				Year 4				
		Faculty		College		Faculty		College		Comments
		Lectures	Classes	Tutorials	Classes	Lectures	Classes	Tutorials	Classes	*Figures in this table are in hours unless otherwise stated.*
[1.] Arabic Unprepared Translation into English and Comprehension	MT		16				16			The hours of teaching listed contribute to both papers.

[2.] Composition in Arabic	HT		16				16			Teaching stops in Week 5 of TT of Year 4. Students may also have up to an additional 4 hours of language tutorials per term.
	TT		16				16			
[3.] Arabic Oral/Aural Examination	MT		16				16			Teaching stops at the end of Hilary Term of Year 4.
	HT		16				16			
	TT		16							
[4.a] Arabic Literature: Classical	MT									For Classical (Yr 1 TT): lectures and classes (i.e. text readings) are held back-to-back in one two-hour session each week.
	HT	8	8	3						
	TT									
[4.b] Arabic Literature: Modern	MT	16		3						
	HT									
	TT									
[5.] Islamic History, 570 - 1500	MT	24		3						6 tutorials will be offered across Michaelmas and Hilary. The distribution across terms may vary.
	HT	12		3						
	TT									
[6.] Islamic Religion	MT									
	HT	12		3						
	TT	24		3						
[7.] Dissertation	MT									
	HT							3		
	TT									
[8.] Further Subject	MT									Timing and amount may vary for some subjects.
	HT									
	TT		16	4						
[9. and 10.] Special Subject	MT					8		6		Timing and amount may vary for some subjects.
	HT									
	TT									

Note: Tutorials are organised by the Faculty.

In TT of the 3rd year, there will be a workshop on the process of writing the dissertation.

Arabic for FHS EMEL

For students taking Arabic as part of a degree in European and Middle Eastern Languages. These papers are taken in addition to any papers from Modern Languages. Details on Modern Languages papers taken may be found in handbooks published by that Faculty.

Paper	Term	Year 3				Year 4				Comments
		Faculty		College		Faculty		College		
		Lectures	Classes	Tutorials	Classes	Lectures	Classes	Tutorials	Classes	*Figures in this table are in hours unless otherwise stated.*
[1.] Arabic Unprepared Translation into English and Comprehension [2.] Composition in Arabic	MT		16				16			The hours of teaching listed contribute to both papers. Teaching stops in Week 5 of TT of Year 4. Students may also have up to an additional 4 hours of language tutorials per term.
	HT		16				16			
	TT		16				8			
[3.] Arabic Oral/Aural Examination	MT		16				16			Teaching stops at the end of Hilary Term of Year 4.
	HT		16				16			
	TT		16				0			
[4.] Arabic Literature	MT	16		3						6 tutorials will be offered across Michaelmas and Hilary. The distribution across terms may vary.
	HT	16		3						
	TT									
[6.] Islamic Religion	MT									
	HT	12		3						
	TT	24		3						
[7.] Bridging Essay	MT									This figure corresponds to AMES tutorials. Students may receive additional tutorials in ML.
	HT							2		
	TT									
[8.] Further Subject	MT									Timing and amount may vary for some subjects.
	HT									
	TT		16	4						

Note: Tutorials are organised by the Faculty.

The three language papers count as half-papers.

In TT of the 3rd year, there will be a workshop on the process of writing dissertations, to which EMEL students are invited.

Arabic for FHS RAMES

This table corresponds to the Arabic Language teaching you will receive. For optional papers or the AMES dissertation, please refer to the corresponding row in the FHS Arabic table.

Paper	Term	Year 2				Year 3				Comments
		Faculty		College		Faculty		College		
		Lectures	Classes	Tutorials	Classes	Lectures	Classes	Tutorials	Classes	*Figures in this table are in hours unless otherwise stated.*
[1.] Translation from Classical Arabic	MT		32					16		
	HT		32					16		
	TT		32					16		
[2.] Additional Arabic: Islamic Texts	MT		16							
	HT									
	TT		4							

Note:
Tutorials are organised by the Faculty.

For information on the patterns of teaching for Further Subjects, Special Subjects, and an AMES Dissertation, see the corresponding papers on the FHS Arabic table above.

FHS Arabic as a subsidiary language

Please see the AMES UG Subsidiary Languages Handbook for details.

Teaching Staff

- Professor Walter Armbrust, Professor of Modern Middle Eastern Studies (St Antony's)
- Dr Ashraf Abdou, Lecturer in Arabic Language (Wadham)
- Professor Umberto Bongianino, Samir Shamma Associate Professor in Islamic numismatics, epigraphy and material culture (St Cross)
- Dr Marco Brandl, Lecturer in Arabic Language and Islamic Studies
- Professor Dominic Parviz Brookshaw, Soudavar Professor of Persian Studies (Wadham)
- Professor Alain Fouad George, I.M. Pei Professor of Islamic Art and Architecture, Director of the Khalili Research Centre (Wolfson) on leave 2026-27
- Dr Günseli Gürel, Departmental Lecturer in Islamic Art and Architecture
- Dr Husam Haj Omar, Lecturer in Arabic Language (Reuben College)
- Professor Raihan Ismail, His Highness Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani Professor in Contemporary Islamic Studies (St Antony's)
- Mr Taj Kandoura, Lecturer in Arabic Language (Pembroke)
- Dr Ohad Kayam, Lecturer in Arabic Language
- Dr Juan de Lara, Teaching Associate, Khalili Research Centre
- Professor Sonja Mejcher-Atassi, Professor of Modern Arabic Literature (St John's)
- Professor Pascal Menoret, Khalid bin Abdullah al Saud Professor for the Study of the Contemporary Arab World (Magdalen)
- Professor Laurent Mignon, Professor of Turkish Literature (St Antony's)
- Professor Fitzroy Morrissey, Associate Professor in Islamic Studies and Law (Pembroke)
- Professor Aslı Niyazioğlu, Associate Professor of Ottoman History (Exeter)
- Professor Tahera Qutbuddin, Abdulaziz Saud AlBabtain Laudian Professor of Arabic (St John's) (on leave from HT 2026-TT 2027)
- Professor Eugene Rogan, Professor of Modern Middle Eastern History (St Antony's)
- Professor Christian Sahner, Associate Professor of Islamic History (New College)
- Professor Nicolai Sinai, Professor of Islamic Studies (Pembroke)
- Dr James Weaver, Departmental Lecturer in Classical Arabic Literature
- Professor Zeynep Yürekli-Görkay, Associate Professor of Islamic Art and Architecture, (Wolfson)

Examination Regulations

The Examination Regulations relating to this course are available at https://examregs.admin.ox.ac.uk/ If there is a conflict between information in this handbook and the Examination Regulations then you should follow the Examination Regulations.

Examinations and Assessment

For details on the assessment of individual AMES papers, please refer to the exam rubrics and conventions available on the Student Hub.

Deadlines

Date	Year of Course	Event	How
Monday 9th Week Trinity Term	1	Provisional start date of the First Public Examinations.	
Long Vacation 31st August	2	Requests to take a subsidiary language	Obtain the conditional agreement of your college tutor and the Course Coordinators of Arabic and of the subsidiary language. You must also inform the administration team by sending an email to undergraduate.administrator@ames.ox.ac.uk
Monday 6th Week Hilary Term	3	Deadline for applications for approval for Further Subjects and Special Subjects.	Options Approval Form. For any questions, contact academic.administrator@ames.ox.ac.uk
Thursday 4th Week Michaelmas Term	4	Deadline for exam entry.	Via Student Self Service
Friday 4th Week Michaelmas Term	4	Question paper for Special Subject extended essays available from the Faculty Office.	Via Inspera
12 noon Monday 0th Week Hilary Term	4	Deadline for applications for approval for AMES dissertation titles.	Online Thesis Title Approval Form will be sent to you by email.
12 noon Friday 0th Week	4	Deadline for submission of Special Subject	Via Inspera

Hilary Term		extended essays.	
12 noon Friday 10th Week Hilary Term	4	Deadline for submission of AMES dissertation.	Via Inspera
0th Week Trinity Term	4	Oral examinations for Arabic language.	
Monday 7th Week Trinity Term	4	Provisional start date of the Final Honour School examinations.	

Student Information and Support

Student Hub

The Student Hub is an ongoing project to provide a live online version of the handbook, together with more detailed course information and further resources such as forms and exam conventions, as well as archived documents from previous years. You can also access the Student Hub through the top bar of the Faculty Website, through the '**NEW Faculty Intranet**' button. You will need to log in using your SSO.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

In accordance with our Statement of Values, the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies is committed to creating a teaching, learning, and research environment in which every member of our community – at every academic level from undergraduate to senior academic, and among library and administrative staff – can achieve their full professional potential without discrimination on the basis of age, disability, gender, marriage or civil partnership, nationality, pregnancy or parenthood, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation.

We welcome suggestions for making our courses more diverse and inclusive. In general, you are encouraged to tell us if you see any ways in which the courses or this handbook might be improved. Staff and students are welcome to contact the Equality and Diversity team with any suggestions or concerns:

Arabic, Persian, and Turkish Group Equality and Diversity Representative: TBC

Faculty Equality and Diversity Officer: TBC

Welfare and Support

Our community aims to encourage and support all students. The student experience at Oxford offers lots of opportunities for you to thrive, grow, and look after your own wellbeing, but we know that sometimes there can be stresses and challenges too.

We want to give you the agency to navigate welfare support, and to make your own decisions. This includes by:

- Keeping in touch with your College and Department, and letting them know if you need help
- Seeking support when needed
- Supporting your fellow students
- Registering with Disability Advisory Service for structured support if you have a disability

Should you have any concerns, or for guidance and support, please do not hesitate to contact the following people:

Disability Coordinators: Thomas Hall and Edmund Howard

Welfare Contact: Edmund Howard

Harassment Advisers: Leyla Najafzada

Details of the range of sources of support available in the University are available from the Oxford Students website, including in relation to mental and physical health and disability.

More information about the support and resources available can be found in the general Undergraduate Handbook and on the Faculty and University websites.