

Islamic studies

Convener: Associate Professor Abdullah Saeed (MIALS)

Islam is one of the fastest growing religions in the world. It is embraced by approximately one-fifth of the world's population. The Islamic studies program at the University of Melbourne provides students with the opportunity to study the development of Islamic thought and Muslim society from a broad multi-disciplinary perspective. Dedicated teaching staff provide expertise in areas ranging from modern Islamic hermeneutics, political thought and gender issues, to the study of economics and finance in Muslim societies. Students who specialise in Islamic studies develop transferable skills that will enhance their career options. They are also able to expand on their interest and knowledge through an articulated structure of higher degree study at the University of Melbourne.

Islamic studies is one of a number of programs that constitute the Melbourne Institute of Asian Languages and Societies (MIALS). The Institute was established in 1998 as a major teaching and research initiative to strengthen the University of Melbourne's role as a major international centre for studies in Asian languages and societies. Islamic studies addresses the issues relevant to the development of Islam as a religion and civilisation from its origins to the present. It draws on broad multi-disciplinary perspectives provided by subjects taught by the Departments of Anthropology, Arabic Studies, cultural studies, history, Indonesian studies, Philosophy, political science and Islamic Studies.

Prerequisites

The Islamic studies program commences in second year. The general prerequisite for entry is the completion of 50 points of first year from any area of study within the Faculty of Arts. Unless otherwise stated there are no specific prerequisites and subjects do not presuppose knowledge of the Arabic language.

Requirements for a major

A major in Islamic studies usually consists of nine 12.5 point subjects, totalling 112.5 points. It comprises:

- two first year subjects from any area of study (25 points) and;
- seven second/third year subjects (totalling 87.5 points). These must include:
 - 110-089 Understanding the Muslim World (*p.241*), the program's compulsory subject (12.5 points) and;
 - four subjects from the list of core subjects below (50 points) and;
 - two subjects from the list of optional subjects below (25 points).

Islamic studies subjects

Core subjects

Students must take **four** of the following core subjects towards their Islamic studies major in addition to the program's compulsory subject 110-089 Understanding the Muslim World (*p.241*). The usual prerequisite for entry to a third/fourth year subject is 37.5 points at second/third year in that area.

Second/third year subjects	Sem.
Compulsory subject	
110-089 Understanding the Muslim World (<i>p.241</i>)	1
Islamic studies	
110-014 Crime Politics & Law in Islamic Society (<i>p.242</i>)	N/A
110-090 Gender and Islam (<i>p.241</i>)	2
110-091 Islam and Political Activism (<i>p.242</i>)	2
110-092 Media Portrayal of Islam (<i>p.242</i>)	N/A
History	
131-046 Great Empires of Islamic Civilisation (<i>p.219</i>)	N/A
131-066 The Modern Middle East (<i>p.210</i>)	2
131-069 God Through History (<i>p.210</i>)	1
Third/fourth year subjects	Sem.
Islamic studies	
110-018 Islam and Questioning of Modernity (<i>p.242</i>)	1
110-093 Islamic Banking and Finance (<i>p.242</i>)	2

Optional subjects

Students must take **two** of the following optional subjects toward their Islamic studies major. Students must consult the relevant area of study entries in this Handbook to make sure that they meet the prerequisites, if any, for entry to these subjects.

Second/third year subjects	Sem.
Anthropology	
121-063 Culture Change and Protest Movements (<i>p.58</i>)	N/A
Arabic studies	
110-010 Arabic 3A (<i>p.63</i>)	1
110-011 Arabic 3B (<i>p.63</i>)	2
110-012 Arabic 4A (<i>p.63</i>)	1
110-013 Arabic 4B (<i>p.63</i>)	2
Cultural studies	
106-042 Postcolonial Cultural Studies (<i>p.145</i>)	2
106-064 Contemporary Cultural Studies (<i>p.147</i>)	2
English	
106-047 Art/Pornography/Blasphemy/Propaganda (<i>p.146</i>)	2
106-036 Postmodernism (<i>p.151</i>)	N/A
History	
131-025 Empire, Race and Human Rights: 1900-2000 (<i>p.206</i>)	1
131-034 Gender, Culture and Identity Politics (<i>p.207</i>)	1
131-036 Indonesian Nationalism (<i>p.207</i>)	1
Philosophy	
161-017 Does God Exist? (<i>p.289</i>)	2
161-023 Medieval Philosophy (<i>p.293</i>)	N/A
161-031 Metaphysics and the Nature of God (<i>p.294</i>)	N/A
161-034 Asian Traditions of Philosophy (<i>p.291</i>)	1
Sociology	
166-085 Identities & Action: Social Movements (<i>p.330</i>)	2

Honours

Currently there is no honours program in Islamic studies.

Career opportunities

The Islamic studies program is expected to be particularly attractive to students interested in working in an area where success depends at times on their understanding of Islam and Islamic culture. Examples of such areas include foreign affairs, international trade, immigration, ethnic affairs, journalism, social work and teaching.

For more information

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Second/third year subjects

110-089 Understanding the Muslim World

Credit points: 12.5 **HECS-band:** 1

Coordinator: Dr M Kamal & Assoc Prof A Saeed

Contact: A 1.5-hour lecture and 1-hour tutorial per week (*Semester 1*).

Description: This subject studies the images of Muslim societies prevalent in the West. For this, selected sections from Western literature and media will be examined. These images will be placed against the reality of the Muslim world - both past and present. Particular attention will be given to a study of the values, beliefs, practices and cultural rituals which have shaped Muslim societies. Students should become familiar with the origin and development of Muslim societies through these factors. Special attention will be given to both unity and diversity in the Muslim world, spanning across vast areas of Asia, Africa and Europe. Students will survey the ways in which Muslim life has changed under the impact of colonisation and partial westernisation, as a means of understanding how and how far Islam adjusts to changing circumstances.

Assessment: Written work totalling 4000 words.

Prescribed texts:

Materials prepared by the Institute.

110-090 Gender and Islam

Credit points: 12.5 **HECS-band:** 1

Coordinator: Dr M Kamal & Assoc Prof A Saeed

Contact: A 1.5-hour lecture and a 1-hour tutorial per week (*Semester 2*).

Description: This subject will explore gender and related issues in the Islamic cultural context. For this, it first reviews the theoretical formulations regarding the issues involved. Then it goes on to study and analyse relevant Muslim beliefs and practices. Writings of selected theorists of gender are examined critically. The issues involved are also studied in the light of the foundational texts of Islam to gain an understanding of Islamic beliefs and related positions. Writings by selected thinkers in the area of gender from the contemporary Muslim world are studied. Their views on prejudices against women, the circumstances within which gender-inequality may have emerged, and whether gender discrimination in Muslim societies is founded in the religious, cultural or meta-cultural spheres are analysed.

Assessment: Written work totalling 4000 words.

Prescribed texts:

Materials supplied by the Institute.

110-091 Islam and Political Activism

Credit points: 12.5

HECS-band: 1

Coordinator: Dr M Kamal & Assoc Prof A Saeed

Contact: A 1-hour lecture, a 1.5-hour audio-visual session and a 1-hour tutorial per week (*Semester 2*).

Description: This subject will look into the theological origins of Islamic political activism in the Qur'an and the Sunnah by studying the various relevant texts. It will trace the historical antecedents of contemporary Islamic political activism through a millennium and a half of the historical progress of Islam as a major political force in world history. The subject will explore the psychological and socio-political reasons behind Islam's rise in the 20th century. Theoretical analyses of the political psychology and socio-political class-structure behind the rise of Islamic political activism in modern times will be used for this purpose. Students will then proceed to study in greater detail the major Islamic political-activist movements in the Middle East, South and Southeast Asia, and North Africa. Students will also explore the implications of Islamic political activism for local and global peace and stability.

Assessment: Written work totalling 4000 words.

Prescribed texts:

Materials supplied by the Institute.

Third/fourth year subjects

110-093 Islamic Banking and Finance

Credit points: 12.5

HECS-band: 1

Coordinator: Assoc Prof A Saeed

Prerequisites: Students enrolling in this subject should normally have some familiarity with banking, finance or economics.

Contact: A 1.5-hour lecture and a 1-hour tutorial per week (*Semester 2*).

Description: This subject will introduce students to the nature and foundations of Islamic law and the important role it plays in the economic and financial institutions in the Muslim world. It will explore the growth of Islamic banking from the 1960s onwards into an international multi-billion dollar venture covering both the Islamic and non-Islamic worlds; the relationship between finance and Islamic law; basic principles of Islamic economics; the framework of Islamic finance; the nature of Islamic banking and finance; the concept of money in Islam; the prohibition of interest; the ethical dimension of Islamic banking; the financing mechanisms used in Islamic banking; and the supervision of Islamic banks both by the central banks and by the Shari'ah supervisory boards. A number of case studies of Islamic banks will be examined as well as key contracts and financial statements. Students will also explore how Islamic banking differs from the conventional interest-based banking system.

Assessment: A 2-hour examination and an essay of 2000 words or written work totalling 4000 words for third year. A 3-hour written examination and written work of 2000 words or written work totalling 5000 words for fourth year.

Prescribed texts:

Materials prepared by the Institute.

Fourth year subjects

110-018 Islam and Questioning of Modernity

Credit points: 12.5

HECS-band: 1

Coordinator: Dr M Kamal & Assoc Prof A Saeed

Prerequisites: Admission to the Postgraduate Diploma in Islamic Studies, or the Postgraduate Diploma or combined Honours in Arabic, or the Postgraduate Diploma or Fourth Year Honours in Asian Studies.

Contact: A 2-hour seminar per week (*Semester 1*).

Description: This subject is a study of Islam's historical experience as a major world religion and a politically dominant force that, with the onslaught of the modern European colonial power, had to come to grips with being vanquished and subdued. This colonial experience brought with it an ambivalent attitude towards modernity within Islam. As a result two major forms of reaction developed: to adopt modernity as the very reason behind the West's conquering power; or to resent and reject modernity as a part of the West which had to be fought. These positions are represented by the Modernist and Neo-Modernist trends, and the Revivalist and Neo-Revivalist trends. This subject explains the background and the substance of these trends, as they revolve around Muslims' questioning of modernity on the one hand, and rediscovering Islam as both an intrinsically modern culture in itself, and as an alternative to a westernising model of modernity.

Assessment: A 3-hour written examination and written work totalling 2000 words, or written work totalling 5000 words.

Prescribed texts:

Materials prepared by the Institute.

110-019 Researching Islam and Muslim Societies

Credit points: 12.5

HECS-band: 1

Coordinator: Assoc Prof A Saeed & Dr M Kamal

Contact: Regular meetings with supervisor. Regular on-line contact with the supervisor for masters students (*Semester 1, repeat 2*).

Description: This subject is taught in English and it deals with advanced studies in Islamic primary sources and methods of research in Islamic studies. It will cover issues such as the early development of main areas of Islamic studies; important primary sources of Islam; the methodologies followed in selected Shari'ah related areas of study; strengths and weaknesses in the so-called 'traditional' and 'modern' methods of research in Islamic studies; and the current state of research in selected areas of Islamic studies. Students will also undertake a small scale research project in Islamic studies and present the results in writing.

Assessment: A 3-hour written examination and written work totalling 2000 words, or written work totalling 5000 words.

Prescribed texts:

Materials prepared by the Institute.

Subjects not offered in 2001

Second/third year subjects not offered in 2001

110-014 Crime Politics & Law in Islamic Society

Note: Formerly available as 150-209/309. Students who have completed 150-209/309 are not eligible to enrol in this subject.

Credit points: 12.5

HECS-band: 1

Semester: Not Offered

Description: This subject explores the three key areas on which the Islamist movement has focused in constructing a just society and contrasts them with historical practice. Students will examine how Islamic law should operate in terms of its effects on women, the family, the economic and banking systems, and the education system; how the law should be enforced through the political and legal systems and the way in which specific penalties are used to define their Islamic character; and how the law is to be understood and interpreted in modern times on the basis of classical texts. Students will explore and analyse why the Islamist movement has emerged, and contextualise this by examining religious law in the Muslim world, the history of this law and its foundation texts, and the practice of law in the precolonial and colonial period. Finally students will look at the altered perspectives within Muslim societies under the pressures of local culture and modernity.

110-092 Media Portrayal of Islam

Credit points: 12.5

HECS-band: 1

Semester: Not Offered

Description: This subject will study the historical, psychological, cultural, political and economic reasons behind the Western perception and media portrayal of Islam as a menace. The experiences of the Crusades, and the period of colonisation and anti-colonial resistance will be studied from a number of thematic/theoretical angles. Due attention will be given to a theoretical analysis of the semiotics and psychology of the media representations. Students should become familiar with the phenomenon of orientalism and develop a critical analysis of the portrayal of Islam as a threat. This subject aims to assist in building mutual confidence between the Islamic and Western worlds. The benefits of a more tolerant coexistence and cooperation will also be briefly reviewed.