



Faculty of Social Sciences

**CMEN18, Middle Eastern Studies: Exploring Religion in  
Contemporary Middle Eastern Societies, 7.5 credits**  
*Mellanösternstudier: Att utforska religion i Mellanösterns samtida  
samhällen, 7,5 högskolepoäng*  
Second Cycle / Avancerad nivå

---

### Details of approval

The syllabus was approved by Center for Middle Eastern Studies Board on 2018-05-30 to be valid from 2018-09-03, autumn semester 2018.

### General Information

The course is an elective component of the second semester of the Master of Science (120 credits) programme in Middle Eastern Studies, 120 credits.

It is also offered as a freestanding course.

*Language of instruction:* English

*Main field of studies*

Middle Eastern Studies

*Depth of study relative to the degree requirements*

A1N, Second cycle, has only first-cycle course/s as entry requirements

### Learning outcomes

For a Pass on the course, students shall be able to

#### Knowledge and understanding

- demonstrate specialised knowledge of and ability to summarise and describe fundamental features of religious reforms and forms of organisation in the modern societies of the Middle East and how they interact with national political movements and post-colonial factors
- demonstrate the ability to describe key concepts of religious studies such as secularism, modernism, theocratism, sectarianism, conservatism, orthodoxy, radicalism and different types of revivalist movements of relevance to the societies

of the Middle East

- demonstrate specialised knowledge and ability to exemplify how religious concepts and norms have been applied in central policy texts and institutions as well as in broader social and cultural practices in the societies of the Middle East in recent decades

### **Competence and skills**

- demonstrate a specialised ability to identify and apply social constructivist, intersectional and post-colonial perspectives to the role of religion in social, political and cultural processes
- demonstrate a specialised ability to describe how key religious concepts have been discussed, interpreted and implemented by current actors, organisations and social practices in the societies of the Middle East
- demonstrate an ability to describe the research situation within a delimited field of research concerning the role of religion in the societies of the Middle East
- demonstrate the ability to complete a minor case study about the role of religion in the societies of the Middle East and provide nuanced and informed feedback on the case study of a fellow student

### **Judgement and approach**

- demonstrate specialised understanding of and ability to assess the extent to which socio-economic and political-strategic circumstances in the Middle East affect current debates about the social functions of religion
- demonstrate a specialised ability to draw conclusions about geopolitical, national and local effects of current debates on religion and their applications in the Middle East
- use a scholarly approach to assess the impact of religious discourses, constructions and practices on the legal regulation and social control of individuals and groups in the Middle East on the grounds of ethnicity, gender and sexuality

### **Course content**

The course enables students to explore theoretical and empirical perspectives on current discussions about the role of religious practices and discourses in the present-day societies of the Middle East. It is theoretically based on constructivist intersectional and post-colonial perspectives on the role of religion in social, political and cultural processes. Students are trained on the one hand to assess how debates about the potential social functions of religion are linked with broader socio-economic and political-strategic relations in the region and on the other hand to assess the power effects of religious discourses and practices (or discourses and practices critical of religion) on the levels of individuals and societies.

Starting with an historical overview of the region's processes of modernity and reform from the mid-nineteenth century onwards and the national independence movements in the twentieth century, the course mainly focuses on the period from the end of the Cold War and the increased geopolitical complexity that has since then characterised the region and affected the role of religion in political discourses and practices. Geographically, the focus is on the so-called Arab world, Israel, Turkey and Iran.

During the course, the students are to monitor and critically analyse the intense previous and ongoing debates in the Middle East about the role of religion in modern

and late modern society. The students engage in specialised study of key concepts such as secularism, modernism, theocracy, sectarianism, conservatism, reformism, orthodoxy, radicalism and different types of revivalist movements. How have they been interpreted by influential thinkers and activists? How have they been implemented in political/social organisations, campaigns, strategies, policy statements and constitutions? And what is the geopolitical, national and local impact of such applications?

The course recurrently provides critical perspectives on how approaches to religious concepts, ritual usage and historiography affect power relations. What role is played by religious narratives with regard to control, disciplining and repression or the interrogation of hegemonies, political hierarchies and forms of organisation? What is the impact of broad religious discourses and constructions on the legal and disciplinary regulation of practices, for example with regard to ethnic, gender-related and sexual rights and identity processes?

The students will explore such perspectives based on a rich and varied empirical material, and will have the opportunity both to specialise individually and to engage in joint exploration in seminars. The types of empirical material include texts, images, online material and arts and culture. Besides exploring formal texts of religious policy, such as constitutions and policy statements from influential organisations, the course highlights how religious norms and references are implemented with innovative devices in a late modern and globalised context: in the fashion industry, cultural life and control of public spheres.

## Course design

The teaching consists of lectures, seminars and exercises.

Unless there are valid reasons to the contrary, compulsory participation is required in seminars and exercises. 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 is individual and based on 4 assignments. The major final written home assignment consists of an empirical case study chosen by the student. The oral report is to have the form of a critical commentary of a fellow student's case study. The assessment is divided into the following elements:

Home assignment 1 20%

Home assignment 2 20%

Home assignment 3 40%

Oral report 20%

The course includes opportunities for assessment at a first examination, a re-sit close to the first examination and a second re-sit exam for courses completed in the past academic year (catch-up exam). Two further re-takes on the same course content are offered within a year of a major change or discontinuation of the course. After this, further re-examination 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 highest grade is A and the lowest grade for a Pass is E. The designation for a Fail grade is U.

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 have shown unacceptable results.

The course grade is based on the grading scale

A = 92- 100 % of the total points

B = 84- 92 % of the total points

C = 76- 84 % of the total points

D = 68- 76 % of the total points

E = 60- 68 % of the total points

U = 0- 59 % of the total points

All assessed assignments are graded and their combined grades determine the grade for the whole course.

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.

### **Entry requirements**

To be admitted to the course, students must be admitted to the Master of Science programme in Middle Eastern Studies (120 credits) or have passed courses amounting to 150 credits including a Bachelor's degree project or the equivalent.

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

## Subcourses in CMEN18, Middle Eastern Studies: Exploring Religion in Contemporary Middle Eastern Societies

Applies from V19

1901 Exploring Religion in Contemporary Middle Eastern Societies, 7,5 hp  
Grading scale: Fail, E, D, C, B, A