

# Course Handbook: Arabic

Faculty of Oriental Studies

**Academic Year 2018-19**

*Version 1*

*The Examination Regulations relating to this course are available at <https://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/examregs/>. 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 ([academic.administrator@orinst.ox.ac.uk](mailto:academic.administrator@orinst.ox.ac.uk)).*

*The information in this handbook is accurate as at Michaelmas Term 2018, however it may be necessary for changes to be made in certain circumstances, as explained at [www.graduate.ox.ac.uk/coursechanges](http://www.graduate.ox.ac.uk/coursechanges).*

*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.*

## Introduction

### Arabic with Islamic Studies and History

This course aims:

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 Islamic cultures and societies;
4. to develop in general your skills of description, interpretation and analysis of literary, historical, religious and cultural material.

### Arabic with a subsidiary language

This course aims:

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 Islamic cultures and societies;
4. to give you a firm grounding in a second language with which Arabic is, in some way and to a greater or lesser extent, historically and culturally linked, and to introduce you to the literature of that language;
5. to develop in general your skills of description, interpretation, and analysis of literary, historical, religious, and cultural material.

## The Nature of Tutorials, Guidance, and Criticism ('Feedback')

### Forms of guidance and criticism

The University's Education Committee describes the purpose of a tutorial as being 'to develop an individual student's capacity to think in depth about a subject area, and to operate with growing confidence within its techniques and methodologies, with the expectation that the process will promote increased understanding of the discipline for both tutor and student.' It's not a lecture; it's not a crib session for exams. It's a joint exploration of a problem. You should come away having looked at the topic from angles you had been only dimly aware of before, articulated precisely what you had perceived only vaguely before. The most common preparation for tutorials is of course the essay, standardly about 2,000 words. That will be where you initially grapple with the material, see what you know and don't know, and so on.

During your course you will receive guidance and criticism of your work in various formats, including:

- Comments on your written work.

- Your tutors' immediate responses to your performance in tutorials and seminars.
- OxCORT reports – this is an online reporting system which requires each of your tutors to complete a report on your work at the end of each term.
- Academic Review – not at Oriental Studies but your college; this is a chance to discuss your progress generally as demonstrated by OxCORT reports and other communications, as well as your own assessment of your performance.
- Marks and comments on collections at the beginning of each term.

### **Your role in relation to guidance and criticism**

You should get as much as you can out of each of these forms of guidance and criticism. One of the joys of studying at Oxford is that you get direct access to a variety of academic experts who have all chosen to work in the intensive tutorial system. It is also the case that tutors in Oxford have a fair degree of autonomy, so that they are able to choose the teaching system that they think works best for them and for you while they are teaching you. BUT you are not just a passive recipient of this process. As with everything in Oxford, what you get out will be proportionate to what you put in. So if some criticism is unclear, or you are not sure how to respond to it in order to improve your work in the future, or you think it is inaccurate or unfair in some way, do discuss it further with the tutor in question. If you do this in a polite and respectful spirit of genuine inquiry, the tutor in question should be happy to respond. If you believe this is not the case, take it up next with the course co-ordinator, the Director of Undergraduate Studies, or your moral tutor in your college.

When you receive criticism, it is therefore worth asking yourself these questions:

- Do I understand the tutor's comments?
- When I look back at my work, can I see what has given rise to the comments?
- Can I think of something I could do to respond to those comments and improve my work on a subsequent occasion?

If you have tried improving your work without success, or you have had the same piece of feedback before and are unsure why you keep receiving it, do take this up with either the tutor who gave it or the course co-ordinator (if different).

### **Comments on written work**

In 1999, the following criteria for marking exams were announced:

'A candidate's performance in the Final Examinations of the Final Honour School (FHS) of Oriental Studies will be assigned by the examiners to one of six classes: first, upper second, lower second, third, pass, and fail. This single result will be computed from the marks assigned to individual 'papers' (units of examination). These may consist of passages for translation, essay-type questions, oral examinations, take-home examinations, or theses. The marks assigned to the component parts of a paper will be used to compute the mark given to the paper. Written papers will be considered equipollent unless otherwise stated in Examination Regulations.

'Naturally the criteria of assessment vary according to the nature of the paper and the subject. In translation from English into an Oriental language, the qualities sought are grammatical and lexical correctness, idiomatic construction, and stylistic propriety. Fluency is also sought when speaking is being tested. In translation from an Oriental language into English the examiners will look for accuracy, transparency and stylistic propriety. The fundamental criteria for the assessment of essay-type examination answers are whether the question that has been set has been answered and, if so,

how well. The latter will depend on a demonstration of knowledge of the subject, the strength and clarity of the argument and the presentation of appropriate evidence. The criteria for assessing a dissertation are how well a topic has been researched and how clearly the results have been presented. Generally speaking, marks are awarded pro rata for incompletely answered questions. Optional exercises and vivas can only improve or leave unaffected a final average.'

These criteria for marking essays should be essentially the same as those used by your tutors during the course. In more detail, here are six key criteria:

1. Attention to the question asked;
2. Knowledge and understanding of the topic and context;
3. Comprehensiveness and accuracy;
4. Structure;
5. Identification of more than one line of argument;
6. Critical analysis and engagement with academic literature.

When your tutorial essay is complete, but before you hand it in, check it over yourself to see whether you think it complies with these criteria. i.e.

- a) Have you answered the specific question, or just written everything you know about the subject?
- b) Are there any areas in your writing where it was clear that you weren't sure how things fitted together, or is it evident from what you've written that you're on top of the subject?
- c) Have you left anything out? Did you cite earlier scholarship without checking that it exactly supports your point?
- d) Does your work make a logical argument? Could someone summarise in a line what your point is? Have you put in lots of 'signposts' for the reader or are they going to get lost in the mass of what you've written?
- e) Is your argument one-sided or have you outlined the opposing arguments before explaining why you find them unpersuasive and why you have taken the line you have?

If after your tutorial you are unsure how you could have improved on any of the six criteria listed above, do your tutor's comments help you to identify the answer? If not, please do ask your tutor specifically for guidance on what you could do to improve.

Ideally if you follow this process you should see your work improve from week to week even though you are studying different topics, and you should certainly see your work improve when you come to go over the same topic again in preparation for collections and exams.

Written work should be returned to students within a week of the deadline. If work persistently comes back late, you might communicate with the tutor involved, the course co-ordinator, or the Chairman of Undergraduate Studies.

### **Collections**

Collections are similar in format to exams in Schools. When conducted at the Oriental Institute, as they usually are in Arabic, sub fusc is not called for. A more important difference is that collections are normally diagnostic. They have some predictive value as to marks in exams to come and they offer some practice in sitting exams (as by requiring students to write by hand for three hours straight) but they do not contribute to those marks. University policy is for collections to be marked within three weeks, but marks will usually come sooner than that. You may ask your tutors for further comments on collections, but do not expect extra tutorials.

### **Set texts**

Most papers involve 'set texts'. These are passages on relevant topics in the relevant languages that students should be prepared to translate in exams (commonly for a third of the overall mark). Copies will normally be available on WebLearn. They will normally be reviewed in lectures, but there is no requirement that teachers translate every word that may appear on a collection or exam. They ensure that, as students learn about a wide range of topics, they also get a close feel for the primary sources for the study of those topics.

## **Course Structure and Content**

### **Preliminaries (First year)**

Arabic Prelims comprise three written examination papers of 3 hours each, plus an oral examination:

1. Translation and précis into English.
2. Comprehension, composition, and grammar.
3. Oral/aural examination.
4. Islamic history and culture.

You will prepare for Papers 1, 2 and 3 by attending intensive language instruction for about 10 hours per week, backed up by thorough preparation in your own time. The course integrates the four language skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking in Modern Standard Arabic. Weekly tests are set, and are intended to provide feedback on your progress. Paper 4 is taught principally through lectures and tutorials. You will receive an hour's tutorial every other week. In Michaelmas, Hilary, and weeks 1-4 of Trinity Term, you will receive one one-hour of lecture a week on History. In Michaelmas and weeks 1-4 of Trinity Term, you will receive one one-hour lecture a week introducing Islam and other aspects of Middle Eastern culture. In Hilary Term, you will receive one one-hour lecture weekly on Middle Eastern literature. You will write a total of 10 essays over the year (4 in each of Michaelmas and Hilary Terms, and 2 in Trinity Term).

### **Second year: Your Year Abroad**

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. Information on the centres is available from the teaching staff and from returning students. Addresses are given below. You must finalise plans for your year abroad early in Trinity Term, Year 1. The current co-ordinator for the year abroad is Mohamed-Salah Omri.

*Addresses of centres offering courses recognised by the Faculty Board:*

*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  
Fax: (+691) 1 420 295  
Contact: see <http://www.ifporient.org/en/node/135>*

*Qasid Institute*

22 Queen Rania Street next to Mukhtar Mall

Tel: +962 6 515 4364

Fax: +962 6 515 4352

Email: [info@qasid.com](mailto:info@qasid.com)

## **Final Honour School (Third and Fourth year)**

In Years 3 and 4 you will broaden and deepen your command of written and spoken Modern Standard Arabic (papers 1-3), and, in three further core papers (papers 4-6), you will begin to acquire a broad knowledge respectively of pre-modern and modern Arabic literature and of the historical and cultural development of Islamic societies (students reading Arabic as a subsidiary language will acquire this knowledge until about 1500). If you are reading Arabic with Islamic Studies and History, you will, in addition, take a Further Subject (to be examined as one paper), and a Special Subject (to be examined as two papers), both chosen from a wide range of options. Finally, you will write a dissertation (for dissertation guidance, see Appendix 1).

Teaching for the Further Subjects is normally given in Trinity Term of Year 3 (note exceptions). Most options present opportunities to explore topics touched on in the core course (papers 4-6). The Further Subject is normally taught by means of 1 or 2 hours of classes per week and, over the whole term, 4 hours of tutorials and 4 essays.

Teaching for the Special Subject will normally be given entirely in Michaelmas Term of Year 4. This will usually involve 16 hours of classes, as well as 6 hours of tutorials and 6 essays. Hilary Term will normally be devoted to your dissertation. The Special Subject will be examined as two papers, one of which will be a take-home paper on a topic chosen from a list made available midway through the term.

Teaching for Further and Special Subjects listed below may be unavailable in a particular year. Additional papers may become available. There will be a special meeting near the end of January when third-years meet with teachers and hear about available papers. Readers of EMEL should find this meeting useful in choosing their option papers.

Students reading a subsidiary language choose one of the nine available languages. If you are interested in how languages work grammatically, the experience of studying any of these languages alongside Arabic will be rewarding and stimulating in itself. In terms of literature and culture, too, you will find that both the connections and the contrast between your two areas of study enrich your understanding of both.

### **Arabic with Islamic Studies and History**

1. Arabic Unprepared Translation into English and Comprehension
2. Composition in Arabic
3. Spoken Arabic
4. Arabic Literature
5. Islamic History
6. Islamic Religion
7. Further subject
8. and 9. Special Subject (examined in two

### **Arabic with a Subsidiary Language**

1. Arabic Unprepared Translation into English and Comprehension
2. Composition in Arabic
3. Spoken Arabic
4. Arabic Literature
5. Islamic History
6. Islamic Religion
7. Dissertation

papers, essay and exam paper)  
10. Dissertation

8. - 10. A subsidiary language from the list below:
- Akkadian.
  - Aramaic and Syriac.
  - Armenian.
  - Classics (in the Honour School of Classics and Oriental Studies; either Latin or Greek).
  - Hebrew.
  - Hindi/Urdu.
  - Persian.
  - Turkish.

The following tables show which papers are normally taught when:

### Year 3

#### Michaelmas

*Papers 1-3 (Arabic lang.)*

*Paper 4 (Arabic lit.)*

*Paper 5 (Islamic History)*

#### Hilary

*Papers 1-3 (Arabic lang.)*

*Paper 4 (Arabic lit.)*

*Paper 5 (Islamic History)*

*Paper 6 (Islamic Religion)*

#### Trinity

*Papers 1-3 (Arabic lang.)*

*Paper 6 (Islamic Religion)*

*Paper 7 (Further Subject)*

### Year 4

#### Michaelmas

*Papers 1-3 (Arabic lang.)*

*Papers 8 & 9 (Special sub.)*

#### Hilary

*Papers 1-3 (Arabic lang.)*

*Paper 10 (Dissertation)*

#### Trinity

*Papers 1-3 (Arabic lang.)*

*Revision*

## Dissertation

The dissertation is an opportunity to undertake original research on a topic of your own choosing. You will have one or two tutorials to discuss method, bibliography, and other aspects at the beginning of Hilary Term, then review what you have come up with near the end of the term with the same tutor. However, it is mainly your project to run with. You will be solely responsible for the final draft, which will not be read by your tutors.

For deadlines, word limit, and other rules, see the Dissertation Guidelines below (Appendix 1).

### Further Subjects:

- I. Hadith
- II. Muslims and Others in Abbasid Story-Telling
- III. Modern Arabic literature

- IV. Anarchy and Religion in the Islamic Middle East
- V. Aspects of Islamic Art, Architecture and Archaeology
- VI. Sufism
- VII. Topics in the Study of Language With Reference to the Middle East
- VIII. The Middle East in the Age of Empire, 1830–1970
- IX. A Modern Islamic Thinker (e.g. Sayyid Qutb, Mohamed Talbi, Rashid Rida)
- X. Society and Culture in the Middle East
- XI. The Ethos of the *jāhiliyya* in the *Mu'allaqa* of Imru'al-Qays
- XII. Harems, Homes and Streets: Space and Gender in the Middle East
- XIII. Short-term Further Subject, as approved by the Board of the Faculty of Oriental Studies

### Special Subjects:

- I. Qur'an
- II. Theology and Philosophy in the Islamic World
- III. The Transformation of Ideas from the *jāhiliyya* to Early Islam in Early Arabic Poetry
- IV. Topics in Islamic Law
- V. A Special Subject from the Field of Islamic Art, Architecture, Numismatics or Archaeology, 500-c. 1900
- VI. The Ottomans, Islam and the Arab World 1300-1566
- VII. Medieval Sufi Thought
- VIII. Themes in Modern Arabic Literature
- IX. Modern Islamic Thought in the Middle East
- X. Topics in the January 25<sup>th</sup> Revolution
- XI. Nahda: Arabic Prose and Cultural Activism in the 19th Century
- XII. A Short-Term Special Subject, as approved by the Board of the Faculty of Oriental Studies

**NB: Not all Further Subjects and Special Subjects are available every year.**

## Teaching Staff

The following list gives most of the members of the Faculty who teach Islamic Studies. Messages can also be left in the pigeonholes in the foyer of the Institute. A fuller list may be found on the [Oriental Studies website](#).

[Dr Walter Armbrust](#), Associate Professor in Modern Middle Eastern Studies (St Antony's)

Dr Abdou Ashraf (in post January 2019), Instructor in Arabic (College tbc)

[Professor Marilyn Booth](#), Khalid Bin Abdullah Al Saud Professor for the Study of Contemporary Arab World (Magdalen)

[Professor Julia Bray](#), Abdulaziz Saud AlBabtain Laudian Professor of Arabic (St John's)

[Dr Dominic Parviz Brookshaw](#), Associate Professor in Persian Literature (Wadham)

Dr Emine Cakir, Instructor in Turkish (St Benet's)



[Dr Stephanie Cronin](#), Department Lecturer in Persian Studies (St Antony's)

Mazyar Ghiabi, Department Lecturer in Persian Studies (Wadham)

[Dr Otared Haidar](#), Instructor in Arabic (Wadham)

Dr Husam Haj Omar, Instructor in Arabic (College tbc)

[Professor Edmund Herzig](#), Soudavar Professor of Persian Studies (Wadham)

[Dr Nadia Jami](#) – on leave 2018-23 Senior Instructor in Classical and Modern Arabic; Senior Researcher DocuMult Project Khalili Research Centre (St Benet's; St Peter's)

[Professor Jeremy Johns](#), Professor of Islamic Archaeology and Director of the Khalili Research Centre (Wolfson)

[Mr Tajalsir Kandoura](#), Instructor in Arabic (Pembroke)

[Dr Homa Katouzian](#), Iran Heritage Foundation Research Fellow (St Antony's)

[Professor Christopher Melchert](#), Professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies (Pembroke)

[Dr Laurent Mignon](#), Associate Professor in Turkish (St Antony's)

[Professor Mohamed-Salah Omri](#), Professor in Modern Arabic Language and Literature (St John's)

[Dr Philip Robins](#), Associate Professor in the Politics of the Middle East and Faculty Fellow (St Antony's)

[Professor Eugene Rogan](#), Professor in the Modern History of the Middle East (St Antony's)

Dr Christian Sahner, Associate Professor of Islamic History (St Cross)

[Dr Ahmed Al-Shahi](#), Research Fellow (St Antony's)

Mr Sahba Shayani, Instructor in Persian (Brasenose)

Professor Nicolai Sinai, Professor of Islamic Studies (Pembroke) – on leave 2018-2021

[Dr Luke Treadwell](#), Samir Shamma Associate Professor in Islamic Numismatics (St Cross)

[Dr Elizabeth Tucker](#), Jill Hart Research Fellow in Indo-Iranian Philology (Wolfson)

Professor Alain George, I.M. Pei Professor of Islamic Art and Architecture (Wolfson)

[Dr Michael Willis](#), University Research Lecturer and H.M. King Mohammed VI Fellow in Moroccan and Mediterranean Studies (St Antony's)

[Dr Zeynep Yurekli-Gorkay](#), Associate Professor in Islamic Art and Architecture (Wolfson)

## Compulsory Subjects

### FHS: Arabic Unprepared Translation into English and Comprehension

#### Terms in which it is taught and hours of teaching:

Throughout the six terms of Years 3 and 4, there are 4 class hours per week devoted to improving language skills in modern Arabic, 2 to written Arabic, 2 to spoken and aural, plus one paired tutorial every other week. Through the integrated approach adopted, these classes and tutorials constitute preparation for both papers, "Arabic Unprepared Translation into English" and "Composition in Arabic". Sets of modern Arabic texts are presented for study, which are organised thematically by subject in Year 3, and by text-type in Year 4. The objective is to focus your attention on which parts of the language's inventory of vocabulary and syntactic structures are typically mobilised to serve particular rhetorical purposes.

#### Teaching staff:

Mr Taj Kandoura, Dr Otared Haidar, Dr Husam Haj Omar; Dr Abdou Ashraf

#### Description:

The examination for which lectures, classes, and tutorials in Years 3 and 4 will prepare you consists of four questions, and there is no choice. Questions 1 and 2 involve translation into English of two Arabic passages in prose, one pre-modern, one modern, which may be drawn from any genre. Questions 3 and 4 involve summarising in English, and answering questions on, two long passages of modern Arabic, of a documentary or expository nature.

### FHS: Composition in Arabic

#### Terms in which it is taught:

Years 3 and 4, Michaelmas – Trinity Terms

#### Teaching staff:

Mr Taj Kandoura, Dr Otared Haidar; Dr Husam Haj Omar; Dr Abdou Ashraf

#### Description:

The examination for which the lectures, classes, and tutorials prepare you involves translating into Arabic one of two English prose passages and writing one Arabic essay, of approximately 400 words, from a choice of subjects. The style of modern written Arabic you use in the examination should be appropriate to the subject matter of the piece being translated, and the subject matter of the essay.

### FHS: Spoken Arabic

#### Term in which it is taught and hours of teaching:

Years 3 and 4, two hours per week, cohorts alternating each week between oral classes and aural exercises in the labs.

#### Teaching staff:

Mr Taj Kandoura and Dr Husam Haj Omar.

#### Course description:

In the examination a candidate will normally be required to show competence in the following:

1. Comprehension of passages of text. In this comprehension test, candidates will hear three passages each lasting up to three minutes, the passages being read twice at normal speed. After the readings of each passage, candidates will be given approximately seven minutes to provide written evidence in English that they have understood the passage. This part of the examination will be conducted in a group.
2. Reading aloud of a passage of text, vocalising the grammar.
3. Oral presentation and general conversation of not more than fifteen minutes, based on a choice of topics given one day in advance.

In part (3) of the oral examination, you will ideally produce language that is both fluent and accurate. It is expected that the presentation and discussion will be conducted, substantially, in Modern Standard Arabic. If you wish to integrate colloquial skills in the general discussion in a style similar to that of educated Arabs, that is also acceptable and welcomed.

## **FHS: Arabic Literature**

### **Term in which it is taught and hours of teaching:**

Year 3, MT and HT, 2 weekly lectures in each of Classical and Modern Literature; 3 tutorials + 3 essays in each of Classical and Modern.

### **Teaching staff:**

Professor Julia Bray and tutor(s) (Classical); Professor Mohamed-Salah Omri (Modern).

### **Course description:**

With this paper you will acquire an overview of Arabic literature from the seventh century to the present.

The **Classical** half of the paper is a survey of poetry and prose up to the seventeenth century. The lectures offer close readings of the set texts and put them in their literary and social context. Tutorial assignments include the literary analysis and translation of set texts, discussion of secondary reading, and essays. Topics covered include major poetic genres (mourning poetry and love poetry), developments in life writing and story telling (legends, historiography and the *maqāma*), and women as literary subjects and authors. Set texts are available [here](#).

### **Recommended reading:**

For overall reference (Classical and Modern):

- Julie Scott Meisami and Paul Starkey (eds.). *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*. London; New York: Routledge, 1998 and reprints (2 vols.);
- The Qur'ān in a bilingual edition (many available, in print and online; N. J. Dawood in Penguin Classics is well indexed and easy to use);

For information on authors of Classical set texts:

- Michael Cooperson and Shawkat M. Toorawa (eds.). *Arabic Literary Culture, 500-925*. Detroit; London: Thomson Gale, 2005 (Dictionary of Literary Biography, vol. 311), continued as:
- Roger Allen, Terri de Young, et al. (eds.). *Essays in Arabic Literary Biography, 950-1350*, and Joseph E. Lowry and Devin J. Stewart (eds.). *Essays in Literary Biography, 1350-1850*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2009;

For problems and issues in Classical Arabic literature:

- Julia Bray (ed.). *Writing and Representation in Medieval Islam*. London; New York: Routledge, 2006;

For social and historical background:

- Hugh Kennedy. *The Court of the Caliphs*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2004;
- Hugh Kennedy. *The Prophet and the age of the caliphates*. Third edition. London: Routledge, 2015;
- Adam Mez. *The Renaissance of Islam*. Salahuddin Khuda Bukhsh and D.S. Margoliouth (tr.). Patna: Jubilee Printing and Publishing House, 1937;
- Muhsin Al-Musawi. *The medieval Islamic republic of letters*. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2015.

**The modern component** of this paper is designed to illustrate how modern Arabic literature emerged initially from its classical antecedents such as the *maqāma*, and went on to develop rapidly the themes, genres and language which have made this one of the richest literatures of the post-colonial world. It begins with extracts from two of the pioneers of modernity in modern Arabic prose, Muhammad al-Muwaylihi and Jibran Khalil Jibran, and continues with a selection of short stories and poetry written between 1929 and 1994.

The paper is taught in a combination of lectures and seminar-style classes. They offer close readings of the set texts and put them in their literary and social contexts. Tutorial assignments include the further literary analysis of set texts as well as additional primary texts, and discussion of secondary reading, all through student essays.

All modern Arabic texts will be supplied. Reading lists will be provided in addition to the recommended background reading. Three essays will be written on aspects of the texts and the genres to which they belong.

#### Set texts:

- M. al-Muwaylihi: *Hadith 'Isa ibn Hisham*, حديث عيسى ابن هشام , Chapter 2.
- Khalil Jibran: extracts from '*Ara'is al-muruj* ("Marta al-Baniyya" *مارتا البانية*)
- Mahmud Tahir Lashin: *Hadith al-qarya* حديث القرية
- Yusuf Idris: *Bayt min lahm* بيت من لحم
- Zakariyya Tamir: *Shams saghira* شمس صغيرة
- Ghada al-Samman: *Qat`ra's al-qitt* قطع رأس القط
- Abu 'l- Qasim al-Shabbi (*Fi zill wadi'l-mawt*) في ظل وادي الموت
- Salah 'Abd al-Sabur (*Hajama al-tatar*) هجم التتار
- Khalil Hawi (*al-Bahhar wa'l-darwish*) البحار والدرويش

## **FHS: Islamic History**

### **Term in which it is taught and hours of teaching:**

Year 3, 1 hour of lecture and 2 hours of discussion class in weeks 1-8 of Michaelmas Term and Weeks 1-4 of Hilary Term, + 6 tutorials and essays

**Teaching staff:** Dr Christian Sahner

**Course description:** This paper provides a chronological and thematic introduction to the history of the pre-modern Middle East (including Spain and North Africa) from Late Antiquity until ca. 1500. Its primary goal is to train students to think critically about the rise of Islam, the formation of classical Islamic civilisation, 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 paper, students will write six essays on a variety of topics. These range from the Byzantine and Sasanian legacy in Islam, to the life of the Prophet Muhammad, the conversion of non-Muslims, tensions between Sunnis and Shi'is, the Mongol conquest, and Islamic historiography.

### **Recommended reading:**

- Cook, ed., *The New Cambridge History of Islam*, 2010
- 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

## **FHS: Islamic Religion**

### **Term in which it is taught and hours of teaching:**

Year 3, Hilary and Trinity Terms: 36 hours of lectures and seminars, 6 tutorials and essays

### **Teaching staff:**

Professors Christopher Melchert and Nicolai Sinai

### **Course description:**

This paper is an introductory survey of the Islamic religious tradition, especially in Arabic. Lectures will provide an initial overview of the main genres of Islamic religious literature and their historical development, while the reading seminars will be devoted to translating and analysing set texts from the Qur'an, Hadith, and other genres. Tutorials and associated essays will involve some additional primary texts and current scholarship.

### **Recommended reading:**

- Brown, Jonathan A. C. *Hadith: Muhammad's Legacy in the Medieval and Modern World*. Oxford: Oneworld, 2009.

- Schacht, Joseph. *An Introduction to Islamic Law*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964.
- Karamustafa, Ahmet T. *Sufism: The Formative Period*. Edinburgh: University Press, 2007.
- Sinai, Nicolai. *The Qur'an: A Historical-Critical Introduction*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017.
- Ernst, Carl W. *The Shambhala guide to Sufism*. Boston, Mass.: Shambhala, 1997.

## Further Subjects

### Hadith

#### Term in which it is taught and hours of teaching:

Year 3, TT, weekly lectures and 4 tutorials

#### Teaching staff:

Professor Christopher Melchert

#### Course description:

Islamic Religion introduced medieval scholarship concerning hadith. Here is an opportunity to explore more deeply. Suggested topics here include the method of identifying weak hadith in Ibn 'Adī al-Qaṭṭān, *al-Kāmil fī al-du'afā'*; the use of Hadith in qur'anic commentary; the use of Hadith in Islamic law; and, finally, the modern authenticity controversy.

#### Recommended reading:

- Berg, Herbert. *The Development of Exegesis in Early Islam: The Authenticity of Muslim Literature from the Formative Period*. Curzon Studies in the Qur'an. Richmond: Curzon, 2000. The first half is a useful review of the authenticity debate.
- Dickinson, Eerik Nael. *The Development of Early Sunnite Hadith Criticism*. Islamic History and Civilization, Studies and Texts, 38. Leiden: Brill, 2001. Chapter 6, on the comparison of *asānīd*, corrects earlier accounts of the Islamic tradition.
- Juynboll, G. H. A. *Muslim Tradition: Studies in Chronology, Provenance and Authorship of Early hadith*. Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilization. Cambridge: University Press, 1983. The first major advance since Schacht and Abbott (not listed here).
- Motzki, Harald. *The Origins of Islamic Jurisprudence: Meccan Fiqh before the Classical Schools*. Translated by Marion H. Katz. Islamic History and Civilization, Studies and Texts, 41. Leiden: Brill, 2002. Chapter 1 is another good survey of the authenticity debate.
- Schacht, Joseph. *The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1950. The next great advance after Goldziher. Sets out the paradigm everybody qualifies or attacks.
- Brown, Jonathan A. C. *Hadith: Muhammad's legacy in the medieval and modern world*. Foundations of Islam. Oxford: Oneworld, 2009. The best textbook, especially strong on scholarship in the High Middle Ages and the difficulties raised by what he calls the Historical Critical Method.

## Muslims and Others in Abbasid Story-Telling

### Term in which it is taught and hours of teaching:

Year 3, TT, up to 16 hours lectures/ classes, to include 4 tutorials and essays.

### Teaching staff:

Professor Julia Bray and tutor(s)

### Course description:

The paper examines areas of intersection between medieval Arabic literature and Byzantine and other Late Antique cultures, with emphasis on the impact of the Arabic “Great Translation Movement” and on imaginative literary responses to it. Set texts will be read in the original Arabic, with further reading both in Arabic and translation. Tutorials will explore recent scholarship on medieval Arabic literature, cultural identity formation, and ideas of intellectual and political authority as developed in literature.

### Recommended reading:

For overall reference (Classical and Modern):

- Julie Scott Meisami and Paul Starkey (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*, London; New York: Routledge, 1998 and reprints (2 vols.);
- the Qur’ān in a bilingual edition (many available, in print and online; N. J. Dawood in Penguin Classics is well indexed and easy to use);

For social, intellectual and historical background:

- Michael Cooperson, “ ‘Arabs’ and ‘Iranians’: The Uses of Ethnicity in the Early Abbasid Period”, in Behnam Sadeghi, Asad Q. Ahmed , Adam Silverstein and Robert Hoyland (eds.), *Islamic Cultures, Islamic Contexts. Essays in Honor of Professor Patricia Crone*, Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2015;
- Dimitri Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture. The Graeco-Arabic Translation Movement in Baghdad and Early ‘Abbasid Society (2nd-4th/8th-10th centuries)*, London; New York: Routledge, 1999;
- Hugh Kennedy, *The Prophet and the age of the caliphates*, third edition, London: Routledge, 2015;
- Louise Marlow, *Counsel for Kings: wisdom and politics in tenth-century Iran*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016;
- Adam Mez, *The Renaissance of Islam*, Patna: Jubilee Printing and Publishing House, 1937;

For the set texts:

- al-Jāhīz, *The Book of Misers*, trans. R. B. Serjeant, Reading: Garnet, 1997 and/or trans. Jim Colville as *Avarice and the avaricious*, London: Kegan Paul, 1999;
- James E. Montgomery, *al-Jāhīz: in praise of books*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013;
- Ibn Faḍlān, trans. James E. Montgomery, *Two Arabic travel books*, New York: New York University Press, 2014;
- al-Tha’labī (d.1035), trs. and annotated William M. Brinner, *‘Arā’is al-majālis fī qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā’ or “Lives of the Prophets” as recounted by Abū Ishāq Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm al-Tha’labī*, Leiden; Boston; Cologne: Brill 2002;
- M. O. Klar, *Interpreting al-Tha’labī’s Tales of the Prophets. Temptation, responsibility and loss*, London, New York: Routledge, 2009.

## **Modern Arabic Literature (the theme offered is subject to change)**

### **Term in which it is taught and hours of teaching:**

Year 3, TT (16 hours lectures, 4 tutorials).

### **Teaching staff:**

Professor Mohamed-Salah Omri

### **Course description:**

The Further Subject on Modern Arabic literature will be organised each Trinity Term around a specific theme, rather than a genre-based approach. For example, in 2016-17 the theme was Literature and Absolute Authority.

The paper will study in detail how literature engaged with authority and rebellion in terms of narrative strategies, language, metaphors and themes. The literary texts themselves include poetry and prose, and cover different periods of time as well as national settings (Tunisia, Morocco, Lebanon, Palestine...). The aim is to trace the changing and the constant elements in literary engagements with the two broad themes through close reading of texts in the Arabic original and in translation, and develop critical, theoretically-informed approaches to the subject. Set texts include Himmish, *majnun al-Hukm* (The Theocrat); Awlad Ahmad (selected poems) in Arabic and some available in English translation; Nawal Saadawi, *Woman at point Zero*.

In addition to contextual lectures, most of the teaching will be in seminar-style classes and based on readings of primary texts as well as theoretical and critical approaches to them and to the theme.

## **Anarchy and Religion in the Islamic Middle East**

### **Term in which it is taught and hours of teaching:**

Year 3, TT, 8 lectures, 4 tutorials plus essays

### **Teaching staff:**

Dr Christian Sahner

### **Course description:**

The history of the medieval Middle East is punctuated by constant rebellions. Many of the most enduring rebellions occurred in regions which lay outside the control of centralized states, including geographically inaccessible areas such as mountains, deserts, and forests. This paper explores the history of these uncontrollable regions and the religions which took root in them. In many instances, inaccessible areas provided havens for non-Muslim communities, who resisted the tide of Islamization emanating from cities and lowland areas. In other instances, when Islam did take root, it was often "dissident" forms which proved most successful, often organized around charismatic leaders with heterodox beliefs. These unique religious communities are usually invisible to the historical record, but they manifested themselves most clearly during moments of unrest against centralized states. This paper is interested in role of geography in the spread of Islam and in the formation of Islamic political culture. Students will explore case studies ranging from Spain, to North Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, Syria, and Iran. They will encounter Christians, Zoroastrians, and other non-Muslims, along with a variety of Islamic sects, including Twelver Shi'is, Nusayri-'Alawis, Druzes, Zaydis, Isma'ilis, and Khariji-Ibadis. They will also consider the medieval Middle East alongside examples from other regions and time periods, including the ancient Roman Empire, colonial Latin America, tsarist Russia, and modern South Asia. More broadly, students will explore the idea of



rebellion and heresy in Islamic thought; the historical geography of the Middle East; conversion; and modern parallels in the Islamic world.

**Further reading:**

- Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, London, 1975
- Richard Bulliet, *Conversion to Islam in the Medieval Period*, Cambridge, MA, 1979
- Patricia Crone, *The Nativist Prophets of Early Islamic Iran*, Cambridge 2012
- Garth Fowden, *Before and After Muḥammad*, Princeton, 2014, esp. 92-126
- James C. Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed*, New Haven, 2009
- Peter Thonemann, "Phrygia: An Anarchist History," In *Roman Phrygia: Culture and Society*, Cambridge, 2013

## **Aspects of Islamic Art, Architecture and Archaeology**

**Term in which it is taught and hours of teaching:**

Year 3, TT, 4 tutorials and essays, plus lectures and/or classes as available.

**Teaching staff:**

Course Co-ordinator: Dr Yürekli-Görkay. Other participating staff: Dr Teresa Fitzherbert, Prof. Jeremy Johns, Dr Luke Treadwell.

Please contact the Course Co-ordinator [zeynep.yurekli-gorkay@orinst.ox.ac.uk](mailto:zeynep.yurekli-gorkay@orinst.ox.ac.uk) to register for this paper.

**Course description:**

This Further Subject offers the opportunity to select one or more aspects of the art, architecture and archaeology of Islamic societies from the formative period until the early modern period. 'Art, architecture and archaeology' is understood in the widest possible sense to include all material and visual culture. Students may choose one or more aspects to complement their interests and other papers, and depending upon the availability of teaching staff in any given year. Contact the Course Co-ordinator (see contact details above) to discuss the aspects on offer.

Tutorials for this Further Subject will be given in Trinity Term of Year Three. Students will normally write four essays for discussion in tutorials in Trinity Term. The Further Subject will be examined by a three-hour written examination.

**Recommended reading:**

To obtain a clearer idea of what the course entails, you may browse the visual and textual resources on the Islamic Art and Archaeology site on WebLearn (<https://weblearn.ox.ac.uk/portal/site/humdiv/orient/iw/iaa/page/home>) and should read one or more of the following:

- 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 Arts*, 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.

## Sufism

### Term in which it is taught and hours of teaching:

Year 3, TT, weekly lectures, 4 tutorials.

### Teaching staff:

Professor Christopher Melchert

### Course description:

Islamic Religion introduced the topic of Sufism. Here is a supplementary survey. Stress will be on the early *zuhd* period, al-Junayd and the crystallization of Classical Sufism in Baghdad, the Sufi biographical tradition, and Sufi practice and terminology. Sufism in Philosophy, the thought of Ibn 'Arabī and his school, and other topics of the later period may be treated, depending on student interest.

### Recommended reading:

- *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new edn., s.n. '*taṣawwuf*', by B. Radtke, and '*zuhd*', by G. Gobillot.
- Ernst, Carl W. *The Shambhala Guide to Sufism*. Boston, Mass.: Shambhala, 1997. If you can look past the title, you should find a very respectable introductory survey.
- Hujvīrī (d. Lahore, 465/1072-3?). *The Kashf al-Maḥjūb*. Translated by Reynold A. Nicholson. E. J. W. Gibb Memorial series 17. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1911.
- Karamustafa, Ahmet T. *Sufism: the formative period*. The New Edinburgh Islamic Surveys. Edinburgh: University Press, 2007. Even better than Ernst but stopping around 1100.
- Al-Qushayrī (d. Tus, 465/1072). *Al-Qushayrī's Epistle on Sufism = al-Risala al-qushayriyya fi 'ilm al-tasawwuf*. Translated by Alexander D. Knysh. Reading: Garnet, 2007.
- Al-Sulamī (d. Nishapur, 1021). *Early Sufi Women*. Edited and translated by Rkia Elaroui Cornell. Louisville, Ky.: Fons Vitae, 1999.

## Topics in the Study of Language With Reference to the Middle East

### Term in which it is taught and hours of teaching:

TT of Year 3, 2-hour lectures weekly for 8 weeks, 4 tutorials (2 in TT, 2 in MT of Year 4), and 4 essays of which one practical assignment to be completed over the summer before MT.

### Teaching staff:

Dr Nancy Hawker

### **Course description:**

The course explores major topics in the study of languages, both as the theories and practices were developed in European and North American academia, and as applied to Arabic and other languages in the Middle East. Students who are especially interested in modern Middle Eastern languages other than Arabic (Berber, Hebrew, Kurdish, Persian, Turkish, etc.) will be offered supplementary readings related to these subjects, but the primary focus of the course is Arabic in its varieties. The readings provide insight into a general theoretical proposition that is tested against the case of language use in the Middle East.

The study of the Middle East has been formed both by traditional “orientalist” versus “nationalist” contentions, and by more modern research, all of which can be consulted in the further readings provided at the beginning of the course.

By the end of the course, students will be able to recognise the various usages of Arabic and other languages in the Middle East. They will be acquainted with the relevant academic debates in sociolinguistics and Middle East studies, and will have learnt how to undertake their own applied analysis of a text or speech. They will gain skills that can be useful also outside academia through the experience of data collection, the different methods of which will be discussed.

### **Recommended reading:**

Recommended basic readings prior to the course:

- Jonathan Owens, "A house of sound structure, of marvellous form and proportion" in *The Oxford Handbook of Arabic Linguistics* ed. by Jonathan Owens, OUP 2013, pp.1-22
- Gerard Van Herk, *What is Sociolinguistics?* Wiley-Blackwell 2012

Readings related to lecture topics (alphabetically):

- Abel-Jawad, H. (2000) "A Linguistic and Sociopragmatic and Cultural Study of Swearing in Arabic" in: *Language, Culture and Curriculum* 13, 2
- Al-Wer, E. and Herin, B. (2011) "The lifecycle of Qaf in Jordan" in: *Langage et société* 4/138
- Avram, A. (2010) "An Outline of Romanian Pidgin Arabic" in: *Journal of Language Contact* 3: 20-38
- Bakir, M. (1986) "Sex differences in the approximation to Standard Arabic: a case study" in: *Anthropological Linguistics* 28: 1
- Cadora, F.J. (1992) *Bedouin, Village and Urban Arabic: An Ecolinguistic Study*. Brill
- Cameron, D., E. Frazer, P. Harvey, B. Rampton and K. Richardson (1992) *Researching Language: Issues of Power and Method*. Routledge
- Chomsky, N. (2002) *On Nature and Language*. Cambridge University Press
- Gordon, E. (1997) "Sex, speech and stereotypes: why women use prestige forms more than men" in: *Language in Society* 26: 47-63
- Hawker, N. (2013) *Palestinian-Israeli Contact and Linguistic Practices*. Routledge. Chaps 4 and 5
- Holes, C. (1993) "The use of variation: A study of the political speeches of Gamal Abd al-Nasir" in: Eid, M. and Holes, C. (eds), *Perspectives on Arabic Linguistics: Papers from the Annual Symposium on Arabic Linguistics. Volume V*. John Benjamins, 13-45
- Ingham, B. (2006) "Language and identity: the perpetuation of dialects" in: Chatty, Dawn, (ed.), *Nomadic Societies in the Middle East and North Africa: Entering the 21st Century*. Brill, 523-538

- Jaffé, A. (2007) "Discourses of endangerment: contexts and consequences of essentialising discourses" in: Duchene, A. and Heller, M. (eds) *Discourses of Endangerment: Interests and Ideology in the Defense of Languages*. Continuum, 57-75.
- : from Jurjaani to Grice" in: Owens, J. and ElGibali, A. (eds) *Information Structure in Spoken Arabic*. Routledge, 20-39
- Kosover, M. (1966) *Arabic Elements in Palestinian Yiddish: The Old Ashkenazic Jewish Community in Palestine, Its History and Its Language*. Rubin Mass
- Milroy, J. and Milroy, L. (1991) *Authority in Language: Investigating Language Prescription and Standardisation*. Routledge
- Omar, M. (2007), *The Acquisition of Egyptian Arabic as a Native Language*. Georgetown
- Owens, J. (2009) "Introduction: The once and future study of information structure in Arabic", Searle, J. (1965) "What is a Speech Act?" in: Black, M. (ed.) *Philosophy in America*. Cornell University Press.
- Thomason, S. G. and ElGibali, A. (1986) "Before the Lingua Franca: Pidginized Arabic in the Eleventh Century A.D." in: *Lingua* 68: 317-349
- Versteegh, K. (1997) *The Arabic Linguistic Tradition*. Routledge
- Wilmsen, D. (2009) "Understatement, euphemism, and circumlocution in Egyptian Arabic: Cooperation in conversational dissembling" In: Owens, J. and ElGibali, A. (eds) *Information Structure in Spoken Arabic*. Routledge, 243-59
- Zuckermann, G. (2008) "'Realistic Prescriptivism": The Academy of the Hebrew Language, its Campaign of "Good Grammar" and Lexpionage, and the Native Israeli Speakers" in: *Israel Studies in Language and Society* 1.1: 135-154.

## The Middle East in the Age of Empire, 1830–1970

### Term in which it is taught and hours of teaching:

Year 3, HT 8 hours lectures, TT 4 tutorials

### Teaching staff:

Professor Eugene Rogan

### Course 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 through 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. Throughout this period, however, the course emphasises how Arab men and women, far from becoming merely 'victims of history', 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 states of 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, the intense European colonisation of North Africa and its more 'indirect' imperialism elsewhere, the emergence and ambiguities of Arab nationalism, the struggle over Israel and Palestine, and the 'end of an era' marked on one hand by the Suez war and the Algerian revolution, on the other by the death of Nasser and the 'Black September' expulsion of the PLO from Jordan.

## **A Modern Islamic Thinker (e.g. Sayyid Qutb, Mohamed Talbi, Rashid Rida)**

### **Term in which it is taught and hours of teaching:**

Year 3, TT, weekly lectures, 4 tutorials

**Teaching staff:** tba

**Course description:** tba

## **Society and Culture in the Middle East (Suspended for 2019)**

### **Term in which it is taught and hours of teaching:**

Year 3, Lectures in Hilary and Trinity Terms, 4 tutorials in TT.

### **Teaching staff:**

Dr Walter Armbrust

### **Course description:**

The paper focuses on the society and culture of the modern Arab world. The main academic literature for the course is drawn from the discipline of social anthropology, but the paper also includes readings from literary studies, political science, sociology and history. A number of primary texts are also relevant to the paper. Topics covered will include notions of family in the region; moral rhetorics of honor, shame, and modesty; marriage; particularism and universalism in Islam; Islam and modernity; Islamist political movements; writing and recitation; language and standardised identity; national identity; ethnicity and the nation-state; "globalisation," the state, and neo-liberalism. The paper will emphasise social anthropological perspectives on the modern Arab world, but will incorporate Arabic-language texts when there is demand for them.

### **Recommended reading:**

- Abu-Lughod, Lila. 1987. *Veiled Sentiments: Honor and Poetry in a Bedouin Society*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Asad, Talal. 1993. *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1965. "The Sentiment of Honor in Kabyle Society." in J.G. Peristiany ed. *Honour and Shame: the values of Mediterranean Society*. London: Weidenfeld.
- Deeb, Lara. 2006. *An Enchanted Modern: Gender and Public Piety in Shi'i Lebanon*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Joseph, Suad. 1994. "Brother/Sister Relationships: Connectivity, Love, and Power in the Reproduction of Patriarchy in Lebanon." *American Ethnologist* 21 (1): 50-73.
- Özyürek, Esra. 2006. *Nostalgia for the Modern: State Secularism and Everyday Politics in Turkey*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press.
- Salamandra, Christa. 2004. *A New Old Damascus: Authenticity and Distinction in Urban Syria*. Bloomington: University of Indiana Press.
- Shryock, Andrew. 1997. *Nationalism and the Genealogical Imagination: Oral History and Textual Authority in Tribal Jordan*. Berkeley : University of California Press.
- Winegar, Jessica. 2006. *Creative Reckonings: The Politics of Art and Culture in Contemporary Egypt*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

## The Ethos of the jāhiliya in the Mu`allaqa of Imru`al-Qays (Currently suspended)

### Term in which it is taught and hours of teaching:

Year 3, TT, weekly lectures, 4 tutorials with essays.

### Teaching staff:

Dr Nadia Jamil

### Course description:

The *Mu`allaqa* of Imru` al-Qays is probably the most famous poem in Arabic literature. It belongs to the body of verse ascribed to the *jāhiliya*, the 'period of ignorance' before the Qur`anic revelation in the 7th century AD, which together constitute a dynamic embodiment of the corporate attitudes of the ancient Arabs, their ideal system of manly virtue (*murūwa*), the nature of honour and human responsibility in a world projected as a theatre of conflict. With the interpretation of the key poem as its ultimate aim, this course surveys a range of primary and secondary sources, to introduce a number of controversial topics and consider them in the light of traditional and modern perceptions on early Arabian society and thought: (i) the transformative potential of *jāhili* poetry, its healing and poison, 'truth' and 'lies'; (ii) the elements of *murūwa* and its position vis a vis Fate and religion; (iii) poetical language, figures and themes as a symbolic encoding of ethical debate and a projection of a coherent system of ideas before Islam – covering Fate, death and redemption; gambling and wine; war and women; the shape of the cosmos and the mind of a man; (iv) the questions of poetical authenticity and coherence.

### Recommended reading:

- Ringgren H. *Studies in Arabian Fatalism*, Uppsala 1955
- Bravmann M.M. *The Spiritual Background of Early Islam*, Leiden, 1972
- Fares B. "Muru'a" *EL*, VII
- Fares B. *L'Honneur chez les Arabes avant l'Islam*, Paris, 1932
- Goldziher, I. *Muhammedanische Studien*, i, 1-40, Halle 1889
- Izutsu T. *God and Man in the Koran; Semantics of the Koranic Weltanschauung*, Tokyo 1964
- Homerin T.E. "Echoes of a Thirsty Owl: Death and Afterlife in Pre-Islamic Poetry", *JNES* 44 (1985), 165-84
- Van Gelder, G.J.H. *Beyond the Line: Classical Arabic Literary Critics on the Coherence and Unity of the Poem*, Leiden, 1982
- \_ "Genres in Collision: *Nasib and Hija*", *JAL*, 21.1, 1990, 14-25
- Jacobi R. "The Origins of the Qasida Form", in Sperl S. and Shackle C., ed., *Qasida Poetry in Islamic Asia and Africa*, I, Leiden, 1996.
- Abu Deeb K. "Towards a Structural Analysis of Pre-Islamic Poetry", *IJMES* 6 (1975), 148-84
- \_ "Towards a Structural Analysis of Pre-Islamic Poetry (II): The Eros Vision", *Edebiyat* I (1976), 3-69
- Jamil N. "Playing for Time: *maysir*-gambling in early Arabic Poetry", in Hoyland R. and Kennedy P.F., ed., *Islamic Reflections, Arabic Musings: Studies in Honour of Alan Jones*, (Gibb Memorial Trust 2004), 48-90
- Jamil N. *Ethics and Poetry in Sixth-Century Arabia*, E. J. W. Gibb Memorial Trust, 2017
- Arberry A.J. *The Seven Odes: The First Chapter in Arabic Literature*, London, 1957 Jones A. *Early Arabic Poetry. Volume Two: Select Ode*, Reading, 1996
- Montgomery J.E. *The Vagaries of the Qasidah. The Tradition and Practice of early Arabic Poetry*, Cambridge, 1997

- Stetkevych S.P. *The Mute Immortals Speak*, Ithaca 1993, Chapter 7.

## **Harems, Homes and Streets: Space and Gender in the Middle East (Suspended for TT 2019)**

### **Term in which it is taught and hours of teaching:**

TT, up to 16 hrs lecture/seminar, 6 hrs tutorials (4 x 1.5 hrs). Four essays/presentations plus long essay.

### **Teaching staff:**

Professor Marilyn Booth

### **Course description:**

This Special Subject focuses on representations of space, place and gendered bodies in European Orientalist writings and modern Middle Eastern literary texts (Arabic and Persian, and possibly Turkish, in translation). We read literary texts against notions of 'the harem' and theoretical readings on gender and space.

Within Muslim societies, social segregation along gender lines has varied tremendously according to region, class, and time. Yet segregation and the veil also became resonant symbols as intellectuals in these societies struggled to define a modernity that would pose a successful challenge to colonial rule and to competing indigenous notions of social organisation. Muslim women have explored the meanings and impacts of segregation through memoirs, fiction, poetry, and film.

We will begin by reading and viewing some European representations of gendered seclusion and harem life, as well as by reading selectively from theoretical literature on the social construction and gendering of space. We will also consider the historical and theological bases for gendered segregation in Muslim communities.

We will consider seclusion as lived reality through reading historical essays on earlier periods (the early Islamic period, the Ottoman empire) and more recent memoirs, which also provide a critique of seclusionary practices that emerged with the rhetorics of modernity.

Finally, we will read fiction through which Muslim women of the past century have interrogated, critiqued, and at times lauded practices of gender segregation.

All literary texts are offered in translation. Students who wish to read texts in Arabic, Turkish or Persian are encouraged to explore these in work for the final extended essay and/or the shorter tutorial essays.

### **Aims of the course include:**

1. developing familiarity with analytical perspectives drawn from the study of Orientalism, cultural encounter, and gender regimes, specifically concerning representations of space as a gendered concept
2. recognising major outlines of current debates on gender and space, and thinking critically about their applicability (or not) to Middle Eastern and/or majority-Muslim contexts
3. gaining knowledge of key institutions and terms concerning the historical representation of women and gender in majority-Muslim societies, in particular the concept of *harim* and its

historical and literary deployments, but with an awareness of how notions and practices concerning gender and space are modulated by historical specificities, generating different practices across time and space

4. developing an ability to critically consider and compare an array of fictional and memoiristic works written originally in Arabic, Farsi, English and French (and read in English translation) that address issues of spatial representation and gendered experience

## Special Subjects

### Qur'an

**Term in which it is taught and hours of teaching:**

Year 4, MT, weekly lectures, 6 tutorials, up to 6 essays.

**Teaching staff:**

Professor Nicolai Sinai

**Course description:**

The course is designed to introduce participants to the study of the Qur'ānic texts in their historical context of emergence and/or to the Islamic exegetical tradition.

**Recommended reading:**

- Görke, Andreas, and Johanna Pink (eds), *Tafsīr and Islamic Intellectual History: Exploring the Boundaries of a Genre*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.
- Sinai, Nicolai. *The Qur'an: A Historical-Critical Introduction*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017.

### Theology and Philosophy in the Islamic World

**Term in which it is taught and hours of teaching:**

Year 4, MT. weekly lectures, 6 tutorials, up to 6 essays.

**Teaching staff:**

Dr Laura Hassan (availability tbc, please enquire with Nicolai Sinai).

**Course description:**

The course will introduce students to the historical development of, and some of the main concepts and ideas discussed in, Arabic philosophy and/or Islamic theology (*kalām*). Depending upon students' interests, the paper will focus on a selection of the following topics:

1. The beginnings of Islamic theological speculation in the Umayyad age;
2. Mu'tazilism;
3. early Ash'arism until ca. 1100;
4. Arabic Philosophy up to al-Suhrawardī (d. 1191);
5. al-Ghazālī and later Ash'arism.



Classes will be devoted to presentations by the tutor and to reading excerpts from the set texts, which will be chosen in consultation with students. Tutorials will offer an opportunity for wider explorations based on the relevant secondary literature.

**Recommended reading:**

- El-Rouayheb, Khaled, and Sabine Schmidtke (eds). *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Philosophy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.
- Schmidtke, Sabine (ed.). *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.

**The Transformation of Ideas from the *jāhiliya* to Early Islam in Early Arabic Poetry (Currently suspended)**

**Term in which it is taught and hours of teaching:**

Year 4, Michaelmas Term as a Special Subject. 2 hrs of classes per week; 6 hours of tutorials (4 x 1½)  
= 4 essays/ assignments

**Teaching staff:**

Dr Nadia Jamil

**Course description:**

Familiarity with the topics covered in Further subject 'The Ethos of the *jāhiliya* in the *Mu'allaqa* of Imru'al-Qays' is desirable. The course surveys a range of materials from key poets of the late *jāhiliya*, and through the first hundred years of Islam. The focus is on mapping continuity and change, the restructuring of pre-Islamic ideals and visions with the gradual emergence of Islamic society.

**Details of Teaching:**

For Paper 1: The restructuring of pre-Islamic ideals and society

Wks 1 & 2 (2 x 2 hour class). The transformation of ethical values; contrary projections of the ideal man

Wks 3 & 4 (2 x 2 hour class). From pre-Islamic to Islamic Ruler, universal epicentre, link to redemption; the competition for legitimacy.

For Paper 2: Changing perceptions of Time and Reality

Wks 5 & 6 (2 x 2 hour class). God and Fate; the implications of a life after death.

Wks 7 & 8 (2 x 2 hour class) Qur'anic accretions: the earnest, the opportunistic and the subversive.

**Recommended reading:**

- Jacobi R. "Time and Reality in *Nasib* and *Ghazal*", *JAL* 16 (1985), 1-17
- "The Khayal Motif in Early Arabic Poetry", *Oriens* 32 (1990), 50-64
- Crone P. and Hinds M *God's Caliph: Religious Authority in the First Centuries of Islam*, Cambridge, 1986
- Guillaume A. trans. *The Life of Muhammad*. A Translation of Ishaq's *Sirat Rasul Allah*, Lahore and Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1974
- Jamil N. "Caliph and Qutb. Poetry as a Source for interpreting the Transformation of the Byzantine Cross on Steps on Umayyad coinage", *Bayt al-Maqdis, Jerusalem and Early Islam*, ed. J. Johns, Oxford Studies in Islamic Art, IX. Part Two (Oxford University Press, 1999), 11-57
- Jamil N. *Ethics and Poetry in Sixth-Century Arabic*, E. J. Gibb Memorial Trust, 2017.

- Kennedy P. F. *The Wine Song in Classical Arabic Poetry: Abu Nuwas and the Literary Tradition*, Oxford, 1997
- Stetkevych S. P. *The Poetics of Islamic Legitimacy: Myth, Gender and Ceremony in the Classical Arabic Ode*, Indiana, 2002

## Topics in Islamic Law

### Term in which it is taught and hours of teaching:

Year 4, MT. 16 hours lectures, 6 tutorials, 6 essays

### Teaching staff:

Professor Christopher Melchert

### Course description:

Islamic Religion introduced the topic of Islamic law. Here is a survey in greater depth. Students will learn to find problems in Islamic law, look up names in biographical dictionaries, look up names in standard reference works (e.g. *GAL*, *GAS*, *Kaḥḥālah*), and look up how to point names in medieval reference works (e.g. Ibn Ḥajar, *Tabṣīr al-muntabih*). We shall read some of both *fiqh*, the genre that lays out rules, and *uṣūl al-fiqh*, the genre that justifies the method of inferring rules; i.e. jurisprudence strictly speaking. The exact topics covered may be shaped to fit student interest.

### Recommended reading:

- Abū Ishāq al-Shīrāzī (d. Baghdad, 476/1083). *Kitāb al-Lumà fi uṣūl al-fiqh. Le Livre des Rais illuminant les fondements de la compréhension de la Loi. Traité de théorie légale musulmane*. Translated and edited with introduction by Eric Chaumont. *Studies in Comparative Legal History*. Berkeley: Robbins Collection, 1999. A translation with copious notes and a useful bibliography.
- Ibn Rushd (d. Merrakech, 595/1198). *The Distinguished Jurist's Primer: A Translation of Bidāyat al-mujtahid*. Translated by Imran Ahsan Khan Nyazee; reviewed by Muhammad Abdul Rauf. *Great Books of Islamic Civilisation*. 2 vols. Reading: Garnet, 1994-6. Bodleian Arab. An unusual hybrid of *furu`* and *uṣūl*, showing how different Sunni schools justify their distinct rules.
- Schacht, Joseph. *An Introduction to Islamic Law*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964.
- Weiss, Bernard G. *The Spirit of Islamic Law. The Spirit of the Laws*. Athens: Univ. of Georgia Press, 1998. A mellow account of what it says: divine sovereignty, the textualist bent, probabilism, &c.

## Medieval Sufi Thought

### Term in which it is taught and hours of teaching:

Year 4, MT. weekly lectures, 6 tutorials, up to 6 essays.

### Teaching staff:

Professor Christopher Melchert

**Course description:**

Similar to the Further Subject but in greater depth. The exact topics covered may be shaped to fit student interest.

**A Special Subject from the Field of Islamic Art, Architecture, Numismatics or Archaeology, 500-c. 1900****Term in which it is taught and hours of teaching:**

Year 4, MT, 6 tutorials (6 with essays; 2 preparing for a 6,000-word extended essay for examination), plus lectures and/or classes as available.

**Teaching staff:**

Course-coordinator: Prof. Zeynep Yürekli-Görkay. Other participating staff: Dr Teresa Fitzherbert, Prof. Jeremy Johns, Dr Luke Treadwell). Please contact the Course Co-ordinator [zeynep.yurekli-gorkay@orinst.ox.ac.uk](mailto:zeynep.yurekli-gorkay@orinst.ox.ac.uk) to register for this paper.

**Course description:**

This Special Subject offers the opportunity to select one medium (e.g. architecture, ceramics, numismatics, painting, etc.) or one period (e.g. Umayyad, Mamlūk, Ottoman, etc.) in the art, architecture and archaeology of Islamic societies from the formative period until the early modern period. 'Art, architecture and archaeology' is understood in the widest possible sense to include all material and visual culture. Students will choose a medium or period to complement their interests and other papers, but the topics offered for study will depend upon the availability of teaching staff in any given year. The examination combines: (Paper 8) an overview of the medium or period taught through a series of six weekly essays and tutorials, and by lectures and/or classes as available, and examined by a three-hour written examination; and (Paper 9) an independent and in-depth study of one topic from the selected medium or period, to be taught through two tutorials and examined by means of a 6,000 word extended essay. While the overview (Paper 8) necessarily follows a prescribed course of tutorials, the topic for independent study (Paper 9) will be chosen by the candidate from a question paper published by the examiners on the Friday of the fourth week of Michaelmas Term in the year of the examination.

**Recommended reading:**

To obtain a clearer idea of what the course entails, you may browse the visual and textual resources on the Islamic Art and Archaeology site on WebLearn (<https://weblearn.ox.ac.uk/portal/site/humdiv/orient/iw/iaa/page/home>) and should read one or more of the following:

- 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 Arts*, 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 Ottomans, Islam and the Arab World 1300-1566 (Currently suspended)**

### **Term in which it is taught and hours of teaching:**

Year 4, MT weekly lectures, 6 tutorials, up to 6 essays

### **Teaching staff:**

tba

### **Course description:**

This paper studies Ottoman history from the emergence of Osman's principality in 1300 to its transformation into a world empire in the sixteenth century, with particular emphasis on how the Ottomans absorbed and adapted Turkic and Muslim political traditions. Topics will include: the nature of the early Ottoman state and the extensive historiographical debate on the "ghazi thesis"; the development of Ottoman provincial and central administration, particularly through the extension of the slave system; imperial ideology and the nature of sultanic authority; religious, cultural and political influences from Mamluk Egypt and Safavid Iran upon the definition of Ottoman Sunnism. There will be a special consideration of the nature of Ottoman rule in the Arab provinces after 1517 and on the place of the early Ottoman empire in Islamic history.

### **Recommended reading:**

- Finkel, Caroline. *Osman's dream* (London 2005)
- Har-El, S. *Struggle for domination in the Middle East: the Ottoman-Mamluk war 1485-91* (Leiden 1995)
- Imber, Colin. *The Ottoman empire, 1300-1650: the structure of power* (New York 2002)
- Inalcik, Halil. *The Ottoman empire, the classical age 1300-1600* (London: 1989, c1973)
- Kafadar, Cemal. *Between two worlds: the construction of the Ottoman state* (Berkeley 1995)
- Karamustafa, Ahmet T. *God's unruly friends* (Salt Lake City 1995), ch. 6 'Dervish groups in the Ottoman empire 1450-1550'
- Lindner, R P. *Nomads and Ottomans in medieval Anatolia* (Bloomington, Indiana 1983)
- Lowry, H J. *The nature of the early Ottoman state* (New York 2003)
- Necipoğlu, Gülru. *Architecture, Ceremonial and Power: Topkapı Palace in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries* (Cambridge, MA 1991)

## **Themes in Modern Arabic Literature**

### **Term in which it is taught and hours of teaching:**

Year 4, MT and HT (16 hours lectures, 6 tutorials)

### **Teaching staff:**

Professor Mohamed-Salah Omri

**Themes in Modern Arabic literature (The theme offered is subject to change).**

“Nation” is one of the most enduring and contentious concepts of our time. Social sciences and history have made use of nation and nationalism extensively and to important effect. However, it is in literature where concepts of nation and national identity are best observed. This has to do in part with the representational nature and the imaginative side to both. It has been argued, notably by Anderson, that literature, particularly the novel, is the medium through which nation has been represented, imagined and performed. The aim of the paper is to explore the complexity and the diversity of nation and nationalism in the Arab world, mainly through the novel. Drawing on history, politics and literature, the paper will be looking at the processes and the art of representing the nation in seminal Arabic novels by women writers. Each refers us to a particular case of nation and nationalism and thus focuses our attention on the specificities of the nation-state; but also draws in other manifestations of nation and nationhood in the wider Arab World, such as pan-Arab nationalism and Islamic loyalties. Theoretical and background reading includes Fanon, Gelder, Anderson as well as historical sources on Algeria, Morocco, Egypt and Lebanon. The primary texts are four in total, all available in English translation.

Considerable attention will be paid to exploring the novels as works of literature. Students are encouraged to explore additional configurations of the nation in other writers in their tutorial essays and the extended essay. All sessions are seminar-style based on readings of primary texts as well as theoretical and critical approaches to them and to the theme. Sample set texts include: Latifa al-Zayyat, *Open Door* (1960); Hanan al-Shaykh, *The Story of Zahra* (1980); Leila Abouzeid, *Year of the Elephant* (1983); Ahlam Moutaghanem, *Memory in the Flesh* (1985).

## **Modern Islamic Thought in the Middle East**

### **Term in which it is taught and hours of teaching:**

Year 4, MT. 16 hours lectures, 6 tutorials, up to 6 essays

### **Teaching staff:**

Tba

### **Course description:**

Tba

## **Topics in the January 25th Revolution (available MT 2018; suspended for MT 2019)**

### **Term in which it is taught and hours of teaching:**

Year 3, HT, 4 tutorials/4 essays

### **Teaching staff:**

Dr. W Armbrust

### **Course description:**

The paper looks at the January 25<sup>th</sup> Revolution as a social and historical turning point in Egypt's history. The following topics will be covered:

- the symbolic importance of Tahrir Square

- revolutionary repertoires of contention (forms and organisation of protest)
- structural factors behind the January 25<sup>th</sup> Revolution
- the Muslim Brotherhood before and during the Revolution
- the status of the armed forces in Egyptian society and in the Revolution
- the anthropology of revolution
- the city and Revolution
- media and the Revolution

**Recommended reading:**

Full syllabus: <https://db.tt/Q6CmCYkx>

Selected primary texts:

- Abu al-Gheit, Muhammad. 2011. *Al-Fuqara' Awwalan Ya Wilad al-Kalb*, originally posted in Abu-al-Gheit's blog: <http://gedarea.blogspot.co.uk/2011/06/normal-0-false-false-false.html>; images preserved on a FB page: <http://tinyurl.com/byv7vrf>.
- Bakri, Mustafa. 2013. *Al-Jaysh wa al-Ikhwan*. Cairo: Dar al-Misriyya al-Lubnaniyya.
- Fayez, Samih. 2013. *Jannat al-Ikhwan*. Cairo: Dar al-Tanwir.
- Tamam, Husam. 2013. *al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun: al-Sanawat ma Qabl al-Thaura*. Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq.
- Khirbawi, Tharwat. 2013. *Sirr al-Ma'bad: Al-Asrar al-Khafiyya li-Jama'at al-Ikhwan al-Musllimin*. Cairo: Dar Nahdat Misr.
- Prince, Mona. 2012. *Ismi Thaura*. Cairo: Mona Prince.
- Youtube Videos: A History of the January 25<sup>th</sup> Revolution through Videos (mostly unsubtitled); <https://db.tt/sbClrCpG>

**Nahda: Arabic Prose and Cultural Activism in the 19th Century (Suspended for MT 2018)**

**Term in which it is taught and hours of teaching:**

Year 4, Michaelmas Term. 8 Seminars and 6 tutorials.

**Teaching staff:**

Professor Marilyn Booth

**Course description:**

This course provides an introduction to the *nahda* (as Arab intellectuals were calling it before the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century) or 'awakening' in Arabic letters and cultural activity. Exploring new styles and genres of writing, but equally looking back to the great classical tradition of Arabic literary expression, intellectuals were articulating visions of indigenous modernity as they grappled with how to read the impact of Europe on their societies. As modes of communication changed radically – trains, telegraphs, the press, independent book publishing, regular postal service, electricity, trams, and telephones became features of Arab urban life in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century – so did ideas about writerly responsibility, audience composition, media of communication, and literary genre. There was now a sense of *publics*, that writers helped to build and to which they responded. Equally, there were new ideas to convey, about nationalism and imperial power, about national economies and subjects' rights, about gender and social organisation, about who should be educated and how.

## Assessment

The latest information on the assessments and submission details is listed in the University of Oxford Examination Regulations and can be found here: <http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/examregs/>

The Exam Regulations are revised and re-issued each year, and you must always consult the relevant issue in force. For example, if you matriculate your studies in Michaelmas Term 2017, for Prelims examinations you should refer to the Examination Regulations for 2017 -2018. For FHS examinations depending on the programme, please see the below:

Year of Matriculation	Prelims Exams	FHS Exams (for 3-year programme)	FHS Exams (for 4-year programme)
MT 2018	Prelims Exam Regs for 2018-19	FHS Exam Regs for 2019-20	FHS Exam Regs for 2020-21

## Important Deadlines

<b>Monday Wk 9 of Trinity Term</b>	Year 1	Provisional start date of the First Public Examinations.
<b>Monday Week Wk 6 of Hilary Term</b>	Year 3	Deadline for applications for approval for further subject, special subjects, subsidiary language and dissertation titles.  Also joint school candidates taking Arabic subjects (where relevant). Forms available <a href="#">here</a> .
<b>Friday Wk 4 of Michaelmas Term</b>	Year 4	Question paper for special subject extended essays available from the Faculty Office.
<b>12 noon, Friday Wk 0 of Hilary Term</b>	Year 4	Deadline for submission of special subject extended essays.
<b>12 noon, Friday Wk 10 of Hilary Term</b>	Year 4	Deadline for submission of dissertation.
<b>Wk 0 of Trinity Term</b>	Year 4	Oral examinations for Arabic language. Timetables available about 5 weeks before the oral exams.
<b>Monday Wk 7 of Trinity Term</b>	Year 4	Provisional start date of the Final Honour School examinations.

## Appendix 1: Dissertation Guidelines

### UNDERGRADUATE HONOURS DISSERTATIONS: ARABIC PERSIAN TURKISH, FACULTY OF ORIENTAL STUDIES

The dissertation is an opportunity to undertake original research on a topic of your own choosing. You will have one or two tutorials to discuss method, bibliography, and other aspects at the beginning of Hilary Term, then review what you have come up with near the end of the term with the same tutor. However, it is mainly your project to run with. You will be solely responsible for the final draft, which will not be read by your tutors.

This document should be read in conjunction with the Faculty Undergraduate Handbook section on dissertations and the 'General Guidelines for Thesis Writers' available through the Faculty Undergraduate Handbook on the OI Website.

The Undergraduate Student Handbook is available on the Oriental Studies website.

The 'General Guidelines' are at:

[https://weblearn.ox.ac.uk/access/content/group/a55c44d3-9f21-4dec-b48c-2dc6fa4e4bee/Exams/General\\_Guidelines\\_for\\_Thesis\\_Writers.pdf](https://weblearn.ox.ac.uk/access/content/group/a55c44d3-9f21-4dec-b48c-2dc6fa4e4bee/Exams/General_Guidelines_for_Thesis_Writers.pdf)

### WRITING AN UNDERGRADUATE HONOURS THESIS: GUIDELINES, AND SOME TIPS

#### Choosing a topic and getting started

The honours dissertation is an exciting part of your course. It is an opportunity to conduct in-depth research on a topic of your choice, and to form and present your own original conclusions. It gives you a real indication of what academic research is like and why your tutors enjoy it so much. It may lead you to take an unexpected professional turn, or to go on exploring a topic of abiding interest even after you have concluded your degree. And it can give you a sense of satisfaction and pride at seeing through a complex, creative and original project. Make the most of the opportunity!

In the course of your studies, you may have already come upon a question you would like to explore or a topic or genre of writing or historical set of events that you would like to learn more about. Perhaps there is a text you have encountered in your studies that you would like to read and analyse more fully. Your year abroad may have sparked a particular linguistic or cultural or historical interest. Define as clearly as possible what it is that you want to focus on and what aspect most interests you. Do a web or library search to see what has been done, and then make an appointment by email – and in good time – with the most likely supervisor. Sometimes a short conversation can lead you in a new direction or sharpen your focus, or confirm that your idea is a viable one. A supervisor will help you to define a manageable topic and research question. At this early stage (ideally the year after your year of study abroad), you do not need to come up with a final title. (You will need to have a working title to be approved by the Subject.) But even before you have a final title and research question, the more clearly you can focus your interests, then the more targeted and useful your preliminary reading will be.

Keep in mind that almost everyone starts out with a question that is far too big or vague. You want to put some careful thought into defining your project at this stage. It is never too early to write a provisional abstract. Remember that a good dissertation *has* a thesis. It not only sets out a topic area but it makes an argument. At the beginning of your research, you won't know exactly what that argument will be, but the earlier you start to think about it, the easier the later stages will be.



Remember also that the dissertation is the equivalent of *one paper* only, and it carries no more weight in your final degree mark than any other paper. This is another reason to focus early and well: you do not want to spend disproportionately more time on the dissertation than on other papers that are examined.

While an undergraduate dissertation is not a PhD thesis, and isn't expected to be an entirely original work in the way that a postgraduate thesis is, examiners do expect to see original thinking, a new angle on material that has been previously studied, a text analysis that takes an approach different to previous studies, etc. One feature of the cross-disciplinary field we work on – the study of Arabic, Persian, Turkish, often with European languages – is that there are many texts that have not been exhaustively studied: starting with a text is a fine way to come up with an original topic or an original treatment of a topic. If you want to work intensively on a text, discuss your interests with the most relevant member of staff, who can help you identify a text pertinent to your interests. Focussing your work carefully and closely, you're probably more likely to produce an original and cogent piece of research by doing so, than if you try to cover too much ground.

When you've chosen your dissertation and supervisor, discuss a preliminary bibliography. Start reading as you would for an essay. But for your dissertation, you are the one who sets the question, and your reading will help you to refine and modify it as you go. If you have chosen to work on a text or set of texts in the language(s) you have studied, give yourself plenty of time to read and reread the text(s), and jot down your ideas as you read. Identify the secondary readings that will help you carry out your original analysis.

You are required to submit a research question/topic and a brief abstract as an 'application for approval'. You may find it helpful to provide yourself and your supervisor with a somewhat expanded version of this, including:

- Title of dissertation
- Rationale underpinning the chosen area of study
- Key research questions to be examined and how you plan to answer them
- Sources to be consulted
- Preliminary discussion of relevant literature, if possible
- A work plan, with your timetable
- Possible outline of chapters

### **The research process**

Read strategically and interactively. Make a record of interesting ideas and also of queries that occur to you. Be sure to also record details (including page numbers) that you would need to provide for a footnote reference. This will save you more time than you can imagine later on.

Here are some useful strategies:

1. Ask yourself, with everything you read for the dissertation: How does this reading relate to the question I started with? What aspect of my central question does it help me with?
2. Skim read for relevance. How useful will this book or article be? What arguments/concepts/evidence/definitions/ways of thinking does it offer to me?
  - a. Skim read the introduction and conclusion to book chapters to identify main approaches or arguments, and to gauge whether closer reading will be fruitful.

3. Read key articles or chapters closely and take notes. Put things in your own words: that way you are having to grapple with the argument, rather than just passively taking down what the author says.
  - a. What are the essential points of the account or argument?
  - b. How do they relate to my ideas and my question?
  - c. How do they relate to the other things I have been reading? Do they reinforce or challenge previous explanations?
4. How will your summary of this work serve the dissertation? Does it help you with your framework for analysis? Your background narrative account and contextualisation? Your sense of how wider debates in the field are mapped?
5. Rely on specialist/academic sources. A textbook might help you identify the specialist works or outline the general field, but it will be too general to serve as a source in itself.
6. The internet is useful in all sorts of ways, but rarely will it be good enough in itself. Be sure to embed your research in published academic literature.

On any topic, there are large numbers of books and articles you could read. Keep in mind that you cannot read everything. Be self-disciplined.

Think about how to pace yourself! As exciting as a dissertation project can be, it does demand commitment and good organisation. Don't leave it to the last minute. You may think that Hilary Term of your 4<sup>th</sup> year gives you plenty of time to write, but don't underestimate the twists and turns that this process can take.

Start writing as soon as you can. Even if you are not certain how all the pieces will fit together in the end – and indeed you may write many pages that never make it into the final dissertation – writing can help you clarify your thoughts, and it will show you where there are gaps in your knowledge and hence where more research is most urgently needed. Having some potential sections written can feel encouraging, too.

Don't feel you must start at the beginning. Write up a section that interests you, and do include the references to make your life easier later on. You might want to ask your supervisor to read this section, and to advise you on whether you need to aim for including more or less detail. When you write, think about how you would want to explain this to someone else who is on your degree but who is working on a completely different topic. You can ask your supervisor whether the section should be organised differently, and whether you've got the references right. Be forewarned: you may be surprised to find that you have already used more of the word-allowance than you expected. Remember the aim is to write *quality* work that is well organised, succinct without being telegraphic, and that all supports your central argument.

### **Research integrity and Ethical issues**

Be sure that you are familiar with the University's guidelines on plagiarism, which you can find a link to in the Undergraduate Handbook.

Also be aware of research ethics and integrity issues. If your research topic involves research with human subjects, you must fill out a preliminary risk form. The full code of practice and procedure on Academic Integrity in Research is here: <https://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/personnel/cops/researchintegrity/>

Our Faculty comes under the purview of the Social Sciences and Humanities Inter-divisional Research Ethics Committee (SSH IDREC). For straightforward or lower-risk ethical issues, applicants apply for

ethical review via completing a checklist (a 'CUREC1A'), and are then reviewed by the SSH IDREC Secretariat. Complex issues require a full application form (a 'CUREC/2') but this is not likely for undergraduate research.

These forms are not meant to be obstacles: indeed, they are meant to foster good research practice, and they are there to help and guide you. The basic question they ask is: 'Does your research have ethical implications because it invokes human subjects and/or personal data?' If you have any questions about the process or whether you need to complete it, ask your supervisor in the first instance. The SSH IDREC Secretariat is there to help us with questions, as well.

Also, if your dissertation is based at all on fieldwork, you need to document interviews or the like. You may want to refer to informants confidentially (as X, Y, Z, etc.). You may also want to provide a copy of any questionnaires or sets of interview questions used, as an Appendix. But a dissertation based on fieldwork also needs to show familiarity with relevant secondary literature.

### **Organisation**

Have a look at the section on 'good vs indifferent theses' in the Guidelines for Theses Writers. Theses are arguments backed up with evidence and clearly indicating the originality of the work and its relation to previous works on the subject. Theses are not simply accumulations of research findings. Evidence doesn't speak for itself! You need to think about how to shape your material into a well-organised argument. Don't let reading and collecting data become an end in itself, however enjoyable it may be.

You are likely to organise your dissertation as an introduction, 3-4 chapters organised on the basis of chronology or theme or another structural principle, and a conclusion. In the introduction, don't take too long to set up your dissertation statement. (*Remember, but most students end up with too many words, not too few!*) Let the reader know immediately what your argument is and how you will present it. The introduction may include a literature review: by briefly discussing important work already done on this topic, you can distinguish your work from that earlier work as well as showing that you have a good grasp of the research area.

As you work, you may want to keep a 'checklist' of questions somewhere nearby, to remind yourself of the basic components of a good piece of research. Some of these aspects may be more important for some topics than for others.

### Focus and structure

1. Have I clearly formulated the question, and do I state it clearly at the start of the dissertation?
2. Have I put the question into context (relevant literature, historical or socio-economic contexts, literary/genre context, etc.)
3. Have I established – and made clear – the aims and objectives of the work?
4. Do those aims and objectives relate to my central research question?
5. Have I made clear what my research design/methods is/are?

### Reading

1. Have I surveyed the most relevant works from the general literature?
2. Have I critically assessed, not merely reported, relevant issues and debates in the literature?
3. How well have I related the literature to my research question?

### Writing up

1. Is there a clear and logical structure, overall and within each section of the dissertation?

2. To put it another way, is the dissertation coherent? Is my central research question evident throughout the entire dissertation, do the different chapters and sections all relate to one another as well as to the research question? Have I avoided digressions?
  - a. It is useful to ask yourself (frequently) the ‘so what?’ question. What’s the point of this section (or this paragraph, or this sentence)? What does it add?
3. Do I begin each chapter with a succinct statement of and guide to what will appear in that chapter?
4. Do I provide good transitions between sections?
5. Do I provide a brief conclusion at the end of each chapter?
6. Have I written in clear English? Have I avoided jargon? Have I avoided generalisations?
7. Have I clearly defined my terms?
8. Have I analysed and interpreted the data, not just in my own head, but on the page, rather than just describing them?
9. Are my conclusions based on evidence I have presented?

#### Presentation and scholarly standards

1. Have I used clear and consistent referencing throughout, with page references where relevant?
2. Have I ensured that other people’s work – whether quoted or described in my own words – is explicitly cited?
3. Have I provided a detailed and accurate Bibliography? Have I rechecked the alphabetical order of authors’ last names?
4. Have I checked spelling and grammar? (Do not rely on computer checks!). Am I certain that my transliteration is consistent and correct?
5. Have I set off long quotations in separate, indented paragraphs?

Oriental Studies does not prescribe one format for citations in footnotes and bibliographies, because we realise that different disciplines tend to prefer different formats. Discuss with your supervisor – preferably early on – what format would be most suitable for you. Three excellent guides, available in the Oriental Institute Library, are:

Waddingham, Anne. *New Hart’s rules: The Oxford style guide*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Oxford: University Press, 2014.

*New Oxford style manual*. Oxford: University Press, 2016.

*The Chicago manual of style*. 16<sup>th</sup> edition. Chicago: University Press, 2010.

#### **Getting there**

People have different working styles. Prior to Hilary Term 4<sup>th</sup> year – when you will do the bulk of the writing – some prefer to set apart one ‘dissertation day’ a week for reading and preliminary writing, while others find that their best rhythm is to work in short stretches between other deadlines. Set yourself some goals: write a timeline, especially for the intense period of work in Hilary Term. Outline each chapter, even if you don’t completely stay with that outline. While our policy is that students should meet with supervisors for an hour or two at the beginning of HT, perhaps an hour in the middle, and then another hour at the end (4 tutorials in total), emails containing particular questions and issues are perfectly acceptable and can often straighten out vexing matters. Some students and supervisors agree that the student will ‘check in’ with supervisors briefly (by email) every two weeks or so, to note their progress.

Try hard to have the final draft ready well in advance of the deadline. Ideally, you want to be able to put it aside and then pick it up to re-read it. This is extremely helpful for seeing gaps in your argument, places where you need better transitions, generalisations that need to be either deleted or worked on, infelicitous translations, missing or incomplete references, and – last but definitely not least – typing errors.

You can ask your supervisor to read a pre-final draft, but not the final draft. In the end, a dissertation is an independent piece of work. Hopefully you have sought out and incorporated your supervisor's diagnostic feedback already, and you've been able to produce a final dissertation that you'll long be proud of. But even in the late stages, supervisors can advise on structure, on problems with references, on particularly knotty translation issues, and the like.

## Appendix 2

### Recommended Patterns of Teaching

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

Arabic; EMEL with Arabic

Year 1

Paper	Term	Dept/ Faculty		College		Comments
		Lectures	Classes	Tutorials	Classes	
						Figures in this table are in hours unless otherwise stated.
[1.] Translation and précis into English.	MT		x			Two hours a day instruction is offered through all three terms; however, the different skills are not assigned to different classes (e.g. translation some days, grammar others).
	HT		x			
	TT		x			
[2.] Comprehension, composition, and grammar.	MT		x			
	HT		x			
	TT		x			
[3.] Oral/aural comprehension and composition.	MT		x			
	HT		x			
	TT		x			
[4.] Islamic history & culture.	MT	x		x		Two hours lectures per week and four tutorials per term, MT-HT; half that in TT, wks 1-4. Tutorials organised by the Faculty. Arabic only, excluding EMEL.
	HT	x		x		
	TT	x		x		

Arabic; EMEL with Arabic  
Years 3-4

Paper	Term	Dept/ Faculty		College		Comments
		Lectures	Classes	Tutorials	Classes	
						Figures in this table are in hours unless otherwise stated.
[1.] Arabic unprepared translation into English and comprehension.	MT		x	x		4 hours classes per week, one hour tutorials every other week, throughout the year; but the different linguistic skills of papers 1-3 by nature cannot be taught separately. Tutorials organised by the faculty.
	HT		x	x		
	TT		x	x		
[2.] Composition in Arabic.	MT		x	x		
	HT		x	x		
	TT		x	x		
[3.] Spoken Arabic.	MT		x	x		
	HT		x	x		
	TT			x		
[4.] Arabic literature.	MT	x		x		2 hours lectures per week, MT-HT; six tutorials likewise distributed over those two terms. Tutorials organised by the faculty.
	HT	x		x		
	TT					
[5.] Islamic history (Arabic only, excluding EMEL).	MT	x		x		3 hours lectures per week, MT and the first half of HT; six tutorials likewise distributed over those two terms. Tutorials organised by the faculty.
	HT	x		x		
	TT					
[6.] Islamic religion.	MT					3 hours lectures per week, second half of HT and TT; six tutorials likewise distributed over those two terms. Tutorials organised by the faculty.
	HT	x		x		
	TT	x		x		
[7.] Further subject (for EMEL: option).	MT					Weekly lectures (1-3 hours), biweekly tutorials. Tutorials organised by the faculty.
	HT					
	TT	x		x		
[8.] Special subject (for EMEL: option).	MT	x		x		Weekly lectures (1-3 hours), 6 hours tutorials. Tutorials organised by the faculty.

Paper	Term	Dept/ Faculty		College		Comments
		Lectures	Classes	Tutorials	Classes	
	HT					
TT						

Figures in this table are in hours unless otherwise stated.

[9.] Dissertation (Arabic) or Bridging essay (EMEL)  
No lectures. Normally 2-3 hours tutorials in HT for Arabic dissertations, 3-4 hours for EMEL bridging essays (divided equally between ML and OS faculties).

Arabic as a subsidiary language.

Paper	Term	Dept/ Faculty		College		Comments
		Lectures	Classes	Tutorials	Classes	
[1.] Arabic prose composition and unprepared translation.	MT		x	x		6 hours per week of classes throughout the first year; up to 2 hours per week (depending on numbers) as tutorial group from the beginning of MT to week 4 of TT the second year.
	HT		x	x		
	TT		x	X		
[2.] Additional Arabic: literary texts.	MT	x		X		1-3 hours per week lectures, 4-6 hours tutorials. Teaching may begin in TT of the first year or MT of the second. Tutorials organised by the faculty.
	HT					
	TT					
[3.] Additional Arabic: Islamic texts	MT					1-3 hours per week lectures, 4-6 hours tutorials. Teaching may begin in MT or HT of the second year. Tutorials organised by the faculty.
	HT	x		X		
	TT					

Michaelmas Term 2018