

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

Lecturers in academic year 2026-2027

Van Steenberghe, Jo	LW21	lecturer-in-charge
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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
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 modules

'The Ottoman Empire in the Early Modern World' and 'History and Culture of the Modern and Contemporary Middle East'.

Contents

This introductory course helps students acquire a general understanding of the history of, and of historical research into, the central Islamic world, with a focus on Islamic West Asia (the Middle East, the Mashreq). The aim is to provide students with an understanding of the emergence of the Islamic world and the key historical developments that this region subsequently underwent, from late antiquity to the early modern period (7th–18th centuries). In this context, the primary aim is to introduce students, in a historically critical manner, to the source material and the historical research on state and identity formation that contribute to contemporary knowledge of the Islamic past. In this way, the course provides a substantive and historically critical foundation for understanding and interpreting that past and its repercussions for the current situation in the region in an academically sound manner.

In terms of content, the course is divided into two main parts, covering the two most significant chronological 'waves' in the pre-modern history of Islamic West Asia. The first part spans from the emergence of Islam in the early 7th century to the complete disintegration of the Abbasid Caliphate in the 10th century. The second part follows on from this, covering the various invasions by Turkic, Mongol and Turko-Mongol groups from the early 11th century up to the transformation of the early modern empires in the region in the 18th and 19th centuries. In each case, the most important socio-political factors are discussed, supplemented where necessary and possible by an outline of significant social, religious and other historical phenomena, and by case studies from historical research.

Topics:

- West Asia in late antiquity (6th–7th centuries)
- Muhammad and the Caliphate of Medina
- The Umayyad Arab Empire
- The classical period of the Abbasids
- The disintegration of the Abbasid Empire
- Invasion of West Asia: 'Turks' and 'Franks'
- Reconstruction and globalisation in West Asia: the Zangids, Ayyubids and Mongols
- State formation and revolution in West Asia: the Sultanate of Cairo and the Timurids
- Early modern empires in West 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 consist of weekly sessions in which the lecturer engages in active discussion of the textbook's content, supported where appropriate by audiovisual material. Students are expected to prepare for the lecture topics each week using the textbook. This also involves completing weekly compulsory assignments (content-related questions and source analysis).

A recording of a lecture may be made available on a weekly basis (each time only until the next lecture) to students with special circumstances or upon individual request, at the lecturer's discretion (e.g. due to clashes with other classes).

Individual study consists of a list of terms that are essential for the history of Islamic West-Asia.

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

Study material

Type: Handbook

Name: Van Steenberg, 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 Steenberg

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

References

- J. Van Steenberg, 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 Cinquanteinaire 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

Continuous assessment: weekly assignments (via Ufora) (as per instructions on Ufora) (1/4)

Submitting a final version of the weekly assignments (on Ufora) on time is an absolute prerequisite for being allowed to sit the end-of-term exam.

End-of-term exam: oral exam, with written preparation (3/4) - subject: lectures & text book, list of terms, weekly assignment - format: 4 questions (reproduction, interpretation, terms, presentation of assignments)

For the oral exam, the focus is, on the one hand, on the material covered during the lectures and in the textbook, and, on the other hand, on the glossary at the back of the textbook. More specifically, the oral exam consists of three questions: a reproduction question (discuss ...; (=textbook)), an insight question (assess ...; to what extent ...; how ...; (=cases covered during the lectures)), and a knowledge question relating to key concepts (=definition of 3 concepts). A fourth question concerns the brief oral presentation and discussion of the weekly assignments. (In the event of a **resit**, the examination consists solely of an oral examination with written preparation covering the entire syllabus [3 questions])

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

Calculation of the examination mark

End-of-term: oral exam (75 %) - continuous: individual work (discussed during the oral exam) (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