Minor in Middle-Eastern Studies

I. Overview

The Middle East dominates the news today and much of what we hear underscores just how poorly Americans understand the politics, culture, and history of the region. Because so much of what is at stake dwells on the present, interest in the Middle East, among our students and the general public, tends to focus on the contemporary setting. Yet this interest should not obscure the long history of the Middle East, reshaped with the Arab conquests of the seventh century CE, and with a legacy that continues into the present.

The Minor in Middle-Eastern Studies introduces students to this vast field, balancing very real interests in the contemporary with the demand that a sophisticated understanding of the Middle East requires significant exposure to the long history of Islam, the political history of the Mediterranean and western Asia, the ethnic and religious makeup of the pre-modern Middle East, and the rich culture that these engendered.

II. Curriculum

A. Transcript title:

Minor in Middle East Studies

B. Catalog Description

The Minor in Middle East Studies consists of a total 15 credits and 5 courses. Coursework must be distributed to meet the overlapping requirements below. (For example, PHIL 416: Medieval Philosophy can be used to meet both the pre-modern requirement and the upper-division requirement.)

- Area distribution (2 courses, 6 credits, minimum). Students must complete at least one course each in two geographical, linguistic, cultural, or religious areas. These may include the following: (a) the Arab world; (b) Iran and the Iranian world; (c) Jewish and Israel; (d) Turkish and Ottoman; and (e) Diaspora Studies. Other areas of concentration may be considered upon request.

- Premodern requirement. At least two courses (6 credits) must focus on the pre-modern (pre-20th century) Middle East. Students may fulfill this requirement through their area distribution or elective courses.

- Upper division requirement. At least three courses (9 credits) must be at the 300 or 400 level.

The balance of credits are electives and may be selected from the list of approved Middle East Studies courses. Students may strengthen their knowledge base in their selected areas, take courses in additional areas, supplement their courses with relevant language...
instruction (up to three credits at the instructional level), enroll in primary-text readings courses, or take inter-disiplinary or internationally focused thematic courses.

Additional restrictions:
Languages: Students may apply up to one course of language instruction (Arabic, Hebrew, or Persian; others by petition) toward the Minor. Such a course may only count toward 3 credits of the Minor. Advanced language courses that are content-focused (e.g., literature, philosophy, law) may be counted toward the Minor.

No more than six credits (2 courses) may count toward the student’s major.

Special topics courses, independent study, and special courses offered in Winter or Summer term may be counted toward the minor with the approval of the Advisor.

No more than six credits (two courses) may be taken at an institution other than the University of Maryland, College Park. However, at least six upper division credits applied to the minor must be taken at this university.

No course with an earned grade below 2.0 (“C”) may count towards a minor.

B. Courses
Languages
Four-year curricula for language instruction in Arabic, Hebrew, and Persian are in place, with further courses under review.

History, Literature, Culture of the Middle East

1. Pre-20th Century
ARCH 436 History of Islamic Architecture
   Prerequisite: ARCH221 or permission of department
GVPT 447 Medieval Arabic and Islamic Political Philosophy
HIST 120 Islamic Civilization
HIST 282/JWST 234 History of the Jewish People I
HIST 283/JWST 235 History of the Jewish People II
HIST 491 History of the Ottoman Empire
HIST 492 Women and Society in the Middle East
   Recommended: Prior coursework in Middle East studies or gender studies
JWST 466 Readings in Medieval Hebrew (where relevant)
   Prerequisite: HEBR212 or permission of department.
PHIL 417/ JWST 472 Golden Age of Jewish Philosophy
   Prerequisite: Three credits in philosophy or permission of department.
PHIL 416 Medieval Philosophy
   Prerequisite: Six credits in philosophy.
SPAN225 Cultures of the Contact Zone: Seville, Al-Andalus and the Atlantic World
SPAN 407 Jews, Moslems, and Christians in Medieval Spain
   Prerequisites: SPAN321, SPAN322, SPAN323, or SPAN324
PERS 351 Introduction to Persian Literature (3)
Currently under review:
PERS 454 The Epic Tradition in Iran (3)
PERS 455 The Persian Ghazal (3)
PERS 456 Sufism: Thought and Expression (3)

2. 20th-21st Century
ARAB 221 The Arab World Today through Readings in Translation
ARAB 282 The Arab-Israeli Conflict through Readings in Translation
GVPT 455 Contemporary Middle Eastern Politics
    Prerequisite: GVPT280 or GVPT282.
GVPT 485 Government and Politics of the Middle East
    Prerequisite: GVPT280 or GVPT282.
HIST 314 Crisis and Change in the Middle East and Africa
    Prerequisite: one course in History
HIST 376/JWST 342 History of Zionism and the State of Israel
HIST 392 History of the Contemporary Middle East
HIST 497 Islam in Africa
PERS 353 Iranian Life in Literature and Film
PERS 452 Modern Persian Literature: A Survey
    Prerequisite: Permission of department
WRLD 135 To Stem the Flow: The Nile, Technology, Politics and the Environment

Currently under review:
PERS 451 Introduction to Persian Literature (3)
PERS 453 Classical Persian Literature: A Survey (3)

3. Other
GVPT 448 Non-Western Political Thought (where topic is relevant)
    Prerequisite: GVPT 100; permission of department required for repeat.
HEBR 498 Special Topics in Hebrew (where relevant)

Courses by Region and Culture

1. The Arab World
ARAB 221 The Arab World Today through Readings in Translation
ARAB 282 The Arab-Israeli Conflict through Readings in Translation
GVPT 447 Medieval Arabic and Islamic Political Philosophy
GVPT 455 Contemporary Middle Eastern Politics
GVPT 485 Government and Politics of the Middle East
HIST 120 Islamic Civilization
HIST 314 Crisis and Change in the Middle East and Africa
    Prerequisite: One course in History.
HIST 392 History of the Contemporary Middle East
HIST 492 Women and Society in the Middle East
    Recommended: Prior study in Middle East Studies or gender studies.
2. Iran and the Iranian World
PERS 351 Introduction to Persian Literature (3)
PERS 353 Iranian Life in Literature and Film
PERS 452 Modern Persian Literature: A Survey
   Prerequisite: Permission of department
PERS 454 The Epic Tradition in Iran (3)
PERS 455 The Persian Ghazal (3)
PERS 456 Sufism: Thought and Expression (3)

3. Jewish and Israel
HIST 282/JWST 234 History of the Jewish People I
HIST 283/JWST 235 History of the Jewish People II
HIST 376/JWST 342 History of Zionism and the State of Israel
JWST 466 Readings in Medieval Hebrew (where relevant)
   Prerequisite: HEBR212 or permission of department

4. Turkish and Ottoman
HIST 491 History of the Ottoman Empire

5. Diaspora Studies.
HIST 282/JWST 234 History of the Jewish People I
HIST 283/JWST 235 History of the Jewish People II
HIST 314 Crisis and Change in the Middle East and Africa
   Prerequisite: One course in History
HIST 392 History of the Contemporary Middle East
SPAN225 Cultures of the Contact Zone: Seville, Al-Andalus and the Atlantic World

III. Faculty and Organization

1. Faculty
The Minor in Middle-East Studies is guided by an inter-departmental faculty committee from BSOS and ARHU. Current membership of the faculty committee consists of the following:

   Butterworth, Charles (Government and Politics, BSOS)
   Cooperman, Bernard (History, ARHU)
   Elgibali, Alaa (School of Languages, Literatures and Cultures, ARHU)
   Karimi-Hakkak, Ahmad (School of Languages, Literatures and Cultures, ARHU)
   Manekin, Charles (Philosophy, ARHU)
   Schwedler, Jillian (Government and Politics, BSOS)
   Telhami, Shibley (Government and Politics, BSOS)
   Zakim, Eric (School of Languages, Literatures and Cultures, ARHU)
   Zilfi, Madeline (History, ARHU)

The advisor for the Minor will be Charles Butterworth (GVPT, BSOS), but the Minor will reside in JWST (ARHU). For Learning Outcomes needs Jewish Studies will serve as the archive for the Program, and will provide other administrative support if needed. This
is an interim solution, we expect that a developing Middle East Studies program will provide an appropriate long term home for the Minor.

2. Advising
The advisor meets with Minor students each semester to approve the courses the student plans to take toward the minor. In cases where there is some thematic overlap between the student’s major and the Minor in Middle East Studies, the advisor will work with the student’s advisor to make sure that courses are not double-counted inappropriately.

Each semester, the advisor, in consultation with the Middle-East Studies faculty will produce a list of courses currently offered, with particular attention to special topics and other exceptional courses. Other courses may be applied to the Minor with the approval of the Advisor.