

Islam, Power and History: Text and Context (A005138)

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

Credits 6.0 **Study time 180 h**

Course offerings and teaching methods in academic year 2026-2027

A (semester 2)	English	Gent	seminar	0.0h
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Lecturers in academic year 2026-2027

Van Steenbergen, Jo	LW21	lecturer-in-charge
Markiewicz, Christopher	LW03	co-lecturer

Offered in the following programmes in 2026-2027

	crdts	offering
Master of Science in Teaching in Arts and Humanities (main subject History)	6	A
Master of Science in Teaching in Languages (main subject Oriental Languages and Cultures)	6	A
Master of Arts in Oriental Languages and Cultures (main subject Middle East Studies)	6	A
Master of Arts in Global Studies	6	A
Master of Arts in History	6	A
Exchange Programme Oriental Languages and Cultures	6	A

Teaching languages

English

Keywords

Islamic political theory, Islamic history, power, ideology, Islamism, caliphate, salafism, jihadi-salafism, community, jihad, Islamic state, Islamic democracy, modernity, orientalism

Position of the course

This course, pitched at the graduate academic level (master), builds on the knowledge and skills acquired in a BA-degree programme of Arabic and Islamic Studies, or equivalent. The course brings together various academic subjects that involve Islamic political thought, its study within —especially— the context of history and cultural studies, and (Arabic) text study (possibly in translation) at intermediate to advanced levels.

Contents

This course consists of a thorough study in regular seminars, from various empirically as well as theoretically informed perspectives, of themes relevant for an understanding of Islamic political theory and politics of truth in past and present. Subjects are annually selected in the context of contemporary relevance and/or the scholarly priorities of students and teacher. Reading and review assignments of, amongst others, relevant Arabic texts (possibly in translation) are an important contributing component.

Subjects that may be considered include: Islam and power, Islam and knowledge, Islam and the state, caliphate and imamate, Sunnism and Shiism, ideal leadership and ideal community, history and memory, politics and historiography, legitimacy and identity, Islamic norms and discursive realities, author and audience, extremism and orthodoxy, Islam and modernity.

Initial competences

BA in Arabic and Islamic Studies, in History, or equivalent (including academic knowledge at undergraduate level of Islam as a religious, socio-cultural and historical phenomenon)

Final competences

- 1 To identify and problematise the complexity of Islamic political thought in past and present.
- 2 To identify and problematise the added value of different disciplines for the resolution of complex questions pertaining to Islamic political thought.
- 3 To identify and problematise current theoretical discussions in the academic field of Islamic political thought.
- 4 To identify and problematise current empirical discussions in the academic field of Islamic political thought.
- 5 To apply independently current theoretical discussions in the academic field of Islamic political thought.
- 6 To apply independently current empirical discussions in the academic field of Islamic political thought.
- 7 To interpret results of individual research about Islamic political thought and to apply these in academically valid ways.
- 8 To reflect critically and in independent and systematic ways about learning, thinking, deciding and acting in the context of Islamic political thought.
- 9 To construct valid academic arguments around complex problems related to Islamic political thought.
- 10 To engage in written and oral communication, with peers and with others, about the results of independent learning, thinking and acting with respect to complex questions related to Islamic political thought.
- 11 To collaborate, in a context of diversity, trans-cultural realities, and historical consciousness, on complex questions related to Islamic political thought.
- 12 To have a critical consciousness about the relevance of knowledge about Islamic political thought for a variety of current social issues, events, debates and opinions.
- 13 To have a critical consciousness about the significance of an advanced knowledge of 'Classical' and Modern Standard Arabic for gaining access to the context of current social issues, events, debates and opinions related to Islamic political thought.

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

Extra information on the teaching methods

Integrative seminar: reading and written assignments, presentations, debates, ... coordinated by the teacher, and with particular attention to meaningful engagements with relevant Arabic text collections (potentially in translation).

Study material

Type: Reader

Name: Reader Islam, Power and History

Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty

Optional: no

Language : English

Available on Ufora : Yes

References

- P. Webb, *Imagining the Arabs. Arab Identity and the Rise of Islam* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016)
- Y. Rapoport, *Becoming Arab: The Formation of Arab Identity in the Medieval Middle East* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2025)
- M. Hassan, *Longing for the Lost Caliphate: A Transregional History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018)
- M. El-Merheb, *Political Thought in the Mamluk Period: The Unnecessary Caliphate* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2022)
- N. Hofer, *The Popularisation of Sufism in Ayyubid and Mamluk Egypt, 1173-*

1325 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015)

- P. Crone, *God's rule: government and islam. Six hundred years of medieval islamic political thought* (Columbia UP, 2004)
- A. Black, *The history of Islamic political thought: from the Prophet to the present* (EUP, 2001)
- W.M. Watt, *Islamic Political Thought* (EUP, 1968)
- A.K.S. Lambton, *State and government in medieval Islam: an introduction to the study of Islamic political theory: the jurists* (OUP, 1981)
- A. Afsaruddin, *Excellence and precedence: medieval islamic discourse on legitimate leadership* (Brill, 2002)
- A. Afsaruddin, *Striving in the Path of God: Jihad and Martyrdom in Islamic Thought* (OUP, 2013)
- T. Khalidi, *Arabic Historical Thought in the Classical Period* (CUP, 1994)
- L. Marlowe, *Counsel for Kings: Wisdom and Politics in Tenth-Century Iran* (EUP, 2016)
- J. Van Steenbergen, *Caliphate and Kingship in a fifteenth-century literary history of Muslim Leadership and Pilgrimage* (Brill, 2016)
- N. Yavari, *Advice for the sultan: prophetic voices and secular politics in medieval islam* (OUP, 2014)
- H. Kennedy, *The Caliphate* (Penguin, 2016)
- Ibn Khaldūn, *Le livre des exemples. Tome 1. Autobiographie. Muqaddima*, trans. Abdesselam Cheddadi (Paris: Gallimard, 2002); idem, *De Muqaddima*. vert. Heleen Koesen, Djûke Poppinga & P.J.A. N. Rietbergen (Amsterdam: Bulaaq, 2008); idem, *The Muqaddimah: an introduction to history*, transl. Franz Rosenthal (London: Routledge, 1958)

Course content-related study coaching

Continuous feedback as a component of the interactive teaching method;
electronic platform Minerva

Assessment moments

continuous assessment

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

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

Examination methods in case of permanent assessment

Participation, Assignment

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

Continuous assessment: preparation and active participation, papers, presentations
(detailed information will be provided at the start of the course)

Calculation of the examination mark

100% continuous assessment

Facilities for Working Students

- 1 No exemption from attendance requirements possible.
- 2 Feedback can be given by email or by appointment during office hours

For more information concerning flexible learning: contact the monitoring service of the Faculty of Arts and Philosophy