

# MIDDLE EASTERN/CENTRAL ASIAN/NORTH AFRICAN STUDIES

The Program in Middle Eastern, Central Asian, and North African Studies (MECANA) offers a minor focusing on the study of the area from Morocco to Afghanistan, from antiquity to the present day. Bryn Mawr students can investigate the history, politics, and cultures of the Middle East, Central Asia, and North Africa through coursework, independent study, study abroad, and events here and at neighboring institutions.

The Director of MECANA is also the advisor for the concentration and can assist students to plan coursework and independent study, including independent majors.

There are two tracks in the MECANA concentration: one requires study or competence in a modern regional language, the other does not.

## Minor Requirements

### Track 1

The first track consists of six courses in the Humanities or Social Sciences that include pre-modern and modern topics distributed in the following manner:

1. A basic course that offers a broad introduction to the region and its peoples. When available, students should take MEST B100 Introduction to Middle Eastern, Central Asian and North African Studies at Bryn Mawr. If this course is not available, students will select a comparable introductory course in consultation with the MECANA advisor(s).
2. Five elective courses, including:
  - at least one course at the 300 level, in a specific area to be chosen in consultation with the MECANA advisor. This area might be defined in terms of conceptual, historical, or geographical interests and, in many cases, will be connected to work in the student's major.
  - at least one course must be in the Social Sciences, and at least one course must be in the Humanities.
  - at least one course must be pre-modern/early modern in content (before 1800) and at least one course must be modern or contemporary in content (after 1800).
3. Of the six courses required for the minor, only two may form a part of the student's major.

### Track 2

The second track includes language study. Students opting for this track must take the equivalent of two years of study of a modern regional language. Four additional courses distributed as follows are required for the minor:

1. A basic course that offers a broad introduction to the region and its peoples. When available, students should take MEST B100 Introduction to Middle Eastern, Central Asian and North African Studies at Bryn Mawr. If this course is not available, students will select a comparable introductory course in consultation with the MECANA advisor(s).
2. Three elective courses, including:

- at least one course at the 300 level, in a specific area to be chosen in consultation with the MECANA advisor. This area might be defined in terms of conceptual, historical, or geographical interests and, in many cases, will be connected to work in the student's major.
  - at least one course must be in the Social Sciences, and at least one course must be in the Humanities.
  - at least one course must be pre-modern/early modern in content (before 1800) and at least one course must be modern or contemporary in content (after 1800).
3. Of the courses required for the minor, only two may form a part of the student's major.

For Middle Eastern languages taught at Bryn Mawr and Haverford, please see the course listings for the Bi-College Program in Arabic and the Bryn Mawr offerings in Hebrew. Additional regional languages may be offered at the University of Pennsylvania.

### MEST B100 Introduction to Middle Eastern, Central Asian and North African Studies (1 Unit)

This course introduces the interdisciplinary field of Middle Eastern Studies with a focus on analytical approaches, methods, and tools. Students consider the dynamics of the region in the premodern and modern periods and become familiar with the major issues and debates that dominate various disciplinary approaches to the Middle East. Readings include both important canonical and alternative scholarship in order to examine the limits and possibilities of the field.

### MEST B103 Introduction to Dari Persian (1 Unit)

Dari Persian course is an introductory course for learning the Dari Persian language. This course is designed to familiarize students with the pronunciation of Persian sounds, writing its letters, and basic conversation in the Persian language. The course will introduce the Persian alphabet alongside grammar and vocabulary and will emphasize using the language for communication. The material of this course will introduce important expression for polite interaction and aspects of Afghanistan and Persian culture. During this course, students will be able to improve their language skills, including reading, writing, speaking, and listening, in a balanced and equitable manner. Dari Persian language is one of the most ancient languages in the world, used in large parts of the Middle East, Central Asia and South Asia. This language has been a carrier of the rich and ancient human heritage for over a thousand years in the fields of literature, art, history, religion, and politics. It is considered the official and administrative language in several countries within a vast region, serving as a central axis for cultural, scientific, and political foundations.

**MEST B201 Society and Culture of the Middle East Through Film (1 Unit)**

This course is designed so that students begin to acquire a knowledge and understanding of the contemporary Arab world through film. A main focus would be society and the representation of family life with all its intricacies. Because the region is extremely diverse and the life of its people and their experiences are, especially in the present, complex, it is necessary to select only a few of the countries in the region and their cinemas to focus on. This should allow for deeper study and meaningful conclusions. The cinemas of several Arab countries will be examined. Egypt has always been and to a large extent remains the center of Arabic-language cinema; three quarters of all Arabic-language feature films having been produced there. Films by famous directors such as Youssef Chahine and Shadi Abdel Salam, among others, will be appropriate to consider. But films from other Arab countries, e.g., from North Africa and the Middle East, will also be included for comparison and a more comprehensive picture.

**MEST B205 Topics: Ethics and Islam (1 Unit)**

This is a topics course. Course content varies. This course will provide a foundation in the study of Islam and introduce students to Islamic ethical thought

**MEST B208 Introduction to the History of the Medieval Middle East (1 Unit)**

This course will provide an overview of the political and social history of the Middle East and North Africa from the sixth century C.E., in the Late Antique Period, with the tensions between the Byzantine and Sasanian empires and the rise of Islam in the Arabian Peninsula, to the fourteenth century C.E., with the Mongol invasions marking the end of the Abbasid caliphate in Baghdad. While students will be introduced to the political figures and frameworks of this period, there will also be a focus on social and cultural developments among the diverse populations that lived in the medieval Middle East, Central Asia, and North Africa, their relationships with one another, and how they interacted with their neighbors. Issues of political and religious authority and legitimacy, the development of social and cultural institutions, the production of artistic and literary works will also be explored.

**MEST B210 The Art and Architecture of Islamic Spirituality (1 Unit)**

This course examines how Muslim societies across time and space have used art and architecture in different ways to express and understand inner dimensions of spirituality and mysticism. Topics to be studied include: the calligraphical remnants of the early Islamic period; inscriptions found on buildings and gravestones; the majestic architecture of mosques, shrines, seminaries, and Sufi lodges; the brilliant arts of the book; the commemorative iconography and passion plays of Ashura devotion; the souvenir culture of modern shrine visitation; and the modern art of twenty-first century Sufism. Readings include works from history, religious studies, anthropology, sociology, and the history of art and architecture.

**MEST B215 Iran: History, Culture, and Politics (1 Unit)**

This course explores the history, cultures, and politics of Iran from the time of the Arab Conquest in the 7th Century CE to the Iranian Revolution in 1979 CE. It introduces students to Iranian civilization through its changing political systems, rich intellectual and religious movements, and vibrant cultural developments that spanned this long period of time. It will examine the various ethnic, religious, and cultural groups that have called Iran home and look at the ways that the diverse inhabitants of the region have interacted with one another. This course will also pay special attention to important religious and intellectual thinkers including the mystic Bayazid Bistami, the Illuminationist Shihab al-din al-Suhrawardi, the poet Sa'adi Shirazi, the philosopher Mulla Sadra, the founder of the Baha'i faith Baha'ullah, and modern social theorist Ali Shariati.

**MEST B301 An Introduction to Middle East Media and Culture (1 Unit)**

This course explores contemporary culture in the Middle East. The course will introduce students to a wide array of relevant theory on modernity and modernization, home and diaspora, as well as social movements and democratization, all through the interrogation of a diverse set of media texts that highlight key issues facing communities across the Middle East. Each week we will focus on a vital social issue facing the communities in the Middle East and compare how it is presented in the media, as compared to the ideals of the society and local and regional collective imaginaries of identity. Students will gain competence at analyzing media texts, as we address these issues through a selection of television serials, films and music videos and other media sources. Students will be exposed to the complexity of daily life and culture across the Middle East, from the lifestyle of communities in affluent urban spaces, to the struggles of the urban poor living in informal settlements, and everyone in between. Prior courses in Middle East Studies or Film Studies encouraged.

**MEST B302 The Legacy of Genghis Khan: The Mongols & Their Successors (1 Unit)**

This course examines the political, intellectual, and social history of Genghis Khan, the Ilkhanid Mongols, and their successors in the Middle East and Central Asia from the thirteenth century to the sixteenth century CE. We will consider the formation of new political norms, changing trends in trade, and an increasingly hybrid cultural and artistic production that characterize this period.

**MEST B305 Merchants, Pilgrims & Rogues: Travels through the Middle East (1 Unit)**

This course will critically approach the various ways that people have traveled to and within the Middle East, Central Asia, and North Africa in the medieval and modern periods. It will explore the many reasons that induced people to travel by looking at travelogues produced by these various travelers, the material culture of travel (e.g. pilgrimage scrolls, architecture and infrastructure that facilitated travel and lodging, movement of commodities, postcards, etc.), and scholarly work on travel, tourism, and migration more broadly. This course will include travels by merchants, pilgrims, adventurers, scholars, conquering armies, imperial powers, oil tycoons, and refugees.

**MEST B315 Empire in the Premodern Middle East (1 Unit)**

This course focuses on empire in Late Antique, medieval, and early modern Middle East, North Africa, and Central Asia, including that of the Sasanians, Umayyads, Abbasids, Fatimids, Ilkhanids, Safavids, and Ottomans. It will explore the rise, politics, economics, longevity, social relations, and cultural production of these empires. While examining the histories of these empires, students will also interrogate the very category of empire, its meanings, its institutions and actors, and its usefulness in studying the region. It will also consider how premodern empires differed from those of the modern period and how the legacies of these empires might continue into the present.

**ANTH B223 The Global Middle East: Colonialism, Oil, the War on Terror (1 Unit)**

A central premise of this course is that European colonial intervention in the Middle East did not just impact the Middle East, but mobilized social, material, and ideological projects which fundamentally transformed Europe itself, producing the modern "West" and the contemporary globe. Challenging tendencies to think of the Middle East as distant and different, students will explore the ways that Euro-American intervention in the Middle East shapes our everyday lives in the contemporary U.S. We will explore how the economy, culture, identity, and social organization of contemporary life in Europe and the U.S. builds off of, and is dependent upon, this history of intervention. We will conclude with an examination of global solidarity movements, with a focus on Black American activists' solidarity work in the Arab world, to ask how this global interconnection makes the Middle East an important site for building and imagining a more just world.

**ARAB B003 Second Year Modern Standard Arabic (1 Unit)**

Combines intensive oral practice with writing and reading in the modern language. The course aims to increase students' expressive ability through the introduction of more advanced grammatical patterns and idiomatic expressions. Introduces students to authentic written texts and examples of Arabic expression through several media. Prerequisite: ARAB H002 or placement by instructor.

**ARAB B004 Second-Year Modern Standard Arabic (1 Unit)**

Combines intensive oral practice with writing and reading in the modern language. The course aims to increase students' expressive ability through the introduction of more advanced grammatical patterns and idiomatic expressions. Introduces students to authentic written texts and examples of Arabic expression through several media. Prerequisite: ARAB B003 or placement.

**ARCH B101 Introduction to Egyptian and Near Eastern Archaeology (1 Unit)**

A historical survey of the archaeology and art of the ancient Near East and Egypt.

**ARCH B212 Visual Culture of the Ancient Mediterranean (1 Unit)**

This course explores the visual culture of the ancient Mediterranean world from the second millennium BCE to early Roman times. Drawing from an extensive variety of extant evidence that includes monuments, sculpture, paintings, mosaics, and artifacts deriving from culturally and geographically distinct areas, such as the Minoan world, Egypt, Turkey, Syria, Phoenicia, Cyprus, Greece, Macedonia, Italy, Tunisia, and Spain, the course explores how such evidence may have been viewed and experienced and how it may have, in turn, shaped the visual culture of the well-interconnected ancient Mediterranean world. Focusing on selected examples of evidence, including its materials, style, and methods of production, the course will also consider how past and current scholarly attitudes, approaches, and terminology have affected the understanding and interpretation of this evidence.

**ARCH B214 The Archaeology of Agricultural Revolutions in Western Asia (1 Unit)**

This course examines the archaeology of one of the most fundamental shifts to have occurred in human society in the last 12,000 years, the origins of agriculture. Via assigned readings, class work and lectures we will consider the varied factors which led (or did not lead) to the adoption of agriculture, questioning what the core building blocks of agricultural life were across Western Asia and exploring societies that did not experience these changes. We will also discuss the impacts these developments have had, and continue to have, on modern society and culture in the Middle East, North Africa and beyond. Themes covered will include societal organization, identity (gender, ethnicity, culture, personhood etc.), communication, and the relationships between humans, animals, and the environment. The class will also begin to address the relationships between colonialism and archaeology in Western Asia and explore what the future of a post-colonial and anti-racist archaeology looks like in this region.

**ARCH B227 The Archaeology of Syria (1 Unit)**

Home to a wealth of archaeological sites and cultures, Syria is perhaps now more widely known for its almost decade long conflict that has seen the displacement of millions of people and the damage to and destruction of hundreds of archaeological sites. The loss of cultural heritage is just one, very small, part of the human tragedies that have unfolded in Syria. Knowledge of the deep and recent past of this region, however, is integral for understanding its present, and its future. This course will explore human settlement and interaction within Syria over the *longue durée*. Using a selection of key sites, inhabited for thousands of years, we will explore several major themes including, the archaeology of inequality, the role of urban life and the importance of ritual and religion. The course will also consider the complex relationships that have always existed between Syria and its neighboring countries. Finally, we will turn to the role of archaeology, its future and potential within a post-conflict Syria.

**ARCH B229 Visual Culture of the Ancient Near East (1 Unit)**

This course examines the visual culture of the Ancient Near East based on an extensive body of architectural, sculptural, and pictorial evidence dating from prehistoric times through the fifth century BCE. We will explore how a variety of surviving art, artifacts, sculpture, monuments, and architecture deriving from geographically distinct areas of the ancient Near East, such as Mesopotamia, the Eastern Mediterranean, Anatolia, and Iran, may have been viewed and experienced in their historical contexts, including the contribution of ancient materials and technologies of production in shaping this viewing and experience. By focusing on selected examples of diverse evidence, we will also consider how past and current scholarly methods and approaches, many of them art-historical, archaeological, and architectural in aim, have affected the understanding and interpretation of this evidence. In doing so, we will pay special attention to critical terms such as aesthetics, style, narrative, representation, and agency.

**ARCH B235 Death and Burial in the Ancient Near East (1 Unit)**

Death is a shared human experience; however, it provokes a huge variety of responses; from the ad hoc and hasty burial of the deceased through to elaborate and lengthy funerary rituals. One of the most direct forms of evidence we have as archaeologists for the people who lived thousands of years ago are burials. The Ancient Near East also offers a rich corpus of textual and visual material, which can be used to explore the ways in which ancient societies conceptualized and thought about death, from the nature of the afterlife to the role of malevolent or helpful ghosts.

**ARCH B237 Art and Archaeology of Central Asia (1 Unit)**

Exploring the rich and vibrant cultural heritage of Central Asia, this course delves into the region's history, art, and archaeology spanning from the third millennium BCE to the eighth century CE. Central Asia, constituting the territory between western China and eastern Iran, served as the heartland of the ancient Silk Road. Despite its significance, the region's history and culture often remain shrouded in mystery, largely unknown to the academic community. This course sheds light on topics related to Central Asia, such as state formation, nomadism, religious beliefs, trade, and arts and crafts production of Central Asia, while emphasizing the region's interconnectedness with the broader world.

**ARCH B240 Archaeology and History of Ancient Mesopotamia (1 Unit)**

A survey of the material culture of ancient Mesopotamia, modern Iraq, from the earliest phases of state formation (circa 3500 B.C.E.) through the Achaemenid Persian occupation of the Near East (circa 331 B.C.E.). Emphasis will be on art, artifacts, monuments, religion, kingship, and the cuneiform tradition. The survival of the cultural legacy of Mesopotamia into later ancient and Islamic traditions will also be addressed.

**ARCH B244 Great Empires of the Ancient Near East (1 Unit)**

A survey of the history, material culture, political and religious ideologies of, and interactions among, the five great empires of the ancient Near East of the second and first millennia B.C.E.: New Kingdom Egypt, the Hittite Empire in Anatolia, the Assyrian and Babylonian Empires in Mesopotamia, and the Persian Empire in Iran.

**ARCH B247 The World of Gilgamesh (1 Unit)**

This course explores how the people of ancient Mesopotamia perceive and comprehend the fundamental questions of human existence, such as the intricacies of life and death, gender and sexuality, the relationship between humans and the divine, and the definition of self-identity in relation to the outside world, through an examination of the literary works and archaeological remains from the ancient Near East. Guided by the epic tale of Gilgamesh, the legendary king of Uruk in Mesopotamian mythology, we will journey back to the mesmerizing world of the fourth and third millennium BCE, when human civilizations first emerged and thrived. This course offers an immersive experience, enabling students to unleash their intellectual creativity through dramatic performances and curation of a digital exhibit showcasing early Mesopotamian civilization.

**ARCH B249 The Archaeology of Urban Revolutions in Western Asia (1 Unit)**

This course examines the archaeology of one of the most fundamental developments to have occurred in human society in the last 6,000 years, the origins of cities. Via assigned readings, class work and lectures we will consider the varied factors which led (or did not lead) to the emergence of cities, questioning what cities were (and are) and how they functioned in the ancient world. We will explore different trajectories towards urbanism that can be identified in the archaeological record and consider societies that did not experience these changes. By exploring processes and practices over the long-term, students will address issues of inequality in the earliest urban societies, developing an understanding of how axes of power and difference interacted to produce inequalities and hierarchies. We will also discuss the impacts these developments have had, and continue to have, on modern society and culture in the Middle East, North Africa and beyond. Themes covered will include the 'urban revolution', rurality and urbanism, urban planning and growth, houses and households, communication and mobility, climate and environment, power and inequality.

**ARCH B253 Gender Archaeology in Pre-Islamic Western Asia (1 Unit)**

This course explores the intersections of gender and archaeology in Western Asia during the pre-Islamic periods. It examines how diverse social groups use multiple means to construct, perform, and negotiate gender, sex, identities. The course discusses gender's intricate relationship with class, sexuality, and religion through analysis of texts, visual representations, spatial organization, and other material traces of the past. Grounded in the tradition of gender archaeology, this course draws on various discourses and interpretive frameworks to offer new archaeological approaches for understanding and discussing gender dynamics in both past and present societies.

**ARCH B312 Bronze Age Internationalism (1 Unit)**

This course explores the rise and fall of the first international age in the eastern mediterranean. We will focus on the cultural and diplomatic connections between Egypt, Syria, Anatolia and the Aegean during the Bronze Age, c. 2000-1200BCE.. Prerequisites: ARCH B101 and 102; ARCH B101 and a 200-level ARCH course; or ARCH B102 and a 200-level ARCH course; or two 200-level ARCH courses; or permission by instructor.

**ARCH B317 Cultural Heritage and Endangered Archaeology (1 Unit)**

This course will examine how and why archaeological sites are 'endangered'. Primarily focusing on the Near East and North Africa (the MENA region), we will examine the different types of archaeological and heritage sites found across this broad region, and some of the threats and disturbances affecting them. We will consider how different interest groups and stakeholders view, value and present historical and archaeological sites to the general public, as well as the success of modern initiatives and projects to safeguard the heritage of the MENA region. Our research will consider the ethics of cultural preservation, as well as the issues and problems encountered by heritage specialists working in areas of modern conflict. Whilst not all damage can be prevented, the course will consider how different threats and disturbances might be mitigated. Prerequisite: Upper level 300-level course. Students should have completed at least two 100 level/200 level courses in either classical or near eastern archaeology.

**ARCH B328 The Roman Empire in South West Asia (1 Unit)**

This course examines the impact – or lack thereof – the Roman Empire had on the visual and material culture in the Eastern Mediterranean and South-West Asia from the 2nd century BCE to the 5th century CE. To understand the local response to Rome's expansion, we study the complex political and social structures that were in place in these regions long before the arrival of Rome as well as the agents that continuously negotiated between Rome, local polities, and external factors (i.e., nomadic tribes). We will explore the multi-faceted world of the easternmost provinces of the Roman Empire with reference to archaeological, visual, and textual sources and adopt counter-narrative approaches to critically discuss the nature of colonial and imperial encounters. The completion of ARCH B101 (Egyptian and Near Eastern Archaeology) or 102 (Classical Archaeology) is a prerequisite for this course.

**ENGL B294 Iranian Cinema: Before and After the Revolution (1 Unit)**

One of the most celebrated global cinemas to date, Iranian cinema has been recognized in film festivals around the world for its unique aesthetic vision, political complexities, and social import. This course will expose students to major masterpieces of Iranian cinema both prior to and after the Islamic Revolution of 1979. Along the way, students will learn to meaningfully engage topics such as film form, colonialism, imperialism, labor migration, realism, expressionism, and issues concerning the politics of gender, race, ethnicity, and religion.



**ENGL B391 Literary Approaches to the Quran (1 Unit)**

The Qur'an, the central holy scripture of Islam, has a long history of being studied as much for its literary and broadly aesthetic qualities as for its divine guidance. This course will engage in a sustained analysis of the history of the study of the Quran as literature, including the recitational practices associated with it, practices that have historically been considered antithetical to the project of modern literature, since they challenge the hegemony of literacy and written textuality. Students will also learn about the Quran and the Quranic interpretive tradition in relation to key fields within literary studies, such as postcolonial theory, African American studies, and American studies. In doing so, this course will also open up space to examine and interrogate the secular basis of the modern humanities. Readings will include work by Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, Malcolm X, Edward Said, and others.

**HART B201 Critical Approaches to Visual Representation: Medieval/Modern (1 Unit)**

This is a topics course. Course content varies. This course is writing intensive. This course examines intersections between the medieval and modern worlds through art and architecture. Students study medieval works of art and/or architecture as well as their afterlives in the modern era, as realized through revivals of style and form, museum exhibition excavation, alteration and adaptation for reuse, etc. There are no prerequisites for this course. Enrollment preference given to majors and minors in History of Art.

**HIST B234 An Introduction to Middle Eastern History (1 Unit)**

This course serves as an introduction to the history of the modern Middle East. We will also explore the narratives and debates that have shaped the field of Middle East history. Topics include orientalism, colonialism, political reform, social, cultural, and intellectual movements, nationalism, and the Cold War. Readings will be drawn from the fields of history, anthropology, politics, and literature.

**INST B210 Popular Uprisings in Global Perspective (1 Unit)**

In recent years, popular uprisings and protest movements have mobilized hundreds and thousands of people in different parts of the world to demand a radical overhauling of existing systems and changes in political leadership. These uprisings have raised a series of questions that will be the focus of this class. What are the catalysts, underlying causes and demands of these protest movements? What can we learn from the grassroots organizing that allowed these movements to gain momentum? All too often popular uprisings in the Global South in particular, are seen as representing the failures and limits of revolutionary action and politics rather than their potential and promise. What then, do recent popular uprisings reveal about the limitations and relevance of various theoretical approaches to explaining revolutionary phenomena and action? How might local scholars and activists analyzing the popular uprisings taking place in their countries, allow us to develop new vocabularies and frameworks for understanding popular protests and revolutionary action elsewhere? Students will explore these questions through a series of case studies including Sudan, Hong Kong, Chile, Lebanon, France, Ethiopia and India.

**INST B301 Politics of Aid and Humanitarianism (1 Unit)**

This course explores the relationship between humanitarian aid, politics and the legacy of colonialism. Our goal will be to historicize and contextualize humanitarian policies and practices through specific case studies which can include, but will not be limited to: Haiti, Sudan, USA, Sri Lanka, Yemen, Palestine, Somalia, Brazil, Nicaragua and the Philippines. We will use these case studies to explore topics such as the militarization of aid and the politicization of emergency assistance. We will also be looking to non-traditional sources such as novels, films, NGO documents and congressional hearings to gain insight from the perspectives of those impacted by and/or shaping humanitarian policies and practices. Finally, we will examine the ways 'non-Western' actors and humanitarian organizations are reshaping the field of humanitarianism and relationships across the Global South more broadly.

**ITAL B218 Early-Modern Intersections: A New Italian Renaissance (1 Unit)**

The period or movement commonly referred to as the Renaissance remains one of the great iconic moments of global history: a time of remarkable innovation within artistic and intellectual culture, and a period still widely regarded as the crucible of modernity. Although lacking a political unity and being constantly colonized by European Empires, Italy was the original heartland of the Renaissance, and home to some of its most powerful and enduring figures, such as Leonardo and Michelangelo in art, Petrarch and Ariosto in literature, Machiavelli in political thought. This course provides an overview of Italian culture from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century by adopting a cross-cultural, intersectional, and inter-disciplinary approach. The course places otherness at the center of the picture rather than at its margins, with the main aim to look at pivotal events and phenomena (the rise of Humanism, courtly culture, the canonization of the language), not only from the point of view of its protagonists but also through the eyes of its non-male, non-white, non-Christian, and non-heterosexual witnesses. The course ultimately challenges traditional accounts of the Italian Renaissance by crossing also disciplinary boundaries, since it examines not only literary, artistic, and intellectual history, but also material culture, cartography, science, technology, and history of food and fashion. All readings and class discussion will be in English. Students seeking Italian credits will complete their assignments in the target language.

**ITAL B221 What is Aesthetics? Theories on Art, Imagination, and Poetry (1 Unit)**

This course investigates how global thinkers, poets, and artists reflected in their works on the roles and powers of art, poetry, and human creativity. The course approaches this theme through a cross-cultural and trans-historical approach, which encompasses the Italian Humanism, which argued for the first time for the importance of aesthetic knowledge, as well as the Age of Enlightenment, which founded 'aesthetics' as a specific scientific discipline. Readings from these writers will show how artistic products, human imagination, and poetry are not just light-hearted activities but powerful cognitive tools which can reveal aspects of human history. If the human being is deemed to be a combination of reason and feeling – soul and body – art and poetry, which border both the rational and irrational realms, appear the most appropriate scientific tool to reveal the human essence and its destiny. The discussion will focus on pivotal global writers and philosophers such as Giambattista Vico and Giacomo Leopardi, who pioneered aesthetic, historical, literary, and anthropological ideas which are still crucial in the current theoretical debate on arts and poetry. All readings and class discussion will be in English. Students will have an additional hour of class for Italian credit.

**ITAL B326 Love, Magic, and Medicine: Poetical-Philosophical Bonds (1 Unit)**

The course investigates how the concepts of love, magic, and medicine emerged and developed throughout early modernity and beyond. In exploring the fields of Philosophy, Medicine, and Magic, global thinkers, poets, and artists drew not only from classical sources, but were also deeply influenced by a wide range of models, such as fictional ancient sources, Islamic philosophy, and the Jewish Kabbalah. In this interesting syncretism, love was considered as an inspiration experienced by the entire universe, and magical practice was understood as a philosophy in action, which had the power to establish a bond of a loving nature between the different realms of reality. Magicians were therefore conceived as wise philosophers capable of joining this network of correspondences and controlling them (art)ificially. As a result, the figures of poets and artists interestingly merged into those of magicians of physicians, and poetry was conceived both as a magic able to arouse mental images stronger than real visions, and as a medicine able to exert a mental and physiological agency on the body. The course will approach these themes through a multi-disciplinary and trans-historical approach, which will include in the discussion a wide variety of figures, such as global early modern and modern philosophers, physicians, poets, artists, and composers. All readings and class discussion will be in English. Students will have an additional hour of class for Italian credit.

**POLS B283 Middle East Politics (1 Unit)**

This course offers an overview on the contemporary politics of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region and the relevant social (mostly political) science work on it. It brings together empirical knowledge on domestic and transnational politics in different countries of the region and how empirical political science around the big questions is conducted. Each module of the course revolves around a central question that has been keeping social and political scientists busy in the last decades: What triggers risky protest movements in authoritarian settings? Why has the MENA region remained authoritarian despite successive global waves of democratization? Under which conditions do transitions to democracies succeed? Do monarchies in the Middle East have an advantage in ensuring political stability, and if so, why? Is it impossible to ensure good governance and peace at the same time in divided societies? What motivates people to take up arms in the name of religion and sect? What are the reasons behind the economic underdevelopment of the MENA region? Students are also invited to think about these "big questions" and take MENA countries as their case studies, while at the same significantly enhancing their contextual knowledge about the region. No prerequisites, but either some prior familiarity with the Middle East or a prior political science course encouraged.

**POLS B318 United States and the Middle East (1 Unit)**

American foreign policy is supposedly undergoing a reorientation away from the Middle East, sometimes described as a "pivot to Asia." To what extent is this pivot actually happening and why? What does it mean for the people and politics of the Middle East and for the future of US relations with allies and adversaries in the region? In this course we will study the history of US relations with state and non-state actors in the region to build historical perspective that will help us more effectively think about these contemporary questions. We will examine how debates over alternative futures are unfolding in Washington as well as how local actors in the Middle East are responding. Prerequisites: At least one of the following: POLS 283 Middle East Politics, Introduction to Comparative Politics or International Studies and at least one 200-level POLS course (i.e. two POLS courses), or permission of instructor.

**POLS B360 Islam and Politics (1 Unit)**

This course locates and explores the politics of Islam in the politics of interpretation, taking into account texts both literal and social. More broadly, this course will consider evolving approaches to culture, religion, and ideology in political science, exploring not just the effect of Islam on politics but also the ways in which politics have shaped the Islamic tradition over time. This course is open to all students who have the prerequisites. It also serves as a thesis prep course for political science senior majors. Prerequisite: POLS B283 or instructor consent.

**POLS B382 Political Parties, Polarization and Democracy (1 Unit)**

Political parties are facing a crisis around the world. Trust in them as civic organizations plummets. Elite politicians do not invest in party organization-building and find other ways to build linkages with voters. Meanwhile, new forms of civic and political participation emerge, such as social media activism, boycotting and 'buy'cotting, and occupation of urban spaces, the implications of which cannot be very well understood by parties. The Middle East and North Africa region, with its history of personalistic and/or militaristic authoritarian regimes, weak party organizations and divided societies, is experiencing an acute form of this crisis. While there is a heightened sense of political participation in the region, as indicated by the repetitive waves of protests since the early 2010s, people debate whether democracy and/or good governance are attainable without political parties.