

Middle Eastern Languages and Cultures

*Master of Arts
Doctor of Philosophy*

The Department of Middle Eastern Studies administers the master's and doctoral degree programs in Middle Eastern Languages and Cultures.

For More Information

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URL: <https://liberalarts.utexas.edu/mes/index.php>

Facilities for Graduate Work

University library holdings on the Middle East form one of the leading collections in North America. These include over 200,000 items in Arabic, Hebrew, Persian, Turkish, Kurdish, Tajiki, and Azerbaijani, among other relevant languages of the region. The collection includes a comprehensive set of Western-language reference works, general texts, monographs, and essential journals (print and electronic) that support teaching at all levels, alongside a large body of more specialized books, periodicals, manuscripts, archival documents, and electronic resources serving the needs of advanced researchers. Among the collection's strengths are robust holdings of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Arabic periodicals; works of Islamic law; Arabic, Persian, and Azeri literature; a unique set of microfilms of Arabic manuscripts of the Zaydis of Yemen; Middle East banking ephemera; Iranian cinema and film studies; a virtually complete set of Turkish and Azerbaijani periodicals that forms a unique national resource; and more than 2,000 volumes of census records on Middle Eastern countries. Among our unique Israeli resources are cinema periodicals in print, the literary journal *Iton 77* and the fanzine *Queer Eye* digital collections, a collection of publications (in Arabic) by the Palestinian Forum of Israel Studies based in Ramallah, and a collection of publications by the Zochrot NGO, Tel Aviv.

Electronic material supporting Middle Eastern studies is also extensive and includes electronic databases such as JSTOR and ATLA; the Perry-Castañeda digitized map collection; the *Encyclopedia of Islam*; *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur* and *Brockelmann in English*; *Foreign Office Files for the Middle East*; the *Kotobarabia* Arabic e-book collections; *The Encyclopaedia Judaica*; *Encyclopedia of Jewish History and Culture*, the *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World* and the Judaic Classics Library. The department has also donated to the main library a collection of approximately four thousand English-language books and reference works, some 10,000 digitized slides, and hundreds of films and periodicals. The Harry Ransom Center holds writers' personal papers, including those of T. E. Lawrence, Paul Bowles, Freya Stark, Richard Burton, and others with a special Middle Eastern connection. The Ransom Center has significant holdings relating to Judaica, including the Isaac Bashevis Singer Archive, the Leon Uris Archive, and a portion of the literary archive of Bernard Malamud. The Dolph Briscoe Center for American History holds the Development Communication Archive, donated by the federal Agency for International Development, which consists of more than 350 linear feet of original records on issues ranging from agriculture and the environment to health and community development; about a quarter of the documents cover Middle Eastern projects. University faculty members and students also have

access to vast centralized resources such as the Center for Research Libraries' (CRL) collection in Chicago and the digital, full-text searchable CRL Alliance Global Press Archive with Eastview.

Areas of Study

The Department of Middle Eastern Studies offers master's and doctoral degrees in Middle Eastern Languages and Cultures. At the doctoral level, students select a field of study from among the following: linguistics (historical linguistics or language pedagogy), literature & culture, history, Hebrew Bible/ancient Near East, or Islamic studies.

Graduate Studies Committee

The following faculty members served on the Graduate Studies Committee (GSC) in the spring 2025 semester.

Ahmad Agbaria	Mikiya Koyagi
Kamran S Aghaie	Shanti Kumar
Olla N Al-Shalchi	Tracie M Matysik
Kamran Ali	Mohammad A Mohammad
Samy Ayoub	A Azfar Moin
Hina Azam	Stephennie Mulder
David P Birdsong	Avigail Noy
Oeyvind Bjoeru	Jeannette Okur
Pascale R Bos	Athanasio Papalexandrou
Benjamin Claude Brower	Na'ama Pat-El
Jason M Brownlee	Esther L Raizen
Mounira M Charrad	Elizabeth Richmond-Garza
Heath Dewrell	Jonathan Wyn Schofer
Rasha Diab	Sonia T Seeman
Emily L Drumsta	Faegheh S Shirazi
Paul Edgar	Nahid Siamdoust
Patience L Epps	Denise A Spellberg
Karen Grumberg	Jeremi Suri
Jo Ann Hackett	Babak Tabarraee
John Huehnergard	Thomas Levi Thompson
Syed A Hyder	Bruce Wells
Jonathan Kaplan	Hannah Chapelle Wojciehowski
Tony Keddie	

Admission Requirements

Master of Arts

Offered by the Department for Middle Eastern Studies, the Master of Arts (MA) in Middle Eastern Languages and Cultures (MELC) is an interdisciplinary academic degree designed to broaden and deepen the student's knowledge of the languages and cultures of the Middle East prior to taking advanced PhD coursework. Courses taken at The University of Texas at Austin for the MA degree in MELC, but not the MA report or thesis courses, may count toward the hours required for the PhD. The MELC MA degree is to be taken as part of the MELC PhD program. It is not a terminal MA degree. Students who are interested in a terminal MA degree should consider the [MA in Middle Eastern Studies](#) offered by the Center for Middle Eastern Studies. The MA program in Middle Eastern Languages and Cultures is understood as a step in preparing students for the PhD. Students will not be admitted for the MA alone. The entering student must have a bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university.

Doctor of Philosophy

In applying to the doctoral program in Middle Eastern Languages and Cultures, students select an area of study from among the following: linguistics (historical linguistics or language pedagogy), literature & culture, history, Hebrew Bible/ancient Near East, or Islamic studies.

Through the course of their studies, students develop methodological expertise in at least one of the following areas: textual analysis, literary theory, linguistic theory, cultural theory, or the theories and methodologies of historical inquiry. Because scholarship in Middle Eastern languages and cultures requires a high degree of language proficiency, students normally complete a Master of Arts in the area of concentration before acceptance into the PhD program. In exceptional cases, the Graduate Admissions Committee may take extensive study outside of a master's program into account. For students specializing in a living language tradition, advanced proficiency in the language of concentration is required. Students focusing on the ancient Near East should have three years of Biblical Hebrew and either knowledge of Biblical Aramaic or experience with a second ancient Semitic language, as well as background in the critical study of the Hebrew Bible.