

Contemporary Asian Academic Debates 2 (A005651)

Course size *(nominal values; actual values may depend on programme)*

Credits 3.0 **Study time 90 h**

Course offerings and teaching methods in academic year 2025-2026

A (semester 2)	English	Gent	lecture	0.0h
			seminar	0.0h
			independent work	0.0h

Lecturers in academic year 2025-2026

Chenganakkattil, Muhamed Riyaz	LW21	lecturer-in-charge
Ashraf, Muhammed Niyas	LW21	co-lecturer

Offered in the following programmes in 2025-2026

	crdts	offering
Master of Science in Teaching in Languages(main subject Oriental Languages and Cultures)	3	A
Master of Arts in Oriental Languages and Cultures(main subject China)	3	A
Master of Arts in Oriental Languages and Cultures(main subject India)	3	A
Master of Arts in Oriental Languages and Cultures(main subject Japan)	3	A
Master of Arts in Oriental Languages and Cultures(main subject Middle East Studies)	3	A
Master of Arts in Art History, Musicology and Theatre Studies	3	A
Exchange Programme Cultures and Languages in Context	3	A
Exchange Programme Global Studies and World Societies	3	A
Exchange Programme Oriental Languages and Cultures	3	A

Teaching languages

English

Keywords

Indian Ocean, Asia, Africa, Middle East, Southeast Asia, South Asia, East Asia, India, Islam, Humanities, Philosophy, Literature, Art History, Global History, migration, historicity, culture, society, transregional networks, intellectual tradition, book culture, material culture, literary tradition, global islam

Position of the course

This elective course widens students' perspective through a humanities lens by exploring **Muslim cultures and societies across the Indian Ocean**. It examines transregional connections and multilingual sources (translated to English), emphasizing their relevance to the region's pluralistic societies, expanding knowledge about Islam beyond Arabo-centric regions and multidirectional flows of Muslims alongside their exchanges with non-Islamic cultures.

Contents

Spanning East Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, South Asia, and Southeast Asia, the Indian Ocean has long been a dynamic arena of cross-cultural exchange, migration, and interconnected histories. This course explores Muslim cultures and societies

across this oceanic rim from the 7th century to the present, tracing how merchants, scholars, and travelers forged transregional networks that linked diverse Islamic communities while engaging with non-Islamic societies. Alongside texts, we analyze oral traditions, material culture, architecture, travelogues, and multilingual sources to highlight the lived experiences of Muslims across littoral zones, challenging the center-periphery binary in global Islamic history. Students will learn how these interactions catalyzed the formation of varied Muslim societies along the coastlines, resulting in multilingual literary traditions, hybrid rituals, and political ideologies, reflecting the Indian Ocean's role as a crucible of global Islam. Emphasizing local agency and connectivity, the course underscores exchanges between Muslim and non-Muslim societies, from the Swahili Coast to the Malay Archipelago and South China Sea. Designed for students of history, literature, anthropology, philosophy, and political science, it offers critical insights into the pluralistic, adaptive nature of Islamic cultures while centering voices from the Indian Ocean's interconnected margins.

Initial competences

No prior knowledge of region or languages is necessary, but the student must be enrolled in a Master's program in related disciplines.

Final competences

- 1 Gain a comprehensive understanding of the historical and cultural dynamics that have shaped Muslim societies in the Indian Ocean region.
- 2 Appreciate the diversity and pluralism inherent in Islamic traditions across different regions and communities.
- 3 Understand the significance of the Indian Ocean as a conduit for religious, cultural, and economic exchanges in the Muslim and non-Muslim world.
- 4 Develop the ability to critically analyze literary and historical sources within their specific cultural and temporal contexts.

Conditions for credit contract

Access to this course unit via a credit contract is unrestricted: the student takes into consideration the conditions mentioned in 'Starting Competences'

Conditions for exam contract

This course unit cannot be taken via an exam contract

Teaching methods

Seminar, Lecture, Independent work

Extra information on the teaching methods

- **Lecture:** the lecturer gives an exposé on their background material (very broad state of the art), research questions, hypotheses, methodologies and outcomes
- **Seminar:** in groups, students discuss the material to develop their own research questions, hypotheses, etc.
- **Independent work:** the teacher gives the students articles, excerpts (translated in English), and videos, etc. to go through prior to the lectures.

Study material

Type: Syllabus

Name: Contemporary Asian Academic Debates 2: Muslim Cultures and Societies across the Indian Ocean

Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty

Optional: yes

Language : English

References

Alpers, Edward A. *The Indian Ocean in World History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Alpers, Edward A. *East Africa and the Indian Ocean*. Princeton, N.J.: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2009.

Pearson, Michael N. *The Indian Ocean*. New York and London: Routledge, 2003.

Feener, R. Michael, and Terenjit Sevea, eds. *Islamic Connections: Muslim Societies in South and Southeast Asia*. Singapore: ISEAS–Yusof Ishak Institute, 2009.

Topan, Farouk, and Stéphane Pradines. *Muslim Cultures of the Indian Ocean: Diversity and Pluralism, Past and Present*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2023.

Sheriff, Abdul, and Engseng Ho. *The Indian Ocean: Oceanic Connections and the Creation of New Societies*. London: C. Hurst & Co. Publishers, 2014.

Course content-related study coaching

Upon appointment (face-to-face or on MS Teams) or by email with lecturers

Assessment moments

end-of-term and continuous assessment

Examination methods in case of periodic assessment during the first examination period

Written assessment

Examination methods in case of periodic assessment during the second examination period

Oral assessment

Examination methods in case of permanent assessment

Participation, Presentation

Possibilities of retake in case of permanent assessment

examination during the second examination period is possible in modified form

Extra information on the examination methods

- **Essay:** a short essay based on ideas and materials related to the subject taught in the course.
- **Oral exam:** an interactive session with each student to assess the ability to analyze and comprehend the ideas and materials taught in the classroom.
- **(group) presentation and participation:** the student develops other research questions, hypotheses and methodologies to suit, based on the material presented, with special attention to valorization.

Calculation of the examination mark

- **Essay:** 40%
- **Oral exam:** 40%
- **(Group) presentation and participation:** 20%

Facilities for Working Students

1. Possible exemption from educational activities requiring student attendance
2. Possible alternative examination on a different time in the same academic year
3. Alternative time for feedback: possible through email, telephone, or upon appointment