Why Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies at Brandeis?

Brandeis offers students the unique opportunity to acquire a strong foundation in Islamic and Middle Eastern studies (IMES) in preparation for graduate work or jobs in the public sector and in various organizations with a focus on the modern Middle East. The IMES program is sponsored by the Department of Near Eastern and Judaic Studies, in conjunction with faculty in several other departments. Students, therefore, have an unusual opportunity to experience the intersection of Islam, Judaism, and Christianity, and to interact with faculty members representing a variety of disciplines.

Curriculum Overview

Students interested in Islamic and Middle Eastern studies (IMES) may pursue either a major or a minor.

The major in IMES requires the following:
• Four semesters of a Middle Eastern language (usually Arabic or Hebrew)
• A core course—Islam: Civilization and Institutions
• Two courses focusing on the classical period
• Two courses focusing on the modern period
• Three electives

Students who demonstrate exceptional achievements in their courses have the opportunity to write a senior honors thesis. This provides an opportunity to spend a year on a self-chosen research topic under the guidance of a faculty member.

The minor in IMES requires the following:
• Two semesters of a Middle Eastern language
• The core course
• One course focusing on the classical period
• One course focusing on the modern period
• Two electives

For those students who wish to pursue a graduate degree in this area of study, one option is the five-year combined BA/MA program offered by the Department of Near Eastern and Judaic Studies.
Electives for the IMES program span a wide range of topics covering the classical and modern periods. These courses are taught by internationally acclaimed research faculty who are also committed to excellence in teaching.

Elective courses include Political Islam, The Rise and Decline of the Ottoman Empire, History of the State of Israel, War and Peace in Israeli Thought and Practice, Describing Cruelty, The Arab-Israeli Conflict, Islamic Law, and Political Cultures of the Middle East.

Advanced IMES majors are often invited to attend 200-level courses. These include States and Minorities in the Middle East, Nationalism and Religion in the Middle East, History and Memory in the Middle East, and Social History of the Middle East.

Opportunities for Study Abroad
Undergraduates are encouraged to spend a semester in the Middle East. They can apply up to two courses taken in a recognized university in the region toward their major.

Opportunities beyond the Classroom
Students have the opportunity to hear lectures from renowned visiting scholars, both academics and experts on public policy, from the United States, Europe, and the Middle East. These lectures are usually organized by the Crown Center for Middle East Studies and by the Ethics Center. Recent visitors included Dennis Ross, Khalil Shikaki, and Sari Nuseibeh.

Career and Education Opportunities
Students completing a major in IMES often explore opportunities in government or public policy. Washington, D.C., and New York City offer many exciting opportunities in the areas of public policy and NGOs. An IMES major also provides the foundation for those wishing to pursue graduate studies.

Faculty
Following is a list of faculty members and their areas of specialization:

- **Avigdor Levy**, chair and advising head
  Middle Eastern studies

- **Tzvi Abusch**
  Languages and cultures of ancient Mesopotamia; ancient Near Eastern religions

- **Seyom Brown**
  International relations, world politics

- **Gordon Fellman**
  Social class, peace and conflict studies, Israeli-Palestinian conflict

- **Joseph Lumbard**
  Classical Islam

- **Kanan Makiya**
  Middle Eastern studies

- **Leonard Muellner**
  Ancient poetics, linguistics, mythology

- **Yitzhak Nakash**
  Middle Eastern studies

- **Wellington Nyangoni**
  Comparative Third World political economy

- **Ibrahim Sundiata**
  Africa: social history, slavery, the African diaspora

- **Ilan Troen**
  Israel studies