

THE FACULTY OF ORIENTAL STUDIES: M. PHIL. IN ISLAMIC STUDIES AND HISTORY

Course organiser: Prof. Christopher Melchert

Introduction

The M.Phil. in Islamic Studies and History is a two-year course intended primarily for students who desire an intensive introduction to Islamic history and thought in the pre-modern period. It presumes no background in Islamic history or languages. The course focuses on the political, social, and intellectual history of the central Islamic lands (Egypt, the Fertile Crescent, the Arabian Peninsula, Iran, Central Asia, and Anatolia) up until c. 1500. It differs from analogous M.Phil. courses at other universities in the significance it places on language instruction in classical Arabic, Persian, and Turkish, and the study of primary sources. Students already capable of carrying out research in one of these languages (to be assessed) will be strongly encouraged to take up a second. Instruction and supervision are carried out by several members of the Faculty's teaching staff. Each student is assigned a supervisor who is responsible for offering academic guidance throughout the course.

D.Phil. students in Oxford normally start immediately with their research project. Applicants are therefore rarely admitted directly to a D.Phil. course. This M.Phil. course in Islamic Studies and History is an excellent preparation for subsequent doctoral study.

Course Content

Year 1 is devoted to intensive language instruction (at least 6 hours per week) and a survey of Islamic Studies and History to 1500 CE. Both papers are taught through a combination of weekly lectures and an accompanying seminar. By Trinity Term, students will have begun to read original texts in their chosen primary language. At the end of Year 1, students sit a qualifying examination in whatever language they have been studying. Passing this qualifying examination is a prerequisite for going on to the second year of the course.

Year 2 is devoted to continuing language instruction, two optional papers that permit more specialized work in particular subfields of Islamic studies and history (see below), and a thesis. Students normally spend the summer between years 1 and 2 in the Middle East for language study and, as appropriate, research.

Year 1:

| Michaelmas Term | Hilary Term | Trinity Term |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Language instruction | Language instruction | Language instruction |
| Islamic history lectures | Wks 1–4: Islamic history lectures | Wks 5–8: Islamic religion lectures |
| Companion seminar to lectures | Companion seminar to lectures | Companion seminar to lectures |

Year 2:

Michaelmas Term

Language instruction

Optional paper 1

Hilary Term

Language instruction

Optional paper 2

Trinity Term

Language instruction

Conclusion of thesis, revision for examinations

Examinations

The qualifying examination will take the form of one three-hour paper. The exam in Arabic will ask for comments on some premodern text and translation with commentary of a premodern text into English. The exam in Persian will consist of translation of passages both from and into Persian and writing a short essay in Persian. Exams in Turkish, Syriac, and other languages will similarly test preparedness to begin serious research. This examination will take place at the end of Trinity Term.

The Final Examination shall consist of the following five units (1–5).

(1) A language examination in Arabic, Persian, Ottoman Turkish, or any other language approved by the Faculty Board. This written examination will take place at the end of Trinity Term.

(2) Islamic studies and history 570–1500. This written examination will take place at the end of Trinity Term.

(3) and (4) Two optional papers chosen from the list below. All candidates must obtain the approval of the Board of the Faculty of Oriental Studies for the papers they wish to offer. All applications for approval must reach the Senior Academic Administrator, Oriental Institute, not later than the Monday in the second week of Michaelmas Full Term preceding the examination.

Unless otherwise noted (*), optional papers are normally assessed by means of a take-home research paper of up to 5,000 words. The question paper will be published by the examiners by noon Friday of eighth week of the term in which the option is taught, and two copies of the essays must be submitted to the Examination Schools, High Street, Oxford by noon on Friday of the following week. Candidates will be contacted with details of how to collect or access the questions.

Qur'an *

Hadith *

Islamic law *

Sufism *

Philosophy and theology in the Islamic world *

Arabic or Persian or Ottoman Turkish literature in any period prior to 1500 (Persian literature to be examined as a 3h written paper at the end of Trinity Term) *

Safavid History *

A paper chosen from the M.St. in Islamic Art and Archaeology

A subject not listed here, upon availability and approval of the Faculty Board

(5) A thesis of 25,000 words on a subject approved by the Oriental Studies Faculty Board, of which two typed copies and an electronic copy in PDF format in a memory stick or CD, of the thesis must be delivered to the Examination Schools, High Street, Oxford, by noon of Friday of sixth week of Trinity Term of the second year from the candidate's admission to the course. The thesis must be accompanied by a signed statement by the candidate that the thesis is his or her own work except where otherwise indicated.

For full details, see the University's *Examination Regulations*.

Michaelmas Term 2016

NOTE: the examination regulations relating to all Oriental Studies courses are available at <https://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/examregs/> . If there is a conflict between information in any of the faculty handbooks and the exam regulations, you should always follow the exam regulations. If you have any concerns please contact academic@administrator.ox.ac.uk. The information in this handbook is accurate as at 1st October 2016, however it may be necessary for changes to be made in certain circumstances, as explained at www.graduate.ox.ac.uk/coursechanges . If such changes are made the department will publish a new version of this handbook together with a list of the changes. Students will also be informed.