

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 multidisciplinary 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 multidisciplinary 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.

Diploma in Arts (Islamic Studies)

The Diploma in Arts (Islamic Studies) is only available to students who are currently enrolled in a degree course at the University of Melbourne. It consists of a three-year sequence of study, and adds one year to the duration of your degree.

Students must complete 25 points of first-year arts subjects and 75 points of second/third-year subjects selected from the lists below, including 110-089 Understanding the Muslim World (*p.1*). Alternatively, students who have completed appropriate background studies at first year may complete 100 points of second/third-year subjects from the list below.

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.1*), 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.1*).

Second/third-year subjects	Sem.
Compulsory subject	
110-089 Understanding the Muslim World (<i>p.1</i>)	2
Islamic studies	
110-091 Islam and Political Activism (<i>p.1</i>)	N/A
110-210 Muslim Philosophy and Thought (<i>p.2</i>)	2
110-211 Great Texts of Islam: Qur'an and Hadith (<i>p.2</i>)	N/A
110-215 Muslim Intellectuals and Modernity (<i>p.2</i>)	1
History	
131-046 Great Empires of Islamic Civilisation (<i>p.8</i>)	2
131-066 The Modern Middle East (<i>p.9</i>)	1
131-069 God Through History (<i>p.9</i>)	N/A

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.3</i>)	2
Arabic studies	
110-010 Arabic 3A (<i>p.3</i>)	1
110-011 Arabic 3B (<i>p.3</i>)	2
110-410 Arabic 4A (<i>p.3</i>)	1
110-411 Arabic 4B (<i>p.3</i>)	2
Cultural studies	
106-064 Contemporary Cultural Studies (<i>p.9</i>)	N/A
English	
106-036 Postmodernism (<i>p.6</i>)	1
History	
131-025 Empire, Race and Human Rights: 1800-2000 (<i>p.6</i>)	N/A
131-034 Gender, Culture and Identity Politics (<i>p.6</i>)	2
131-211 The History of the Arab-Israeli Conflict (<i>p.12</i>)	N/A
Philosophy	
161-017 Does God Exist? (<i>p.5</i>)	N/A
161-023 Medieval Philosophy (<i>p.6</i>)	1
161-031 Metaphysics and the Nature of God (<i>p.6</i>)	2
Sociology	
166-085 Identities & Action: Social Movements (<i>p.3</i>)	N/A

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

Availability: 2nd and 3rd year

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 2*).

Description: Students of this subject will study images of Muslim societies prevalent in the West. Selected excerpts from Western literature and media will be examined. These images will be considered in the context of the past and present Muslim world. Particular attention will be given to the values, beliefs, practices, and cultural rituals which have shaped Muslim societies. Students of this subject should become familiar with the origin and development of these societies. They will study both unity and diversity in the Muslim world, spanning Asia, Africa and Europe. Changes to Muslim life under the impact of colonialism and Westernisation will be studied as a means of understanding how Islam adjusts to changing circumstances.

Assessment: Written work totalling 4000 words.

Prescribed texts: A subject reader will be available.

110-091 Islam and Political Activism

Availability: 2nd and 3rd year

Credit points: 12.5

HECS-band: 1

Semester: Not Offered

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 sociopolitical reasons behind Islam's rise in the 20th century. Theoretical analyses of the political psychology and sociopolitical 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.

110-210 Muslim Philosophy and Thought

Availability: 2nd and 3rd year

Credit points: 12.5

HECS-band: 1

Coordinator: Dr M Kamal

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

Description: This subject is an introduction to Islamic philosophy and theology, tracing the major developments from their emergence to the present day. The subject will survey the early theological debates within their intellectual and sociopolitical contexts; the roots of the Sunni/Shi'i split, and the subsequent developments which led to the formation of theological schools within these two traditions; the translation of Greek philosophical works into Arabic; the development of philosophical schools in the Muslim world; and key contributions made by Muslim philosophers. Students will be introduced to some of the key works of great philosophers such as Ibn Sina, al-Farabi and Ibn Rushd. On completion of the subject students should be familiar with the early theological debates in the Muslim world, and their and sociopolitical contexts.

Assessment: Written work totalling 4000 words.

Prescribed texts: Materials supplied by the Institute.

110-211 Great Texts of Islam: Qur'an and Hadith

Availability: 2nd and 3rd year

Credit points: 12.5

HECS-band: 1

Semester: Not Offered

Description: This subject is taught in English and is an introduction to the foundation texts of Islam: the Qur'an and Hadith. Students will be introduced to the origins of the texts of the Qur'an and Hadith; their overall structure, content and style; their interpretation; and their functions in Muslim religious and social life. The subject will also cover the nature and development of Hadith literature; the history of the Hadith collections; and the place of the Hadith in various branches of Islamic thought. Students will be introduced to selected texts from the Qur'an and Hadith and their interpretation by leading authorities, both early and modern. Themes covered in the subject should assist students in understanding contemporary debates on the relevance of Islam in the modern period.

110-215 Muslim Intellectuals and Modernity

Availability: 2nd and 3rd year

Credit points: 12.5

HECS-band: 1

Coordinator: Assoc Prof A Saeed

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

Description: This subject is taught in English. It deals with Muslim intellectuals and their thought in the period 1850-2002, with particular focus on their attempts to come to terms with modernity and to deal with important issues facing Islam in the modern period, including human rights, religious pluralism, interpretation of the Qur'an, reform of Islamic thought and law, gender issues, war and peace. Texts will be selected from the works of intellectuals from a variety of backgrounds and orientations, from traditionalist, modernist, post-modernist, liberal to secular, with a view to demonstrating the diversity of approaches and positions among Muslim thinkers and intellectuals of the period. Selected texts may include, for example, extracts from the works of Abduh, Rida, Banna, Turabi, Mawdudi, Ghanushi, Qutb, Ahmad Khan, Arkoun, Khurshid Ahmad, Soroush, Mernissi, Hanafi, Mariyam Jameelah, Attas, Faruqi, Fazlur Rahman, Asad, Mutahhari, Khomeini, Shariati and Essak.

Assessment: Written work totalling 4000 words.

Prescribed texts: Materials provided by the Institute.

C Kurzman (ed), *Liberal Islam: A Source Book*, Oxford University Press, 1998. • J L Esposito & J O Voll, *Makers of Contemporary Islam*, Oxford University Press, 2001.