

## Culture in Perspective: the Near East and the Islamic World (A005152)

**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 2025-2026**

A (semester 2)

English

Gent

lecture

independent work

**Lecturers in academic year 2025-2026**

Janssen, Caroline

LW21

lecturer-in-charge

**Offered in the following programmes in 2025-2026**

**crdts**

**offering**

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 China)

6

A

Master of Arts in Oriental Languages and Cultures(main subject India)

6

A

Master of Arts in Oriental Languages and Cultures(main subject Japan)

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

Exchange Programme Cultures and Languages in Context

6

A

Exchange Programme Global Studies and World Societies

6

A

Exchange Programme in Political and Social Sciences

6

A

Exchange Programme Oriental Languages and Cultures

6

A

**Teaching languages**

English

**Keywords**

Cultural history, Social history, history of mentalities, research perspectives, Arabic and Islamic Studies, Quranic Studies (the Qur'anic context), Arabic literature, Arabia, Near East, Ethiopia, cultural heritage

**Position of the course**

This course places well-defined themes from the culture/cultural history of the Near East and the world of Islam in a broad cultural perspective and analyses the dynamics of scholarly research from this point of view.

This course contributes to the following learning outcomes: 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4, 5.5.

**Contents**

Culture in perspective is a course which focuses on the interpretation of complex themes. The student is familiarized with research perspectives and their impact on the outcome of an investigation. Complex relations between cultures are the focal point of this course.

Different themes are explored.

In the first part the interwovenness of the cultural traditions of the Near East and Arabia is the focal point. The central theme is the story of the Queen of Sheba.

The second and most important part of this course is devoted to the Qur'anic discourse about prophets known from the Hebrew Bible, and in particular on Jesus and Mary, and research perspectives in the field of Early Qur'an Studies.

A third part is devoted to the figure of Shaytan.

The interconnectedness of the religious traditions of the Near East, Ethiopia and Arabia is shown, as well as the links between the three main monotheistic religions

Judaism, Christianity and Islam. It is made clear that not only the 'Great Texts' but also oral and apocryphal traditions are essential for the study of the context in which the Qur'an took shape.

We deal with the question why the Qur'anic discourse on Mary and Jesus is different from that of the New Testament, what the Qur'an 'does' with the traditional accounts on the prophets of the Near East, and why. The Quranic text is juxtaposed to Christian subtexts.

A case study from the Ancient Near East will show the challenges and pitfalls of interdisciplinary approaches.

Students elaborate a theme themselves for which a concise framing will be provided. The theme of the year will be announced at the beginning of the course. Students will be given the freedom to choose an orientation in accordance with their own interests.

### **Initial competences**

This course is meant for advanced students. They have a BA level in Oriental Languages and cultures, or a minor in this field, or another field in which cross-fertilisation is possible (history, political studies, religious studies, anthropology, economics, ...). An open and critical attitude and curiosity about other cultures is essential. This course is also open for international students and will be taught in English.

### **Final competences**

- 1 Students have an insight in the complex relations between Judaism, Christianity and the Quranic context.
- 2 Students realize that religions are diverse and have not always been what they are today; they understand that religion is more than a collection of dogmas.
- 3 Students know the main theories on the origin of the Quran and they can identify different research cultures. They have an insight in the complexity of the field.
- 4 Students learn how to be empathic and engage in the interreligious dialogue with respect for other people's opinions.
- 5 Students understand that daring to think means that one questions the existing order including results of research on a permanent basis.
- 6 Students can make a distinction between the Qur'anic context, the Qur'an as text and the interpretations of Qur'anic exegesis

### **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**

Students prepare seminars by reading texts or articles. Students are encouraged to respond and reflect, in the group, on their choices and positions.

### **Study material**

Type: Syllabus

Name: The Queen of Sheba, the Devil and Jesus and Mary in the Qur'an

Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty

Optional: no

Available on Ufora : Yes

Online Available : No

Available in the Library : No

Available through Student Association : No

### **References**

Abboud (2014), Husn Abboud, *Mary in the Qur'an. A Literary Reading*. London & New York.

Anthony (2014), Sean W. Anthony, "Muhammad, the Keys to Paradise, and the *Doctrina Iacobi*: a Late Antique Puzzle." *Der Islam* 91, 2014, pp. 243-265.

Bowersock (2013), Glen W. Bowersock, *The Throne of Adulis. Red Sea Wars on the*

*Eve of Islam (Emblems of Antiquity)*. Oxford.

Donner (2002-2003), Fred M. Donner, "From Believers to Muslims: Confessional Self-identity in the Early Islamic Community." *Al-Abhath* 50-51, 2002-2003, pp. 9-53.

Dye (2015), Guillaume Dye, "The Qur'ān and Its Hypertextuality in Light of Redaction Criticism." *Paper for the Fourth Nangeroni Meeting on Early Islam: The Sectarian Milieu of Late Antiquity?* (online raadpleegbaar op [https://www.academia.edu/12358270/The\\_Quran\\_and\\_its\\_Hypertextuality\\_in\\_Light\\_of\\_Redaction\\_Criticism](https://www.academia.edu/12358270/The_Quran_and_its_Hypertextuality_in_Light_of_Redaction_Criticism))

Janssen, C. 2018, Maria, Jesus en de keten van revelaties en profeten. Een hypothese wat de Koran *doet* met de protagonisten van het christendom, vanuit welke mogelijke gronden en met welk effect, Brussel.

Khalidi, T. 2003: The Muslim Jesus, Harvard.

Lange, Chr. 2016: Paradise and Hell in Islamic Traditions, Cambridge.

Lange, Chr. 2017: Mohammad. Perspectieven op de profeet, Amsterdam.

Robin (2015), Christian Robin: Le judaïsme de l'Arabie antique, Turnhout.

Robin (2012), Christian Robin, "Arabia and Ethiopia." In: Scott Fitzgerald Johnson (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Late Antiquity*. Oxford, pp. 247-332.

Rubin (1990), Uri Rubin, "*Ḥanīfiyya* and Ka'ba. An Inquiry into the Arabian Pre-Islamic Background of *dīn ibrahīm*." *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 13, 1990, pp. 85-111.

Shoemaker (2003), Stephen J. Shoemaker, "Christmas in the Qur'ān. The Qur'ānic Account of Jesus' Nativity and Palestinian Local Tradition." *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*, 2003, pp. 11-39.

#### **Course content-related study coaching**

Active support during online sessions and through Ufora. Students who face difficulties can contact me through e-mail.

#### **Assessment moments**

end-of-term and continuous assessment

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

Oral assessment, Participation, Presentation, Assignment

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

Oral assessment

#### **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

#### **Extra information on the examination methods**

PE: written assignment and participation during online sessions.

NPE: oral exam about the classes, reading materials and assignments.

#### **Calculation of the examination mark**

PE 50% (10% participation, 20% presentation, 20% assignments)

NPE 50%

If a part of the exam is not taken and the final score would be more than 10/20 the final score will be reduced to the highest non-pass score. When unsatisfactory grades are obtained on parts of the exam the final mark may be lowered.

#### **Facilities for Working Students**

1. Possible exemption from educational activities requiring student attendance.

2. Possible rescheduling of the examination to a different time in the same academic year

3. Alternative time for feedback is possible

Students need to send an e-mail (mention as subject: "werkstudent CIP") and schedule an appointment **before Oct. 1st.** in order to work out a solution.

For more information concerning flexible learning: contact the monitoring service of the faculty of Arts and philosophy

