

Introduction to the History of Islamic West Asia (600-1800) (A005455)

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

Credits 5.0 **Study time 150 h**

Course offerings and teaching methods in academic year 2026-2027

A (semester 2)	Dutch	Gent	lecture group work independent work
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Lecturers in academic year 2026-2027

Van Steenbergen, Jo LW21 lecturer-in-charge

Offered in the following programmes in 2026-2027

	crdts	offering
Bachelor of Arts in Oriental Languages and Cultures(main subject Arabic and Islamic Studies)	5	A
Bachelor of Arts in Oriental Languages and Cultures(main subject China (China Track))	5	A
Bachelor of Arts in Oriental Languages and Cultures(main subject China (UGent Track))	5	A
Bachelor of Arts in Oriental Languages and Cultures(main subject India)	5	A
Bachelor of Arts in Oriental Languages and Cultures(main subject Japan)	5	A
Bachelor of Arts in History	5	A
Bachelor of Science in Political Science	5	A
Micro-credential Introduction to Islamic History and Religion	5	A
Exchange Programme Oriental Languages and Cultures	5	A
Linking Course Master of Arts in Gender and Diversity	5	A
Linking Course Master of Arts in History	5	A
Linking Course Master of Arts in Multilingual Communication: a combination of at least two languages	5	A
Linking Course Master of Arts in Translation: a combination of at least two languages	5	A
Preparatory Course Master of Arts in History	5	A
Preparatory Course Master of Arts in Multilingual Communication: a combination of at least two languages	5	A
Preparatory Course Master of Arts in Translation: a combination of at least two languages	5	A
Elective Set Arabic and Islamic Studies	5	A
Elective Set Culture and Society	5	A
Elective Set History	5	A
Elective Set Languages of Asia, the Middle East and Eastern Europe	5	A
Elective Set Religion Studies	5	A
Elective Set Southeast-European Language	5	A

Teaching languages

Dutch

Keywords

History, Islam, Late Antiquity, Middle Ages, Early Modernity, Islamic world, West-Asia, Middle East, empire formation, identity formation, Arabs, Turks, Mongols, Persians, introduction/survey

Position of the course

This introductory module allows students to gain a first insight into the history and research of the West-Asian Islamic world between the 7th and 18th centuries. 'Introduction to the History of Islamic West-Asia' is complementary with the module

'Introduction to Islam en Being Muslim', and it prepares for the module 'Politics of the Contemporary Middle East'.

Contents

This module enables the acquisition of a general framework for the history and the historical enquiry of the central Islamic lands, West-Asia (the Middle East, the Mashrek) in particular. The aim of this module is to stimulate insight into the formation of the Islamic world and into the key developments that characterise this region's history from late antiquity till the early modern period (7th-18th centuries). This module endeavours especially to acquaint students with the academic discourses shaping current knowledge of the Islamic past, and of processes of empire/state and identity formation in particular. As a result, the module offers a framework of substance and attitudes that enables an academically grounded understanding of this past and its repercussions for the region's current situation.

The module is divided into two major blocks, corresponding to the two main chronological cycles that make up pre-modern Islamic history. The first block runs from the rise of Islam in the early 7th century until the complete disintegration of the Abbasid empire in the 10th century. The second block runs from the multiple invasions of the Islamic world by Turco-Mongol people, in the 11th century and beyond, until the transformation of early modern empires in the 18th and 19th centuries. In each block, discussions of processes of state and identity formation are prioritised, enriched with considerations of important social, religious and other phenomena and of cases from historical research.

subjects:

- Western Asia in Late Antiquity (6th-7th centuries)
- Muhammad and the Caliphate of Medina
- The Arab Empire of the Umayyads
- The classical period of the Abbasids
- The disintegration of the Abbasid empire
- Invasion of West Asia: 'Turks' and 'Franks'
- Recovery and Globalization in West Asia: Zangids, Ayyubids and Mongols
- Empire formation and revolution in West Asia: the Cairo Sultanate and the Timurids
- Early Modern Empires in Western Asia
- A World of Change: Persians, Ottomans, Sunnis, Shiites and many others

Initial competences

learning outcomes secondary education

Final competences

- 1 To define and describe key evolutions in the history of Islamic West-Asia (7th-18th centuries)
- 2 To explain the historical processes that have shaped the premodern Islamic world
- 3 To connect the historical processes that have shaped the premodern Islamic world
- 4 To define a clear and relevant historical framework for Islamic history
- 5 To engage with key academic issues and debates on premodern Islamic history
- 6 To understand the value of source texts (in translation) for premodern Islamic history
- 7 To compare academic texts on premodern Islamic history
- 8 To co-operate in group on a specific in-depth assignment regarding premodern Islamic history

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

Access to this course unit via an exam contract is unrestricted

Teaching methods

Group work, Lecture, Independent work

Extra information on the teaching methods

Lectures concern weekly meeting in which the teacher engages from various perspectives with the subjects of the textbook, possibly also with the aid of audiovisual and digital materials. Students are expected to prepare for lectures from the textbook, including by the weekly formulation of a relevant question. **Individual study** consists of a list of terms that are essential for the history of Islamic West-Asia.

Group and independent work consist of a portfolio-assignment (only students of Arabic and Islamic Studies) or a reading assignment (all other students), as a first encounter with a very specific aspect of that source material and its academic study. This furthermore includes the weekly preparation and formulation of a relevant question for the lectures.

Alternative arrangements can be made for **exchange students** who do not have a sufficient proficiency in Dutch.

Study material

Type: Handbook

Name: Van Steenbergen, J., Een Nieuwe Geschiedenis van de Islamitische Wereld: Rijks- en identiteitsvorming in islamitisch West-Azië, 7de-18de eeuw(Acco 2018)

Indicative price: € 48

Optional: no

Language : Dutch

Author : J. Van Steenbergen

ISBN : 978-9-46344-237-4

Number of Pages : 360

Online Available : No

Available in the Library : Yes

Available through Student Association : Yes

Usability and Lifetime within the Course Unit : intensive

Usability and Lifetime within the Study Programme : regularly

Usability and Lifetime after the Study Programme : occasionally

Type: Slides

Name: Slides IGIWA

Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty

Optional: no

Language : Dutch

Available on Ufora : Yes

Type: Reader

Name: Reader IGIWA

Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty

Optional: no

Language : English

Available on Ufora : Yes

References

- J. Van Steenbergen, A History of the Islamic World (600-1800) (Routledge 2021)
- R.S. Humphreys, Islamic History. A framework for Inquiry
- I.M. Lapidus, A History of Islamic Societies
- Cambridge Illustrated History of the Islamic World, ed. F. Robinson
- A Companion to the history of the Middle East, ed. Y. Choueiri
- A. Hourani, A History of the Arab Peoples
- T. Ansary, Destiny Disrupted. A History of the World through Islamic Eyes
- In harmony. Art from the Islamic World in the Cinquantenaire Museum, ed. M. Van Raemdonck

Course content-related study coaching

Electronic support via Ufora (learning and reading materials, assignments with weekly feedback)

individual: during/after the lecture, by electronic appointment (especially for exchange students, see below)

Assessment moments

end-of-term and continuous assessment

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

Oral assessment

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

Oral assessment

Examination methods in case of permanent assessment

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

- portfolio (1/4) (with possibility of an alternative assignment for non-A&I students)
- oral exam, with written preparation (3/4) - subject: lectures & text book, list of terms, (reading assignment) - format: 3/4 questions (reproduction, interpretation, terms) / timely submission of a complete portfolio or weekly question assignment is a condition to be allowed to the oral exam

For the oral exam, the emphasis is on the one hand on the material covered during the lectures and in the textbook, and on the other hand on the glossary found at the back of the textbook. More specifically, the oral exam consists of three questions: a reproduction question (discuss...) (= manual), an insight question (assess...; to what extent...; how...) (= cases discussed during the lectures), and a knowledge question regarding central concepts (=definition of 3 concepts). A fourth question concerns the brief oral presentation and discussion of the portfolio assignment. The fourth question for non-A&I students who choose the alternative assignment concerns the reading assignment.

(in case of a **resit**, assessment will only take place on the basis of an oral exam concerning the course material)

Alternative arrangements can be made for exchange students who do not have a sufficient proficiency in Dutch.

Calculation of the examination mark

Periodical: oral examination (75 %) - non-periodical: combination of individual work and cooperation in group (1 portfolio) (25 %)

(resit: oral examination [100%])

Facilities for Working Students

1. No exemption from educational activities requiring student attendance.
2. Possible rescheduling of the examination to a different time in the same academic year
3. Feedback can be given by email, telephone or during an appointment during or after office hours

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