

Islamic Studies

Convener: 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.

Time commitment to study

As well as scheduled contact hours for lectures, tutorial and seminars a considerable additional time commitment is needed to complete the academic requirements of each subject.

A subject-specific time commitment to study will be provided by your lecturer or tutor at the beginning of semester to help you schedule your workload and successfully manage your time during the semester. In addition, general estimates of the total time commitment required to study a 12.5-point single semester subject in the Faculty of Arts can be found on page 1.

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:
 - the program's compulsory subject: 110-089 Understanding the Muslim World (*p.1*) (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 at least **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>)	1
Islamic Studies	
110-091 Islam and Political Activism (<i>p.2</i>)	2

Second/third-year subjects	Sem.
110-210 Muslim Philosophy and Thought (<i>p.2</i>)	1
110-211 Great Texts of Islam: Qur'an (<i>p.2</i>)	N/A
110-215 Muslim Intellectuals and Modernity (<i>p.2</i>)	1
110-222 Islam and Human Rights (<i>p.2</i>)	2
110-223 Islam and Muslims in Australia (<i>p.2</i>)	2
110-224 Islamic Mysticism (Sufism) (<i>p.3</i>)	2
History	
131-046 Great Empires of Islamic Civilisation (<i>p.8</i>)	N/A
131-066 The Modern Middle East (<i>p.10</i>)	Summer
131-069 God Through History (<i>p.10</i>)	2

Optional subjects

Students may take not more than **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>)	1
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.4</i>)	2
Australian studies	
102-211 Migrant Nation: Culture and Identity (<i>p.3</i>)	1
Cultural studies	
106-064 Contemporary Cultural Studies (<i>p.9</i>)	1
English	
106-036 Postmodernism (<i>p.6</i>)	2
History	
131-025 Empire, Race and Human Rights: 1800-2000 (<i>p.6</i>)	Summer
131-034 Gender, Culture and Identity Politics (<i>p.7</i>)	2
131-211 The History of the Arab-Israeli Conflict (<i>p.14</i>)	N/A
Philosophy	
161-017 Does God Exist? (<i>p.5</i>)	1
161-023 Medieval Philosophy (<i>p.6</i>)	N/A
161-031 Metaphysics and the Nature of God (<i>p.6</i>)	N/A
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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First/second-year subjects

110-089 Understanding the Muslim World

Availability: 1st and 2nd year

Credit points: 12.5

Coordinator: Dr M Kamal & Prof A Saeed

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

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: An assignment of 750 words 20% (due mid-semester), an essay of 2500 words 50% (due during the examination period), a tutorial journal of 750 words 20% (due during the examination period) and continuous tutorial participation 10%.

Prescribed texts: A subject reader will be available.

Second/third-year subjects

110-091 Islam and Political Activism

Availability: 2nd and 3rd year

Credit points: 12.5

Coordinator: Dr M Kamal & Prof A Saeed

Contact: A 1.5 hour lecture 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 sociopolitical reasons behind Islam's rise in the 20th century. Theoretical analyses of the political 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.

Assessment: An assignment of 750 words 20% (due mid-semester), an essay of 2500 words 50% (due during the examination period), a tutorial journal of 750 words 20% (due during the examination period) and continuous tutorial participation 10%.

110-210 Muslim Philosophy and Thought

Availability: 2nd and 3rd year

Credit points: 12.5

Coordinator: Dr M Kamal

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

Description: This subject is an introduction to Muslim philosophy and theology, tracing the development of the major schools and doctrines. 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 al-Farabi, Ibn Sina and Ibn Rushd. On completion of the subject, students should be familiar with the early theological and philosophical debates in the Muslim world, and their sociopolitical contexts.

Assessment: An assignment of 750 words 20% (due mid-semester), an essay of 2500 words 50% (due during the examination period), a tutorial journal of 750 words 20% (due during the examination period) and continuous tutorial participation 10%.

Prescribed texts: Materials supplied by the Institute.

110-211 Great Texts of Islam: Qur'an

Availability: 2nd and 3rd year

Credit points: 12.5

Semester: Not Offered

Description: This subject is taught entirely in English and is an introduction to the most important foundation text of Islam: the Qur'an which Muslims regard as the revealed word of God. It is the scriptural basis on which Muslims build their religious life and define the concepts of sacred and profane. Students will be introduced to the origins of the Qur'an; its overall structure, content; major themes; approaches to its interpretation; and its functions in Muslim religious, social and political life. Students will explore selected texts from the Qur'an in English translation 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

Coordinator: Prof A Saeed

Prerequisites: Usually completion of one Islamic Studies subject or permission from the coordinator.

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

Description: This subject, which is taught in English, deals with the life and thought of key Muslim intellectuals between 1850-2004. It examines attempts by Muslim men and women from a variety of backgrounds and orientations to come to terms with modernity as a Western project, while addressing critical issues facing Islam. The particular focus is the shaping of identity that is both modern and authentically Muslim. Areas for consideration include: renewal and reform (*tajdid wa islah*); the impact of colonialism and globalization on Muslim discourse; the implications of independent judgement versus emulation (*ijihad vs taqlid*) for contemporary ulama; and issues associated with civil society, such as human rights, gender and a free press. In order to demonstrate the diversity of approaches by Muslim thinkers of the period, texts will be selected from a range of sources: traditionalist, modernist, post-modernist, liberal and secular. These may include extracts from the following: 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: Assignment 750 words 20% (first half of semester), essay 2500 words 50% (examination period), tutorial journal 750 words, 20%, (examination period), tutorial participation 10% (on going).

Prescribed texts: C Kurzman (ed), *Liberal Islam: A Source Book*, Oxford University Press 1998. • JL Esposito and JO Voll, *Makers of Contemporary Islam*, Oxford University Press 2001.

110-222 Islam and Human Rights

Availability: 2nd and 3rd year

Credit points: 12.5

Coordinator: Prof A Saeed

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

Description: In the last half-century, some Muslim governments and their opponents have asserted the need to bring about truly Islamic government. Much of the argument has centred on the need for an Islamic system of human rights. A discourse has developed drawing on ideas unique to Islam expressed in the Qur'an and other religious sources, and on other concepts founded in the universalising ideas of modern international law. These are immediate and powerful issues for governments and oppositions, and also for very many refugees fleeing human rights abuses. This subject focuses on the tensions and contradictions underlying modern Muslim discourse on human rights. It concentrates on the mid-twentieth century to the present, but situates the arguments in the context of the Qur'an and of early Islam. It examines Islamic ideas about human rights and the engagement of Muslims in the debate as theoreticians, lawyers and victims. It discusses the challenge of the modern international human rights discourse and its universalist claims.

Assessment: An assignment of 750 words 20% (due mid-semester), an essay of 2500 words 50% (due during the examination period), a tutorial journal of 750 words 20% (due during the examination period) and continuous tutorial participation 10%.

Prescribed texts: AE Mayer, *Islam and Human Rights: Tradition and Politics*, Westview Press 1991.

110-223 Islam and Muslims in Australia

Availability: 2nd and 3rd year

Credit points: 12.5

Coordinator: Prof A Saeed

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

Description: This subject examines Islam in Australia past and present, including immigration, ethnic politics, revivalism and what many call Australian Islam. It explores how Muslims live in a culture that is secular and somewhat alien to the culture of Muslim majority countries. Students will consider several questions: how do Muslims, whether Australian-born or immigrant, negotiate the categories of Australian and Muslim? What shapes contemporary Muslim discourse in Australia? What role do Muslims play in creating a pluralist and harmonious multi-cultural society? What are the Australian Muslim organizations and where do they stand on a set of social or political issues? The subject will include visits to Muslim institutions in Melbourne and interaction with their communities.

Assessment: An assignment of 750 words 20% (due mid-semester), an essay of 2500 words 50% (due during the examination period), a tutorial journal of 750 words 20% (due during the examination period) and continuous tutorial participation 10%.

Prescribed texts: A Saeed, *Islam in Australia*, Allen and Unwin 2003. • A Saeed & A Shahram (eds), *Muslim Communities in Australia*, UNSW Press 2001.

110-224 Islamic Mysticism (Sufism)

Availability: 2nd and 3rd year

Credit points: 12.5

Coordinator: Dr M Kamal

Prerequisites: Usually completion of one Islamic studies subject or permission from the coordinator.

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

Description: Spirituality and Sufi understanding of life and reality have given inspiration to many people to achieve spiritual elevation and psychological satisfaction in life. This subject is intended to look into the Sufi Way as the spiritual dimension of Islam, its roots and philosophical meaning, and the factors which led to its emergence, its seeming conflict and reconciliation with the views of the Orthodox scholars, its socio-political dimensions as a popular religious trend, and such sufi practices as chanting, meditation and dance-like rituals. It also explores the various sufi brotherhoods, and analyses the relevance of the sufi dimension of Islam to contemporary society.

Assessment: An assignment of 750 words 20% (due mid-semester), an essay of 2500 words 50% (due during the examination period), a tutorial journal of 750 words 20% (due during the examination period) and continuous tutorial participation 10%.

Prescribed texts: A Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, The University of North Carolina Press 1975. • SH Nasr, *Sufi essays*, State University of New York Press 1991.

