

## **LETTER OF INTENT**

**NAME OF THE COLLEGE:  
QUEENS**

**SPONSORING DEPARTMENT:  
CLASSICAL, MIDDLE EASTERN & ASIAN LANGUAGES & CULTURES**

**OFFICIAL NAME OF THE PROGRAM:  
BACHELOR OF ARTS IN MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES**

**DEGREE OF CERTIFICATE TO BE AWARDED:  
BACHELOR OF ARTS**

**ANTICIPATED DATE FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAM:  
SEPTEMBER 2010**

**DATE OF THE COLLEGE'S GOVERNANCE APPROVAL:  
TBA**

## 1. PURPOSE AND GOALS

The Department of Classical, Middle Eastern & Asian Languages & Cultures at Queens College proposes a Bachelor of Arts in Middle Eastern Studies.

The purpose of this program is to provide a practical curriculum choice comparable in structure to subject-oriented majors in the Humanities and Social Sciences, while utilizing some of the advantages of interdisciplinary programs through the incorporation of courses from other disciplines and participation of faculty from other departments (the model here is the departmental major in East Asian Studies). Currently, other departments offer a limited selection of Middle East courses, but there is little or no coordination between faculty with expertise in Middle East Studies. In fact, there is currently no undergraduate program in Middle Eastern Studies to be found anywhere within CUNY, and the growing number of students with an interest in this area have no where to turn to fulfill their goals (unless they look externally to NYU or Columbia). The creation of a major in Middle East Studies at Queens College will therefore fulfill a real need.

The goals of the program are to provide students with a broad introduction to Middle Eastern Studies principally but not exclusively through study of language, literature, history, and civilization. The major has a significant language requirement but does not require advanced language study. This design is typical of area studies majors in the United States, and would be contrasted with our language major in Hebrew or a potential language major in Arabic (which would entail 30 credits of advanced language study). The program will provide students with a liberal arts concentration that can serve usefully in a wide array of fields including law, politics, education, publishing, media, creative work and the arts, diplomacy, human rights, and international studies. Students can also combine study of the Middle East with other majors such as Economics, Business, Journalism, History, Philosophy, Comparative Literature, Jewish Studies, or Education.

The creation of a new major in Middle Eastern Studies is broadly supported. The 2006 Report of the External Evaluation Committee assessing the department's self-study "detected considerable student interest in Arabic," and even went on to recommend "the need for an additional Arabist, in order to do justice to the breadth of Islamic culture." The 2008-2013 Strategic Plan<sup>1</sup> of the College demands that we become "widely recognized for our programs in languages other than English, with instruction in Arabic... unrivaled in breadth and depth" (p.7). More broadly, both national and local trends show that interest in Middle East Studies has grown considerably in the recent past. Finally, the development of an undergraduate program at CUNY in Middle Eastern Studies is consistent with what has already taken place at the graduate level: An MA in Middle Eastern Studies has recently been approved at the Graduate Center.

---

<sup>1</sup> The 2008-2013 Strategic Plan can be viewed at:  
[http://www.qc.cuny.edu/qc\\_strategic\\_plan\\_2008-2013.pdf](http://www.qc.cuny.edu/qc_strategic_plan_2008-2013.pdf).

Overall, the presence of such a major on campus will draw attention to the importance of the region and the need to include the study of diverse aspects of its civilization, culture and history across the curriculum.

## **2. NEED**

The Middle East remains an historical source of civilizations, religions, legal codes, social structures, and cultural forms that have put their imprint on all aspects of modern Western civilization. Moreover, the Middle East remains a site of crucial geopolitical importance whose conflicts and contentions have taken center stage, not only in the 20th and 21st centuries, but throughout recorded history. The need to address this part of the world in all its aspects through reasoned academic discourse in an undergraduate setting in the largest public university system in the country seems self-evident. Courses in certain aspects of the Middle East offered at Queens College have drawn national attention; clearly, there is deep student interest.

That there is a need is also reflected in the enrollment patterns of courses related to the Middle East. Over the five-year period from 2004 to the present (and ignoring variations due to faculty leaves, etc), the department has enrolled an average of 125 students a semester in courses in Arabic and Middle Eastern Studies. These figures, which are given in detail in Appendix A, are higher more recently. The obvious conclusion is that interest in the Middle East is growing dramatically. The new major in Middle Eastern Studies will allow these students to pursue their interests in an appropriate academic context.

## **3. STUDENTS**

The Department of Classical, Middle Eastern & Asian Languages & Cultures enrolls an average of 125 students a semester in courses in Arabic and Middle Eastern Studies. If even 10% of these students decide to major in Middle Eastern Studies (or double major with more practical degrees such as Accounting, Economics, or Computer Science as is the pattern with the degree in East Asian Studies), within four years we will be graduating 12 majors a year (again as is the case with our degree in East Asian Studies).

## **4. CURRICULUM**

The proposal below is interdisciplinary, but the majority of courses are controlled by the Department of Classical, Middle Eastern & Asian Languages & Cultures. While we have received assurances from History, in particular, that they will continue to offer their courses related to the Middle East, it is still possible for a student to graduate by taking only courses within the Department.

A. Major in **MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES**

a. **Modern language** (6-14 credits)

Four semesters of language, at least two which must be college-level courses in Arabic (at an appropriate level). Other qualifying languages are Hebrew, Farsi, or Turkish. Credit for up to half of this requirement will be given to students who satisfy the College language requirement in one of the four languages.

*Discussion:*

*The requirement is designed so that all MES majors must study college-level Arabic for at least two semesters. For native or near-native speakers this will entail placement directly into (new) 300-level courses in Arabic. For others, it might be satisfied by Arabic 101-204. At a minimum, the requirement entails the study of Arabic 101-102 for anyone who takes or receives credit for another Middle Eastern language (e.g. Hebrew 101-102).*

b. **Introductory courses** (6 credits)

Two of:

- HIST 148 or HIST 149  
“Islamic Civilization 600-1517” or “Islamic Civilization 1517-Present”
- MES 160  
“Introduction to Islamic Civilization”
- MES 255  
“Modern Arabic Literature in Translation”

*Discussion:*

*The Major in Middle Eastern Studies focuses on the language, literature, and history of the Middle East. This is typical of programs preparing students for graduate study in Middle Eastern Studies (and the requirement here parallels exactly the requirements of the Major in East Asian Studies). The expectation is that MES 160 will also satisfy a Culture and Values PLAS requirement, and that MES 255 will also satisfy a W requirement.*

c. **Core courses** (12 credits)

Four of the following:

- HIST 204 “The Ancient Near East and Egypt”
- HIST 256 “History of Modern Israel”
- MES 155 “Sephardic Literature in Translation”
- MES 240 “Images of the Middle East”
- MES 250 “The Mystical Literature of Islam”
- MES 260 “Revival and Reform Movements”
- PSCI 240 “Contemporary Middle East”
- Any introductory course not already taken

*Discussion:*

*The courses listed here are generally more advanced or specialized versions of the material covered in the introductory course options.*

d. **Electives** (9 credits)

Three more electives:

Anything Arabic not taken above.

Anything MES not taken above.

Anything Hebrew not taken above.

Anything relevant to the Middle East college-wide.

*Discussion:*

*According to the 2005-2007 College Bulletin, college-wide offerings include (but are not limited to): Anthropology 212, Anthropology 290, Art History 203, Political Science 260, and Religious Studies 101 as well as courses in Jewish Studies and particular incarnations of courses in History and in Comparative Literature. With the recent appointment of a specialist in Islamic history in the History department, we anticipate that that department will have further offerings.*

e. **Senior Seminar** (3 credits)

- Middle Eastern Studies 380 “Research Seminar in Middle Eastern Studies”
- Any relevant 300-level course (for example, HIST 339 “Palestinian-Israeli Relations, 1967 to the Present”)

*Discussion:*

*MES 380 is a new course. “Prereq.: Major in Middle Eastern Studies with senior status or consent of the instructor. Students undertake a full-length research paper on a topic related to the Middle East. Students will learn research methods and academic writing as well as in-depth knowledge of the subject studied. May not be repeated for credit.”*

## B. Sample course of study

Year 1	Fall	MES 160	(1) Introductory course (PLAS)
	Spring	MES 255	(2) Introductory course (W)
Year 2	Fall	Arabic 101 HIST 000	(1) Modern language (1) Core course
	Spring	Arabic 102 MES 240	(2) Modern language (2) Core course
Year 3	Fall	Arabic 203 PSCI 240	(3) Modern language (3) Core course
	Spring	Arabic 204 MES 260	(4) Modern language (4) Core course
Year 4	Fall	Hebrew 101 HIST 256 MES 155	(1) Elective (2) Elective (3) Elective
	Spring	HIST 339	(1) Senior seminar

Electives in Middle Eastern Studies will be scheduled so that a minimum of three are offered every year. Currently, we offer one or two introductory courses during the summer, and we will continue this practice into the foreseeable future. If demand arises, we will offer courses for Weekend College as well. Given these various venues, and given that there is a steady demand, we foresee no problem in maintaining the courses required for this degree.

## 5. FACULTY

The Department of Classical, Middle Eastern & Asian Languages & Cultures has one full-time appointment in Arabic (Prof Mark Pettigrew). We also regularly employ one or two adjuncts who each teach from six to nine hours a week. With this staff, we regularly offers six to seven courses in Arabic language and Middle Eastern Studies each semester with total enrollments of approximately 125 students.

In addition, the department has two full-time appointments in Hebrew (Prof Sami Chetrit and Prof Ammiel Alcalay). We are in the process of appointing a third person in Hebrew for the Fall of 2009 (replacing Prof Emmanuel Goldsmith, who has retired).

Given the prominence of Arabic and Middle Eastern Studies in the 2008-2013 Strategic Plan, we have already proposed to the Dean of Arts And Humanities, the Provost, and the Vice-President for Institutional Advancement that we need at least one more full-time position in Arabic. Although that request is independent of this proposal, the creation of this degree will go some way towards demonstrating the importance of a new appointment in this area.

Additionally, while faculty with some degree of interest in the Middle East can be found throughout the College, the most significant recent appointment is that of Prof Kristina Richardson (specializing in the history of the Middle East) in History. Professors Pettigrew and Richardson, while both young at the College, have already begun to coordinate on their offerings (with a view to the structure of this degree).

## **6. COST ASSESSMENT**

The main (potential) cost associated with this proposal would be a new faculty line in Arabic, as noted above. Our current appointment in Arabic (Prof Mark Pettigrew) has sole responsibility for the entire program in language and literature, although his specialization is classical Arabic literature. Our hope would be to supplement him with an additional faculty member specializing in modern Arabic literature or possibly in some field of linguistics. An appointment of the latter kind would also have the responsibility of remaking and to modernizing our undergraduate curriculum in Arabic.

Additional costs will be associated with updating resources in the library and in the department. These may be in print, electronic, on-line. As the program grows, we might expect that our computer facilities will need to be updated and enlarged (the Department currently has a dedicated lab with eight computers, a smart board, and video capability). Presumably, a well-timed Tech Fee proposal can cover our future computer needs.

As noted above, the Dean of Arts and Humanities, the Provost, as well as the Vice-President for Institutional Advancement are all aware of this proposal and its implications for the College. We are currently applying to a number of external resources for funding (both short and long term).

## APPENDIX A: COURSE ENROLLMENTS 2004-2009

### Arabic Language

#### Arabic 101 (Elementary Arabic I)

S04	F04	S05	F05	S06	F06	S07	F07	S08	F08	S09
—	28	—	34	—	37	—	40	—	38	—

#### Arabic 102 (Elementary Arabic II)

S04	F04	S05	F05	S06	F06	S07	F07	S08	F08	S09
10	—	13	—	21	—	26	—	13	—	18

#### Arabic 203 (Intermediate Arabic I)

S04	F04	S05	F05	S06	F06	S07	F07	S08	F08	S09
—	6	—	10	—	11	—	16	—	15	—

#### Arabic 204 (Intermediate Arabic II)

S04	F04	S05	F05	S06	F06	S07	F07	S08	F08	S09
11	—	3	—	—	—	—	—	7	—	9

### **Arabic language totals**

S04	F04	S05	F05	S06	F06	S07	F07	S08	F08	S09
21	34	16	44	21	48	26	56	20	53	27

### Area Studies

#### History 148 (Islamic Civilization 600-1517)<sup>2</sup>

S04	F04	S05	F05	S06	F06	S07	F07	S08	F08	S09
—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

#### History 149 (Islamic Civilization 1517-Present)<sup>3</sup>

S04	F04	S05	F05	S06	F06	S07	F07	S08	F08	S09
—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	21

#### History 204 (The Ancient Near East and Egypt)

S04	F04	S05	F05	S06	F06	S07	F07	S08	F08	S09
—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	55

<sup>2</sup> A new course, to be offered for the first time in the Fall of 2009.

<sup>3</sup> History 149 is a new course, but it is currently being taught as a version of History 200 (Topics).

History 256 (History of Modern Israel)

S04	F04	S05	F05	S06	F06	S07	F07	S08	F08	S09
—	35	—	44	—	27	—	39	—	—	—

MES 155 (Sephardic Literature in Translation)

S04	F04	S05	F05	S06	F06	S07	F07	S08	F08	S09
16	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

MES 160 (History and Civilization of Islam)

S04	F04	S05	F05	S06	F06	S07	F07	S08	F08	S09
—	—	42	—	33	35	69	71	71	61	28

MES 240 (Images of the Middle East)

S04	F04	S05	F05	S06	F06	S07	F07	S08	F08	S09
—	—	—	—	21	—	12	—	6	—	—

MES 250 (Literature from the Islamic World)

S04	F04	S05	F05	S06	F06	S07	F07	S08	F08	S09
—	—	—	—	—	—	32	—	—	—	—

MES 255 (Modern Arabic Literature in Translation)

S04	F04	S05	F05	S06	F06	S07	F07	S08	F08	S09
39	—	39	44	—	18	—	8	12	—	24

MES 260 (Revival and Reform Movements)

S04	F04	S05	F05	S06	F06	S07	F07	S08	F08	S09
—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	22	—	20

Political Science 240 (Contemporary Middle East)

S04	F04	S05	F05	S06	F06	S07	F07	S08	F08	S09
—	—	—	—	—	—	27	54	—	35	—

**Area Studies totals**

S04	F04	S05	F05	S06	F06	S07	F07	S08	F08	S09
55	35	81	88	54	80	140	172	111	96	148

**Area Studies plus Language totals**

S04	F04	S05	F05	S06	F06	S07	F07	S08	F08	S09
76	69	97	132	75	128	166	228	131	149	175

The average over the period is approximately 125 students a semester. The trend is obviously upward.

## **APPENDIX B: COURSE DESCRIPTIONS**

Courses required for the major in Middle Eastern Studies. Additional electives will be created if and when the need arises. While some modifications are planned to existing courses, except for MES 380 (the Senior Seminar) none of these courses is new.

### **ARAB 101 Elementary Arabic I**

4 hr.; 4cr. Prereq.: ENGL 095 or equivalent. A beginner's course in modern Arabic, designed to give elementary control over the spoken and the written word; practice in reading elementary texts and in oral expression.

### **ARAB 102 Elementary Arabic II**

4 hr.; 4cr. Prereq.: ARAB 101 or equivalent. A continuation of ARAB 101.

### **ARAB 203 Intermediate Arabic I**

3 hr.; 3cr. Prereq.: ARAB 102 or equivalent. A continuation of ARAB 102.

### **ARAB 204 Intermediate Arabic II**

3 hr.; 3cr. Prereq.: ARAB 203 or equivalent. A continuation of ARAB 203.

### **ARAB 311 Advanced Texts [new course]**

3 hr.; 3cr. Prereq.: Permission of the instructor. Reading of selected modern texts with emphasis on expository style.

### **HIST 148 Islamic Civilization 600-1517**

3 hr.; 3cr. Introduction to the history of the Islamic conquest and expansion in the early Islamic period and the changes in Empire, from Spain to Iran, up through the Ottoman conquest of the Mamluk sultanate.

### **HIST 149 Islamic Civilization 1517-Present**

3 hr.; 3cr. Islamic history from the Ottoman conquest of Arab lands until the present day. Major themes will be the Ottoman Empire, European expansion into the Middle East, the Middle East during the World Wars, the Arab-Israeli conflicts, the Iran-Iraq war and the current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

### **HIST 204 The Ancient Near East and Egypt**

3 hr.; 3cr. The civilizations of the ancient Near East in three parts: Mesopotamia, Egypt, and the Levant. Includes the following common themes: relationship between religion and politics, the nature and importance of literacy, the public role of the military, and the evolution of law.

### **HIST 256 History of Modern Israel**

3 hr.; 3cr. The history of Israel from the founding of the state to the present; emphasis on the circumstances leading to the establishment of the Jewish state and on the domestic and foreign policy of Israel.

MES 155 Sephardic Literature in Translation (formerly HEBRW 155)

3 hr.; 3cr. This class will explore cultural, political, and social implications of works by writers from throughout the Middle East. Readings in English translation of the literature of Sephardic, Middle Eastern Jews from the late nineteenth century to the present.

MES 160 History and Civilization of Islam (formerly ARAB 160)

3 hr.; 3cr. Explores the institutions and intellectual traditions of the civilization of Islam from the days of the Prophet Muhammad through the modern period.

MES 240 Images of the Middle East

3 hr.; 3cr. Prereq.: ENGL 110 and sophomore standing. An investigation into the culture, history and politics of the Middle East through a wide range of sources, with an emphasis on analyzing how our knowledge of a culture or region is both created and processed through different forms of representation. Using films, literary texts, and media representations as primary resources (augmented by readings that provide cultural, historical, political, and theoretical background), students negotiate issues of narrative, point of view, and cultural history in order to explore the complexities of Middle Eastern cultures and peoples in both contemporary and historical contexts.

MES 250 Literatures from the Islamic World

3 hr.; 3cr. Prereq.: ENGL 110 and sophomore standing. Study of a wide range of literary genres and themes from the region usually defined as the Islamic world. The texts we will be engaging with are part of the Arabo-Islamic tradition, but are limited to neither the Arabic language nor the Muslim region. We will be reading, in English translation, texts originally written in Arabic, Hebrew, Persian, and other languages. One of the main goals of the course is to understand the wide array of influences making up the remarkably rich and diverse cultures of the Middle East. The course will cover a time period beginning with the pre-Islamic period (6<sup>th</sup> century C.E.) to the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

MES 255 Modern Arabic Literature in Translation (formerly ARAB 150)

3 hr.; 3cr. A study of Arabic novels and short stories to see how modern prose developed to express, confront, and challenge social, political, religious, and aesthetic issues in contemporary Arab society. We will examine themes such as gender, colonialism and post-colonialism, religion, "modernity," Israel/Palestine, language, and resistance. The course will also deal with issues of genre itself, examining Arabic fiction's classical roots and modern innovations; we will consider readings of these works on multiple levels, and by avoiding strict genre categorization, students will learn to better understand and appreciate the rich complexity of literary texts.

MES 260 Revival and Reform Movements in Islam (formerly ARAB 260)

3 hr.; 3cr. Prereq.: ENGL 110 and sophomore standing. An examination of movements of revival and reform that have evolved in various parts of the Islamic world from the eighteenth through the twentieth centuries. Some of these movements represent developments within Islam; others are responses to the pressures of political and social change brought about by colonialization and industrialization. All readings and discussions are in English.

MES 380 Research Seminar in Middle Eastern Studies [new course]

3hr., 3 cr.; Prerequisite: Senior status or permission of the instructor. Students undertake a full-length research paper on a topic related to the Middle East. Students will learn research methods and academic writing as well as an in-depth knowledge of the subject studied. May not be repeated for credit.

PSCI 240 Contemporary Middle East

3 hr.; 3cr. A survey of Middle Eastern governments, political processes, and political group behavior.