Structures of Arabic (Language and Texts): Social and Political Thought (A006639)

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

Credits 7.0 **Study time** 210 h

Course offerings and teaching methods in academic year 2026-2027

A (semester 1)	Dutch	Gent	independent work	0.0h
			seminar	0.0h

Lecturers in academic year 2026-2027

Termonia, Maya	LW21	staff member
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)	7	A
Exchange Programme Oriental Languages and Cultures	7	A

Teaching languages

Dutch

Keywords

Arabic grammar, Arabic literary heritage, Arabic intellectual heritage, social thought, political thought

Position of the course

This course builds on the competences acquired in the courses Structures of Arabic: literary heritage, and Structures of Arabic: Historical Thought. It engages in more depth with topics encountered in, or related to, the courses Introduction to the History of Islamic West Asia, Introduction to Islam and Being a Muslim, and History and Culture of the Modern Middle East.
This course familiarizes the student with philosophical, legal and literary Arabic text genres concerning political thought from the pre-modern Islamic world, with their social and political impact and meaning in the past and the present, with their place in a long tradition of thinking about human coexistence and power, and with the specific properties of their grammatical structures.

Contents

This course consists of two components: structures of texts and structures of language.
* Structures of texts is devoted to the contextualization and study of literary-philosophical and legal texts from the pre-modern Islamic heritage that belong to the tradition of political thought. Close reading, contextualization, and structural analysis are central, including an intensive introduction to socio-political thinking in an Islamic framework, and its modern study.
* Language structures focuses on the grammatical analysis of the studied texts, especially with an eye for morphology and for the Arabic grammatical instruments.

Initial competences

To have successfully completed Structures of Arabic: Literary Heritage, and Structures of Arabic: Historical Thought, or to have acquired the intended competences in another way.

Final competences

1 The student translates texts from the Arabic literary, legal and philosophical heritage with the help of the dictionary.

2 The student identifies the main points from texts from the Arabic literary, legal and philosophical heritage.
3 The student analyses texts from the Arabic literary, legal and philosophical heritage with an eye for language structures.
4 The student explains the characteristics of texts from the Arabic literary, legal and philosophical heritage
5 The student knows the most frequent reading strategies for texts from the Arabic literary, legal and philosophical heritage.
6 The student contextualizes texts from the Arabic literary, legal and philosophical heritage.
7 The student knows the grammatical structures that occur most frequently in texts from the Arabic literary, legal and philosophical heritage
8 The student reflects on an abstract level on the forms, functions and meanings of various Arabic literary, legal and philosophical texts.
9 The student participates in discussions and debates about Arabic literary, legal and philosophical texts in an adequate and tolerant manner.
10 The student actively connects different Arabic literary, legal and philosophical texts and debates about them with the contents and insights acquired in other relevant course units.

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

Seminar, Independent work

Extra information on the teaching methods

Seminar: the classes consist of two components: language structures and text structures.
* During the text structures classes, texts prepared by the student are studied. This preparation includes reading comprehension, translation and acquisition of the context of the history of Islamic political thought.
* The language structures classes focus on the applied study of Arabic grammar.
Independent work: reading and/or writing assignments.

Study material

Type: Handbook

Name:
Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty
Optional: no
Language : Other
Author :
Online Available : Yes
Available in the Library : No
Usability and Lifetime within the Course Unit : intensive
Usability and Lifetime within the Study Programme : intensive
Usability and Lifetime after the Study Programme : regularly

Type: Handbook

Name: Wright, W., Grammar of the Arabic Language, Third Edition.
Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty
Optional: no
Language : English
Author : W. Wright
Online Available : Yes
Available in the Library : Yes
Usability and Lifetime within the Course Unit : regularly
Usability and Lifetime within the Study Programme : regularly
Usability and Lifetime after the Study Programme : occasionally

Type: Handbook

Name: Fischer, W., Grammar of Classical Arabic, Third Edition. London: Yale University Press, • 2002.
Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty
Optional: no
Language : English
Author : W. Fischer
Online Available : Yes
Available in the Library : Yes
Usability and Lifetime within the Course Unit : regularly
Usability and Lifetime within the Study Programme : regularly
Usability and Lifetime after the Study Programme : occasionally

Type: Syllabus

Name: Syllabus Islamic Political Thought
Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty
Optional: no
Language : Dutch
Available on Ufora : Yes

Type: Reader

Name: Reader Islamic Political Thought
Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty
Optional: no
Language : English
Available on Ufora : Yes

References

* P. Adamson, Philosophy in the Islamic World. A History of Philosophy without any gaps. Volume 3 (Oxford, 2016) (podcast: http://philosophy.net/islamic-world)
* 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)
* 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)
* Van Steenbergen, J., Een Nieuwe Geschiedenis van de Islamitische Wereld: Rijks- en identiteitsvorming in islamitisch West-Azië, 7de-18de eeuw (Acco 2018)

Course content-related study coaching

Interactive classes allow the students to receive direct feedback. Ufora. Feedback after the exams.

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

Written assessment

Examination methods in case of permanent assessment

Participation

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

Written exam on the entire course material (language structures and text structures).
Participation: active participation during class and completing assignments and tasks on time.

Calculation of the examination mark

Text structures: 70 %

Language structures: 30 %

Both parts are subdivided into end-of-term evaluation and continuous assessment (active participation during classes, and tests and assignments).

Students who do not participate in (one of the parts of) the assessment, or have a mark below 10/20 for one of the assessed parts, automatically fail the entire course. Final marks higher than 10/20 will, in this case, be reduced to the highest mark that does not qualify for automatic upgrade ('deliberation') (7/20).

A pass mark for one of the assessed parts means that the assessment of that part does not need to be retaken in case of a resit (only!). Students are nevertheless free to decide to retake it.

Facilities for Working Students

Student attendance of classes is compulsory.
The examination cannot be rescheduled
Feedback can be given by email, telephone or during an appointment during office hours.
For more information concerning flexible learning: contact the monitoring service of the faculty of Arts and philosophy