

MODERN MIDDLE EAST STUDIES (MODM)

The courses listed on this page are exclusive to the LPS BAAS degree (<https://lpsonline.sas.upenn.edu/features/what-bachelor-applied-arts-and-sciences-degree/>) and LPS Online certificates (<https://lpsonline.sas.upenn.edu/academics/certificates/>).

MODM 1000 The Middle East and the West

This course provides an overview of themes and issues in Middle Eastern history from the medieval era to the present, with an emphasis on encounters and exchanges between the "Middle East" (defined as Southwest Asia and North Africa) and the "West" (chiefly Europe and the United States). Key topics include perceptions of Islam since its inception, conflicts between predominantly Christian Europe and the Islamic world during the Crusades, East-West encounters during the age of exploration, European colonial domination of the Middle East from the 19th century, independence movements and the rise of nationalism in the 20th century, the Middle East and the Cold War, and the challenge of Islamist radicalism and anti-Western sentiment in recent times.

1 Course Unit

MODM 2000 Women and Gender in the Middle East

Depictions of Middle Eastern women frequently present them as voiceless, oppressed, and disadvantaged, and often cite Islam as the cause. This course explores the many complexities of gender and the position of women in the predominantly Islamic Middle East, surveying the major developments, themes, and problems in women's history from the medieval era to the contemporary period. Special emphasis will be placed on the role of women in foundational Islamic texts and the many interpretations of those texts regarding questions of gender. The course will also challenge the idea that gender divisions and the role assigned to women have been static throughout history, by tracing women's legal status, sexual morality, family life, and economic and political participation over time. Themes discussed include the importance of the harem and the influence of women in political life, the challenges posed by the impact of the West, women's reactions to these challenges, the return of Islam and Islamism, and the repercussions for women in dress, employment, and morality. The course will also consider gender norms and homoerotic relations. In addition, the course will also look at Western representations of the Oriental woman, the effects of colonialism and nationalism on Middle Eastern women, and the rise of Muslim women activist movements. We will also address the highly contested subject of veiling and consider the effects of modern US wars on Middle Eastern women. Seeking to go beyond just scholarly studies, this course will make use of art, documentaries, and literature in order to demonstrate how, in the modern period, women have defined themselves amid great political, social and economic turmoil.

1 Course Unit

MODM 2600 Oil, Politics in Mid East

Few issues have dominated the economic and political landscape of the Middle East over the past hundred years more visibly than oil. This course examines the historical, economic, political and social dimensions of petroleum exploration in the region, from the first major oil discoveries in Iran in 1908 to more recent attempts to diversify the regions economic and energy practices. Topics discussed include oil and economic development, colonialism and foreign oil exploration, petro-nationalism and the rise of OPEC, the Arab oil embargo of 1973, the significance of oil in the US-Saudi relationship, and the role of climate change and sustainability priorities in the Middle East.

1 Course Unit

MODM 3000 Religions Traditions Mid East

Understanding the modern Middle East is almost impossible without first developing an appreciation for the importance of its diverse religious traditions, and the role that religion has played in the development of the region since antiquity. This course examines the many ways that religion has functioned in Middle Eastern societies, beginning with ancient, pre-Islamic practices, such as the Zoroastrian religion of the Persian Empire, the development of Judaism among the ancient Israelites, and the spread of Christianity in the eastern Roman Empire. Of special interest will be the rise of Islam in the seventh century, and the development of unique and localized Islamic traditions in the rapidly expanding Arab empires of the medieval period. The class will focus on such themes as the differences between Sunni and Shia Islam, the position of non-Muslim minorities in Islamic history and the different responses offered by Muslims to the challenge of western hegemony in predominantly Muslim lands. The class will conclude by looking closely at the many ways religion is practiced in the Middle East today, from the official secularism of states like Turkey, to the post-revolutionary religious politics of the Islamic Republic of Iran, to the complex relationship between Judaism and Zionism in Israel, to the special challenges faced by Christian and other minorities in places like Egypt or Lebanon.

1 Course Unit

MODM 3200 America and Iran: 1720 to Present

In recent times, the United States and Iran have seemed closer to war than peace, but that is not where their story began. When the United States was in its infancy, Thomas Jefferson and John Quincy Adams turned to the history of the Persian Empire as they looked for guidance on how to run their new country. In the following century, Iranian newspapers heralded American politics and practices as ideals that their own government might someday emulate. How, then, did the two nations become the adversaries that they are today? In this course, we will trace the complex story of America and Iran over three centuries. Drawing on a range of primary sources, films and other historical materials, students will be expected to challenge easy notions of right and wrong, and instead seek to understand why each country has made the decisions it has made at various points in history. The ultimate goal will be to gain a deeper understanding of when, where and how it all went wrong for Iran and America and why, perhaps, it didn't have to be this way. Note: There will be one hour of synchronous meetings every Monday, at a time to be determined in consultation with registered students. Students are strongly urged to read the following two Wikipedia entries before the first day of class: 1979 Iran Hostage Crisis (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iran_hostage_crisis) and 1953 CIA Coup (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1953_Iranian_coup_d%27C3%A9tat)

1 Course Unit