



Faculty of Social Sciences

SIMS55, Middle Eastern Studies: Islam and the Politics of Everyday Life in the Middle East, 7.5 credits

*Mellanösternstudier: Islam och vardagens politik i Mellanöstern,
7,5 högskolepoäng*
Second Cycle / Avancerad nivå

Details of approval

The syllabus was approved by Graduate School Board on 2020-02-25 to be valid from 2020-08-31, autumn semester 2020.

General Information

The course is offered as a single subject course in Social Sciences at the second-cycle level and as an optional course within the Master of Middle Eastern Studies.

Language of instruction: English

Main field of studies

Middle Eastern Studies

Depth of study relative to the degree requirements

A1F, Second cycle, has second-cycle course/s as entry requirements

Learning outcomes

Upon completion of the course, the student shall:

Knowledge and understanding

- Describe, explain and discuss central theoretical perspectives on power and representation and their relevance for understanding Islamic discourse and practice in the contemporary Middle East
- Demonstrate familiarity with current academic discussions about 'political Islam' and its application in state politics and Islamic movements, in relation to diverse, Middle Eastern national settings and histories
- Explain the role of Islam in the political dimensions and variations of everyday Middle Eastern life, demonstrating understanding of the potentially disciplinary, repressive, mobilising and as well as emancipatory functions of Islamic discourse and practice

Competence and skills

- Exemplify how Islamic concepts, rituals and commodities are discussed, interpreted and implemented by current actors, organisations and individuals in everyday social practices in contemporary Middle East societies
- Demonstrate an ability to describe the research situation within a delimited field of research concerning the role of Islamic discourse and practice, in various societies of the Middle East
- Demonstrate the ability to complete a theoretically informed and well-referenced, minor case study about the role(s) of religion in contemporary Middle Eastern society and provide nuanced and informed feedback on the case study of a fellow student

Judgement and approach

- Demonstrate the ability to reflect on the extent to which socio-economic and political-strategic circumstances in the Middle East affect current debates about the political, social and cultural functions of Islamic discourse and practice
- Theoretically assess scholarly discussions on the role of Islam in relation to political processes, from trans-regional, regional, state-centred, and/or local perspectives
- Using a scholarly approach, assess the impact of religious discourses, constructions and practices on the legal regulations and patterns of social control of individuals and groups in the Middle East, on the grounds of ethnicity, gender and sexuality

Course content

This course aims to move beyond over-simplified and dichotomous approaches to the complex set of phenomena we refer to as 'Islam'. It explores the complexity of the social processes defining, constructing and traversing Islamic discourse and Muslim practice.

Based on joint readings, discussions and presentations of recent academic research, this course theoretically and empirically explores the impact of Islamic discourse and Muslim practice in contemporary Middle Eastern societies, from social, political and cultural perspectives. Two main questions underpin the readings, discussions and assignments:

- How do Islamic concepts, practices, norms and ideals (and debates thereupon) interrelate with broader socio-economic and political-strategic trajectories in the Middle Eastern region?
- What are the power effects of Islamic/Muslim discourse and practice (or the critique thereof), from individual, social, political, cultural, consumerist and strategic perspectives?

The course is organised in four thematic sections, to the following effect:

1. Theorising religion, power and representation in the Middle East.
Here the course addresses some essential theoretical perspectives for the study of religious discourse and practice in the Middle East. Central are anthropological and political scientific perspectives on religious discourse, power and representation.
2. Imagining religious order(s) and communities.
Here, the course turns to empirical perspectives on the role of religious discourse and practice in Middle Eastern societies – while keeping the theoretical engines running. The section starts by revisiting the complex relation of 'religion' and

'politics' in empirical detail and how it currently plays out in various national settings.

3. Religious consumption, affect, embodiment and visual (re)presentation.
Going beyond dichotomies such as sacred/secular, public/private and government/civil society, the third section explores realities outside of 'traditional' political institutions, contributing to the 'fuzziness' of religious discourse and practice and its relation to power and politics.
4. Individual specialisation, presentation & opposition.
The last two weeks of the course are devoted to an individual essay-project, where the student focuses on a topic of choice relating to Islam in the current Middle East and discusses it in relation to one or several theoretical perspectives covered during the course. Individual essays are presented during a final seminar, where the student also offers oral feedback on another student's essay.

Course design

The teaching of this course is run in a seminar format, meaning that group discussions (in pairs, smaller groups or within the entire class) will take place at every class meeting.

Unless there are valid reasons to the contrary, compulsory participation is required in every class meeting. Students who have been unable to participate due to circumstances such as accidents or sudden illness will be offered the opportunity to compensate for or retake compulsory components. This also applies to students who have been absent because of duties as an elected student representative.

Assessment

The assessment of the course consists of three written assignments and one oral assignment:

- Assignment 1: Theory reflection paper
- Assignment 2: Research review paper
- Assignment 3: Final essay: individual specialisation
- Assignment 4: Final seminar discussion + written talking points

All written assignments must include in-text references and a list of cited works. The assignments are to be submitted through the Internet course platform by the set deadline.

The course includes opportunities for assessment at a first examination, a re-sit close to the first examination and a second re-sit for courses that have ended during that school year. Two further re-examinations on the same course content are offered within a year of the end of the course. After this, further reexamination opportunities are offered but in accordance with the current course syllabus.

The examiner, in consultation with Disability Support Services, may deviate from the regular form of examination in order to provide a permanently disabled student with a form of examination equivalent to that of a student without a disability.

Subcourses that are part of this course can be found in an appendix at the end of this document.

Grades

Marking scale: Fail, E, D, C, B, A.

The grade for a non-passing result is Fail. The student's performance is assessed with reference to the learning outcomes of the course. For the grade of E the student must show acceptable results. For the grade of D the student must show satisfactory results. For the grade of C the student must show good results. For the grade of B the student must show very good results. For the grade of A the student must show excellent results. For the grade of Fail the student must have shown unacceptable results.

At the start of the course, students are informed about the learning outcomes stated in the syllabus and about the grading scale and how it is applied on the course.

The grade distribution is as follows:

- Assignment 1 (Theory reflection paper): 20 percent
- Assignment 2 (Research review paper): 20 percent
- Assignment 3 (Final essay: individual specialisation): 40 percent
- Assignment 4 (Final seminar discussion + written talking points): 20 percent

All assessed components are awarded points which will be added up to a total on which the final grade is based. The grade for the entire course consists of the average grade of all assessed assignments. For a grade of Pass on the entire course, the student must have been awarded at least E on all assessments. The student must also have participated in all compulsory components.

Entry requirements

To be eligible for the course the student must have a Bachelor's degree equivalent to 180 credits.

Oral and written proficiency in English equivalent to English 6/B (advanced) from Swedish upper secondary school is a requirement. International qualifications will be assessed in accordance with national guidelines.

Further information

The course replaces CMEN18 Middle Eastern Studies: Exploring Religion in Contemporary Middle Eastern Societies. The courses CMEN18 and SIMS55 cannot be included in a degree together.

Subcourses in SIMS55, Middle Eastern Studies: Islam and the Politics of Everyday Life in the Middle East

Applies from H20

2001 Islam and the Politics of Everyday Life in the Middle East, 7,5 hp
Grading scale: Fail, E, D, C, B, A