

MIDDLE EAST STUDIES MINOR

2020-2021 Assessment Report

1. IDENTIFYING INFORMATION

- (a) Name of Program: Middle East Studies Minor (*hereinafter* MES)
- (b) Type of Program: Undergraduate Minor Program
- (c) CAS Division: Social Sciences
- (d) Submitters & Points of Contact: Nora Fisher-Onar, Coordinator, nfisheronar@usfcaedu

2. MISSION STATEMENT

Our program introduces students to the historical, religious, and political trends that have shaped the Middle East. Drawing upon diverse and comparative perspectives, the minor facilitates a broad understanding of the Middle East that takes into account the complexity and richness of the region. The minor enables students to understand the historical contributions of the Middle East to human civilization and the importance of the Middle East to international politics today.

3. PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon completion of a minor or the BAIS Regional Concentration in Middle Eastern Studies, students will:

- 1) Demonstrate an understanding of the major issues and problems facing the greater Middle Eastern/North African region and be able to relate this knowledge to a broader global context.
- 2) Gain the conceptual and analytical tools to understand how politics, economics, history, international relations, and culture shape Middle Eastern national and regional dynamics.

4. SUMMARY OF PAST ASSESSMENTS

In the 2019-20 Academic Year, then coordinator Lindsay Gifford submitted a report in keeping with the “alternative template” permitted during the peak of the pandemic in which she assessed pandemic era programming challenges. The document reflected upon lessons learned from the transition to remote learning. These included elements which were adaptable to the remote learning environment (e.g. lecture and discussion via Zoom; homework reading; films, papers and projects) while noting that some elements of MES pedagogy were untenable during the pandemic (e.g. field research project, in-person interviews and study abroad)

The current coordinator does not have access to pre-pandemic MES assessments.

5. ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW

The MES minor entails three required courses (from a menu of four) for 12 units and elective courses for 8 units. The core courses are:

ANTH 270 Mideast Peoples and Cultures

THRS 373 Introduction to Islam

POLS 349 Government and Politics of the Middle East OR POLS 354 International Relations of the Middle East

The interdisciplinary minor also draws on a wide range of elective course offerings with substitutes available on a case-by-case basis depending on in-house USF and study abroad selection in a given academic term.

Currently listed courses include Art, History, INTD, Politics, Sociology, and Theology offerings such as:

Islamic Art; Sex and Transgression in the Islamic World; The Ancient Near East; Late Antiquity; Living Muslim History; Islamic Empires; The Modern Middle East; Beyond Bridges: Israel-Palestine (summer); Beyond Bridges: Israel-Palestine (CEL); U.S. Middle East Policy; Social Justice and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict; FYS: Engaging Political Islam; Introduction to the Qur'an; Who is Jesus?; Islam in the Modern and Contemporary World; Jews, Judaisms, and Jewish Identities; and Israeli-Palestinian Conflict Through Literature and Film

The program also benefited from a Faculty Advisory Board (FAB) composed of six, engaged members: Nora Fisher-Onar, Lindsay Gifford, Aaron Hahn Tapper, Aysha Hidayatullah, Oren Kroll-Zeldin, Sadia Saeed, Taymiya Zaman, and Stephen Zunes.

6. METHODS

* Direct assessment of PLO1 through correct responses on final examination of MES minors enrolled in our core course, THRS373: Introduction to Islam, taught by Aysha Hidayatullah

* Direct assessment of PLO2 through response paper response to another core course, ANTH270: Middle East Peoples and Cultures, taught by Oren Kroll-Zeldin.

* Direct assessment of PLO2 through final paper submissions of another core course, POLS349: Comparative Politics of the Middle East, taught by Stephen Zunes.

Course: THRS 373-01 Introduction to Islam
Term: Spring 2021
Assignment: Final exam (multiple choice questions)
Number of MES major/minors enrolled: 6

OUTCOME ASSESSED: PLO1

FINDINGS: With only two incorrect answers out of a possible thirty-four responses, with the six enrolled MES students appear to have successfully acquired an understanding of key “issues and problems facing the greater Middle Eastern/North African region;”

LIMITATIONS: The ability to, in turn, “relate this knowledge to a broader global context” as required by the section of PLO1 is not ascertainable on the basis of the data assessed. Moving forward, it may be useful to base assessment on a wider range of student work.

1. Figure associated with state doctrine in modern Saudi Arabia =Ibn Abd al-Wahhab

Correctly answered: 4 students

Incorrectly answered: 2 students

2. The third Shia imam was killed in the Battle of =Karbala

Correctly answered: 6 students

Incorrectly answered: 0 students

3. Led the Iranian Revolution =Ayatollah Khomeini

Correctly answered: 6 students

Incorrectly answered: 0 students

4. The mosque named after the first imam (and also the site of his grave) is located in =Najaf

Correctly answered: 2 students

Incorrectly answered: 4 students

5. In which country was the Muslim Brotherhood founded? =Egypt

Correctly answered: 6 students

Incorrectly answered: 0 students

6. Where is this architectural structure located? [picture of Blue Mosque provided] =Turkey

Correctly answered: 6 students

Incorrectly answered: 0 students

7. Where is this architectural structure located? [picture of Dome of the Rock provided]

=Jerusalem

Correctly answered: 6 students

Incorrectly answered: 0 students

8. The country with the world’s largest population of Shias is: =Iran

Correctly answered: 6 students

Incorrectly answered: 0 students

Course: ATHR270 Mideast Peoples and Cultures
Term: Spring 2021

OUTCOME ASSESSED: PLO2

FINDINGS: Upon review, these four response papers from enrolled MES students, outputs demonstrated variable degrees of mastery of: “conceptual and analytical tools to understand how politics, economics, history, international relations, and culture shape Middle Eastern national and regional dynamics” in keeping with PLO2. All items were written in the idiom of personal reflection, and three out of the four (75%) engaged meaningfully with key authors, concepts and written and media texts from the field of MES.

LIMITATIONS: Only four MES students were enrolled. In future years, it may be useful to base assessment on a wider range of student work.

Course: POLS349 Comparative Politics of the Middle East
Term: Spring 2021

OUTCOME ASSESSED: PLO2

FINDINGS: Upon review, these well-developed final research projects applied the theoretical toolkit of the course to timely case studies, demonstrating considerable mastery of: “conceptual and analytical tools to understand how politics, economics, history, international relations, and culture shape Middle Eastern national and regional dynamics”.

LIMITATIONS: Only three MES students were enrolled and Professor Zunes was only able to locate two of the papers, respectively. In future years, it may be useful to base assessment on a wider range of student work.

* “Understanding Tunisian Migration to Italy: How the Arab Spring and COVID-19 Impacted Tunisian-Italian Relations”

* “China’s Extraction and Importation in North Africa Effectuating Foreign Dependency.”