



The American
University in Cairo

School of Humanities
and Social Sciences

Department of Arab and
Islamic Civilizations



Graduate Programs in Premodern Studies at AUC

The American University in Cairo, Est 1919

Tahrir and New Cairo Campuses



AUC Academic Calendar

Semester System

All teaching on New Cairo Campus
(except *some* intensive Arabic
teaching)

Two semesters:

Fall - first week of September to
second week of December

Usually no graduate teaching in
January or summer (June, July,
August)

Spring - first week of February to
second week of May

Global Pasts/Premodern Studies at AUC

Arabic Studies

Egyptology/Coptology

Philosophy

English and Comparative Literature

Arabic Studies covers the following areas of specialization...



Islamic Art and
Architecture



Arabic Language
and Literature



Middle Eastern
History



Islamic Studies

Islamic Art and Architecture



For over fifty years, the Islamic art and architecture program has been engaging students in the material culture of Islamic civilizations through a range of arthistorical and theoretical perspectives. Our breadth of course offerings and access to the monuments we teach is unique among English-language programs in the field.

The program strongly benefits from the University's location as students often connect their research with physical sites in Cairo or elsewhere in the MENA region.

Arabic Language and Literature



The program offers classes on both classical (500-1850) and modern (1850-present) Arabic literature, including seminars on topics as diverse as the development of prose, the tradition of classical Arabic poetry, the Arabic rhetorical and literary critical tradition, modern Arabic novels, Arabic drama, Arab cinema, issues in literary and cultural translation and colloquial and folk Arabic literature.

Middle Eastern History



The program offers classes and seminars on the history of the Arab Middle East and greater Islamic world from the rise of Islam to the modern period. Topics covered include the rise of Islam and Arab conquests; Islamic political theory; the economic, social and cultural history of the Mamluk and Ottoman empires; international and Red Sea trade networks; war and diplomacy; literacy and book culture; protest and dissent in Middle Eastern history and colonialism and nation- building in the modern Middle East.

Islamic Studies



The program offers lectures and seminars on topics such as Qur'anic studies, hadith, theology, Islamic jurisprudence, legal reform, Sufism and Islamic philosophy.

Why study at AUC's Department of Arab and Islamic Civilizations?



The world-class, international, multidisciplinary faculty

The Department of Arab and Islamic Civilizations is multidisciplinary in the truest sense of the term. With several different areas of expertise, diverse training and a range of critical perspectives, our faculty members offer a rich selection of methodological and theoretical approaches.

Faculty members in Arab and Islamic Civilizations (Arabic Studies)



Bernard O'Kane
Professor of Islamic Art and
Architecture
Joined AUC in 1980.
PhD (1982) Edinburgh University

Prof. O'Kane is one of the world's most prominent scholars of Islamic art and architecture. He teaches seminars on the historical development of Islamic art and architecture in North Africa and the Arab Middle East, Iran and Central and Southeast Asia, and book production and ornamentation.

Research interests: Epigraphy, tilework, Iranian and Egyptian Islamic art and architecture, and Arab and Persian painting.

Faculty members



Noha Abou-Khatwa

Assistant Professor of Islamic Art and
Architecture

Joined AUC in 2024.

PhD (2017) University of Toronto

Prior to joining the University of Toronto, Prof. Abou-Khatwa worked at the Thesaurus Islamicus Foundation, where she started and directed The Dar al-Kutub Manuscript Conservation Project. She also founded the Islamic Art Network, one of the earliest projects to consider the digital humanities to aid those studying Cairo's Islamic art and architecture. She publishes on epigraphy, calligraphy, Qur'an manuscripts, architecture and the intellectual life of medieval Islam. She is currently working on her first monograph on Mamluk calligraphy and illumination, and an art historical catalogue of the Mamluk Qur'an manuscripts in the National Library of Egypt.

Research interests: Manuscript culture, the architecture, and the intellectual life of the Medieval Muslim world with a focus on the Mamluks.

Faculty members



Mohamed Serag

Professor of Islamic Studies

Head of the Arabic Literature and

Islamic Studies Unit

Joined AUC in 1992.

PhD (1976) Cairo University

Prof. Serag offers classes on all aspects of Islamic religion and learning, including the Quran, Hadith, Sirah, and Jurisprudence. In 1992 he received the Egyptian State Incentive Award for his book *Islamic Law of Torts* which compares Islamic Law with the English Legal system in respect of tortious liability. Since 1996 he has been a member of the prestigious Academy of Arabic Language Committee for the Dictionary of Usul Al-Fiqh.

Research interests: Islamic Studies, Islamic jurisprudence.

Faculty members



Ahmad Khan

Assistant Professor of Islamic Studies

Joined AUC in 2018.

DPhil (2018) Oxford University

Prof. Ahmad Khan is a historian of the Islamic world. His research focuses on four related fields of historical inquiry: heresy and orthodoxy in medieval Islam (eighth to eleventh centuries); the early Islamic empire at work (eighth to tenth centuries); medieval religious and intellectual history; and the history of printing and publishing houses in the Islamic world (Middle East and Indian subcontinent, nineteenth to the twenty-first centuries).

Research interests: Medieval Islamic Social and religious history, Orthodoxy, heresy and rebellion, Early Islamic empire, Islamic law, Hadith learning in Khurasan and Transoxiana, Printing and Publishing houses in the Islamic world

Faculty members



Amina Elbendary

Chair and Associate Professor of History

Joined AUC in 2009.

PhD (2007) University of Cambridge

Prof. Elbendary is a scholar of Mamluk social and cultural history. Her book *Crowds and Sultans: Urban Protest in Late Medieval Egypt and Syria* was published by AUC Press in 2015. She has published in the *Mamlūk Studies Review* and was invited to give the third Ulrich Haarman Memorial Lecture at the Annemarie Schimmel Kolleg, University of Bonn (Germany) in April 2012.

Research interests: Social and cultural history of the Arab Middle East; Arab-Islamic historiography; Mamluk Egypt and Syria; protest and dissent in Arab history; Islamic political thought.

Faculty members



Nelly Hanna

Distinguished University Professor of
Middle East History
Joined AUC in 1991.

Doctorat d'État (1989) Université de
Provence

Prof. Hanna offers seminars on various aspects of social and cultural history in the Mamluk and Ottoman Empires. Prof. Hanna is the world's foremost expert on the social and cultural history of Ottoman Egypt. In numerous publications, including nine books, Prof. Hanna has practically rewritten the history of Ottoman Egypt, using court records and a sensitive, non-elite approach to Egyptian social and cultural history.

Research interests: the Ottoman history of the Arab world (1500-1800) with special focus on the economic, social and cultural aspects of this period.

Faculty members



Eleonora Fernandes

Associate Professor of Middle East History,
Joined AUC in 1999

PhD (1980) from Princeton University.

Prof. Eleonora Fernandes is an associate professor in the Department of Arab and Islamic Civilizations at The American University in Cairo. She received her BA (1966) and MA (1976) from The American University in Cairo. She later received her PhD (1980) from Princeton University. Dr. Fernandes is the author of "*Il Cairo Durante Il Regno Mamelucco*" in *Egitto Dalla Civiltà Dei Faraoni Al Mondo Globale*. ed. Paolo Branca, 2007.

Research interests: Mamluk Waqfs, Mamluk Social History, and Medieval Urban History

Faculty members



Tamer El-Leithy '94

Assistant Professor of Middle East History,
Joined AUC in 2024
PhD (2005) from Princeton University.

Tamer el-Leithy is Assistant Professor, in the History Department at Johns Hopkins University. In a former life, he studied Economics at AUC and then worked as an economist for an oil company. Drudgery ensued. So when he read a historical novel set in 15th-century Cairo, he quickly saw the light and discovered a passion for medieval history. That conversion led him to graduate school in Cairo, Cambridge (MPhil), and Princeton (PhD), where he studied medieval Middle Eastern history.

Research interests: Social and Cultural History of the Medieval Middle East and Mediterranean. Islamic Law and Society; Muslim Courts; Arabic and Judeo-Arabic Documents; Medieval Archives.

Faculty members



Adam Talib

Director of Graduate Studies and
Associate Professor of Arabic Literature.

Joined AUC in 2022.

PhD (2014) University of Oxford.

Prof. Adam Talib is an Associate Professor of Arabic Literature. He is also a co-editor of the journal *Middle Eastern Literatures* and a scholar of Classical Arabic poetry. He is an award-winning translator of Arabic into English. His first book, *How Do You Say “Epigram” in Arabic? Literary History at the Limits of Comparison*, uses the methods of archival literary history, Classical Arabic philology, and translation to explore the limitations of the epigram as a category in literary studies. By bringing to light the previously unknown history of Arabic maqāṭīʿ-poetry, the book demonstrates how extra-European literary histories can inform and radically transform both the intellectual basis of comparative literature and the landscape of world literature.

Research interests: Classical Arabic Poetry, Arabic literary history and the canon, Comparative Islamicate poetry, Classical Arabic literary scholarship, Literary Translation

Faculty members



Dina Heshmat

Associate Professor of Arabic Literature

Joined AUC in 2013.

PhD (2004) University of Paris III -
Sorbonne Nouvelle, France.

Prof. Dina Heshmat joined the Department of Arab and Islamic Studies in 2013. She teaches modern and contemporary Arabic literature, with a focus on Egyptian novels and short stories. Before joining AUC, she taught Arabic language and literature at Leiden University (2009 - 2013). Dr. Heshmat is the author of *Egypt 1919: The Revolution in Literature and Film* (Edinburgh University Press, 2020), and *Al-Qāhira fil adab al-miṣrī al-ḥadīth wal mu‘āṣir* (Cairo in Modern and Contemporary Egyptian Literature, Cairo: al-Majlis al-a‘lā lil-thaqāfa, 2007)

**Research interests: Literature and History,
Literature and Urban Space, Literature and
Cinema & Gender Studies.**



Our fascinating course offerings

Here is a small selection of our recent course titles:

Islamic Institutions

The World of Mahfouz

Egypt and the Mediterranean-Red Sea trade

Selected Topics in Middle Eastern History 600-1800 AD: Protest and Dissent in Middle East History

Passionate Love in Arabic and World Literature

Islamic Architecture in Turkey, Persia and Central Asia

Heritage Management and Architectural Conservation in Cairo

Studies in the Qur'an

Egyptology and Coptology (Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Egyptology)



THREE TRACKS

Art, Archaeology and History



Language, Literature and
Religion



Coptology



Course Examples

Site Analysis



Religion and Ethics



Material Culture



Faculty Members

Salima Ikram

Salima Ikram is a distinguished university professor of Egyptology at The American University in Cairo (AUC) and has worked as an archaeologist in Turkey, Sudan, Greece and the United States. After double majoring in history and classical and near eastern archaeology at Bryn Mawr College, United States, she received her MPhil in museology and Egyptian archaeology and PhD in Egyptian archaeology from Cambridge University. She previously directed the Animal Mummy Project, the North Kharga Darb Ain Amur Survey, Valley of the Kings KV10/KV63 Mission co-directed the Predynastic Gallery project and the North Kharga Oasis Survey. She has also participated in several other archaeological missions throughout Egypt. She has lectured on her work internationally and publishes in both scholarly and popular journals. She also has an active media presence.

Research Interests: Funerary archaeology, Daily life, Archaeozoology, Rock art, Cultural heritage and museology, Experimental archaeology, Ethnoarchaeology, Bioarchaeology



Mariam Ayyad

Her doctoral research focused on mortuary texts, the Third Intermediate Period, and the role of women in temple hierarchies. Research Interests: social history and religion in the Third Intermediate and Late Periods, Transmission and layout of Egyptian funerary texts (including Opening of the Mouth, Pyramid and Coffin Texts, Solar Hymns, Books of the Hours of Night and Day) on New Kingdom and Third Intermediate Period monument Status and Iconography of women in ancient Egypt, The role of ancient Egyptian women in temple ritual, The significance of the titles Gods Wife of Amun and God's Hand, Egyptian grammar and language (Old Egyptian through Coptic), Survival of ancient Egyptian idioms in modern colloquial Egyptian Arabic, Epigraphy



Mennat-Allah El Dorry

Research Interests: Egyptology, Coptology, Culinary history, Wine production and economy, Cotton textile production and economy, Monasticism

Lisa Sabbahy

Research Interests: Queens of the old and middle kingdom, disease in ancient Egypt, anthropoid clay coffins, position and status of ancient Egyptian women, chariot use in the new kingdom, griffins in ancient Egyptian art, and the iconography of the god Nefertum





FIELD WORK



 The American
University in Cairo

MUSEUM WORK

Philosophy Program

The MA program in Philosophy emphasizes the importance of the study of the history of philosophy as the main avenue for both appreciating the plurality of positions it has given rise to and for the sake of cultivating the methodological versatility and patience such pluralism calls for in the 21st Century.

Accordingly, our program historically gives students a unique opportunity to explore the common roots, interconnections and conceptual boundaries between Islamic and Western schools of philosophical speculation, while at the same time systematically fostering the dialogue between the logical rigor and scientific naturalism advocated by the tradition of Analytic Philosophy, on the one hand, and the depth of systematic accounts of human experience offered in the German Idealist, Pragmatist and Phenomenological traditions, on the other hand.



Faculty Members Specialized in Premodern Philosophy

[Dr Catarina Belo](#)

She is a specialist in classical Islamic philosophy. Other interests include classical Islamic theology (kalām) and medieval Christian philosophy, focusing on the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas. She has also conducted research on German Idealism, in particular, Hegel's philosophy. In addition, she has studied the intersection between philosophy and religion in the Middle Ages and Hegel's works. She has recently written on the concept of 'spirit' in philosophy and virtue ethics.

Belo authored several books and articles on Islamic philosophy and Hegel. She has recently completed a translation of al-Ghazālī's *The Incoherence of the Philosophers* into Portuguese and several articles on medieval philosophy for international journals and anthologies. Her translations from Arabic into Portuguese have received an Achievement Award at the 2019 Sheikh Hamad Award for Translation. Furthermore, Belo was interviewed by Richard Marshall to discuss *Can Philosophy and Religion be Harmonised?*



[Dr Ahmed El-Sayed Abdel Meguid](#)

His research draws on Islamic and German philosophy focusing on metaphysics and epistemology, philosophy of mind and social and political philosophy. He has published articles in the European Journal of Political Theory, Oxford Journal of Islamic Studies, Theology and Science and Journal of Islamic Philosophy, in addition to book chapters published by Oxford, One World and The Atlantic Council. He is currently finalizing two monographs titled Being and Representation: Ibn al-'Arabī's Modal Metaphysics and Philosophy of Mind and Rethinking Al-Kindī's Philosophy: The Systematization of Early Islamic Modal Epistemology.

Areas of Specialization: Classical and post-classical Islamic philosophy and philosophical theology, Modern German philosophy and phenomenology (especially, Kant and Husserl)

Watch a video of Dr Abdel Meguid here:



English and Comparative Literature

Immerse yourself in literature from every corner of the world. Students in the ECLT master's program conduct comparative research on the works of English and American authors, in addition to other European and non-Western works.



Faculty Members

Ferial Ghazoul

Research Interests: Medieval Literature (European and Middle Eastern), Gender Studies, Arabic, African, and French Literatures, Postcolonial Theory



Martin Moraw

Research Interests: Shakespeare and early modern drama, Renaissance drama



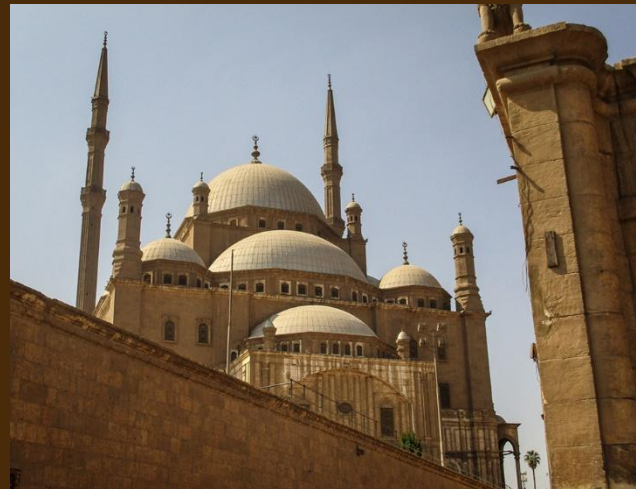
Steven Salaita

Research Interests: Native American and Indigenous Studies, American Literature, Race and Ethnic Studies, Arab American Culture and Literature



Studying in Cairo

Cairo has an unparalleled concentration of extant Islamic monuments plus rich archives and museums. Living and studying in a lively capital in the Middle East with a wealth of cultural offerings, provide students the opportunity of personal as well as academic growth.



Don't miss the opportunity to immerse yourself in the Arabic language, spoken everyday by everyone, and take advantage of the voluminous collection of literature in Arabic at AUC's renown library.

A woman wearing a headscarf and a dark jacket is sitting cross-legged on a low wall in front of a large, ornate archway. The archway is decorated with intricate Islamic calligraphy and geometric patterns. The interior of the archway is dark and appears to be a large, open space.

Cairo's role as a
regional
transportation
hub

A large, ornate dome of a mosque, featuring intricate Islamic geometric patterns. The dome is covered in a complex, repeating pattern of stars and polygons. The base of the dome is decorated with a band of calligraphy.

Curious about
the region?

Take advantage of being
based in one of the region's
most active travel hubs to
travel around the Middle East
and beyond for research or
general interest.



The rich trove of document archives and museums



The presence in Cairo of some of the world's largest collections of Arabic manuscripts and documents (such as Dar al-Kutub, Dar al-Watha'iq al-Qawmiyya, Dar al-Mahfuzat) gives students in AUC and especially those affiliated to the Department of Arab and Islamic Civilizations a rare opportunity to work with primary source material.

The rich material heritage of the region can be studied at Cairo's Museum of Islamic Art, the Coptic Museum, and the Egyptian Museum, and many other collections. These resources are augmented by countless specialized research institutes throughout the city.



19th Century Books

AUC's Rare Books Library

Students also have access to the renowned collection of AUC's Rare Books and Special Collections Library, including the Creswell Special Collections.



The beautiful,
state-of-the-art campus

After a hard day in the library, enjoy the jasmine-scented evening breeze in the university's expansive garden, take a plunge in our Olympic-sized swimming pool, or indulge in something delicious from one of the many eateries on campus.



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