

# Master of Arts in Contemporary Islamic Studies

Specialization: Contemporary Islamic Thought

كلية الدراسات الإسلامية  
College of Islamic Studies

جامعة حمد بن خليفة  
HAMAD BIN KHALIFA UNIVERSITY



# Master of Arts in Contemporary Islamic Studies

Specialization: Contemporary Islamic Thought

The Master of Arts (MA) in Contemporary Islamic Studies program, with two specialization tracks\*, synthesizes traditional Islamic sciences with contemporary religious thought. It aims to develop a generation of graduates with the critical skills and exceptional knowledge of Islam in the modern context. The Contemporary Islamic Thought specialization is taught in English.

The specialization attracts students who are seeking a unique opportunity to engage with rigorous multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary graduate training across a range of core subjects, while also enabling them to pursue a focused field of study within modern Islamic scholarship.

Students will learn how to critically approach and analyze issues related to Islam and Muslim societies, develop sophisticated and balanced arguments, and meaningfully shape discourses surrounding Islam.

## Program Focus

The program track is structured to examine traditional Islamic knowledge and place such knowledge in the context of the challenges faced by modern society. Students explore diverse theoretical perspectives and thought traditions, such as postcolonial and decolonial thought, pluralism, scientific thought, media-driven discourse, and diaspora studies, in order to delve deeply into the complexities of contemporary debates.

The track is tailored for students who aim to advance their academic pursuit through a PhD degree and a career in academia, or for those students who look forward to employment opportunities across various sectors that can be enhanced with expertise in Islamic thought.

\*The MA in Contemporary Islamic Studies offers two specializations: Contemporary Islamic Thought (taught in English) and Fiqh and Society (taught in Arabic).



## Curriculum

**A 36-credit degree program taught in English over two years that includes:**

### Three foundational courses (9 credits)

- ▶ Foundations of Islamic Thought
- ▶ Contemporary Quran and Hadith Studies
- ▶ Applied Research Methodologies in Islamic Studies

### Three specialization courses (9 credits)

- ▶ Islam and Modernity
- ▶ Islamic Thought and Postcolonial Studies
- ▶ Islamic Law and Society

### A choice of three electives out of six options (9 credits)

- ▶ Islam and Politics in the Muslim World
- ▶ Modern History of the Muslim World
- ▶ Muslim Encounters with Other Societies
- ▶ Muslim Societies in Diaspora
- ▶ Scientific Thought in Muslim Societies
- ▶ The Media and Muslim Societies

### Thesis (9 credits)

\*Students can select up to three elective courses from the range of options offered within each specialization. Students also have the option of selecting one elective course from the CIS catalog.

## Foundational Courses

Code	Credits	Course Title	Description
CIS 600	3 credits	Foundations of Islamic Thought	The course provides an in-depth investigation of multiple intellectual traditions and debates within the Islamic civilization before the onset of modernity. The course is based on readings of key primary texts in philosophy, theology, law, Sufism, and social thought. The course identifies major trends and directions of Islamic scholarship, demonstrates connections between fields of knowledge, highlights the changing cultural assumptions that have historically shaped the discourse of Muslim scholars, and explores the contemporary relevance of their works.
CIS 601	3 credits	Contemporary Quran and Hadith Studies	This course provides a contemporary treatment of the major scriptural sources in Islam, including the Quran, and the Hadith, and the salient methodologies for working with them. The course examines competing epistemological approaches to the history, composition, and content of these sources, as well as the interplay between them. Contemporary methodologies for working with these sources and their function in modern Muslim societies are then analyzed.
CIS 602	3 credits	Applied Research Methodologies in Islamic Studies	The course introduces students to the field of Islamic studies and teaches them how to design and prepare a research project that can make a meaningful contribution to this field. The particular focus of this course is on writing research-based papers. After situating Islamic studies in the broader context of academic disciplines, basic research skills are reviewed and applied in the context of a self-identified research project. Major approaches in the field of Islamic studies are surveyed, taking the case of canonical prayer and significant contributions to ongoing debates about orientalism are reviewed.

## Thesis

Code	Credits	Course Title	Description
CIS 695	9 credits	Master's Thesis Hours	This course provides students with the opportunity to develop and design a research project related to their field of specialization. As part of the process, the student initially develops a research question and defends a research proposal related to their chosen topic. Then the student undertakes the research, writing a dissertation that will be defended in an oral examination. The student's work in this course is supervised by a qualified faculty member with related expertise to the research area selected.

## Specialization Courses

Code	Credits	Course Title	Description
CIS 607	3 credits	Islamic Thought and Postcolonial Studies	This course focuses on the development of decolonial and postcolonial studies and their applications to the study of Islamic thought and society, including debates around orientalism and women's studies. Through the study and analysis of key texts, students engage with significant trends in traditional and modern scholarship, navigate critically through the relevant academic literature, and analyze methodological developments in Religious Studies and Islamic Studies.
CIS 705	3 credits	Islam and Modernity	This course introduces students to institutions, concepts, and processes centrally associated with modernity. Focusing on the fields of knowledge, government, and economy, the course investigates what is new and distinctive about modern societal contexts. It examines fields of conflict which have emerged in these contexts. Trajectories of modernity are investigated in a comparative perspective.
CIS 706	3 credits	Islamic Law and Society	The course provides an interdisciplinary exploration of law and society in the Muslim world from medieval to modern times. It presents the main figures and institutions of Islamic legal authority, showing how they have adapted to changing configurations of power. The course discusses various approaches to the study of law in society through case studies ranging from crime and punishment, marriage and divorce, and economic practice. Particular attention is paid to the study of law and society in the contemporary Muslim world.

## Elective Courses

Code	Credits	Course Title	Description
CIS 608	3 credits	The Media and Muslim Societies	This course explores the surprisingly close relationships between the forces of media and religion in what is arguably a "secular" age. It closely examines the evolution of ubiquitous religious content and how it relates to Muslim society. The course also considers qualitative methods in analyzing major media narratives that include such topics as the use of digital media by a variety of Muslim groups, reactions and counter-reactions to extremism and Western discourses appropriating Islam for political advantage.
CIS 609	3 credits	Islam and Politics in the Muslim World	This course examines relations between Islam and politics in the contemporary Muslim world. The course surveys foundational texts, and classical theories of political order, as well as key notions of Western political thought. On this basis, the course provides a contextualized analysis of central debates about the political order, while situating them in the evolving structure of the Muslim world.
CIS 611	3 credits	Scientific Thought in Muslim Societies	This course explores the scientific tradition that developed in Islamicate societies and the complex interaction between scriptural revelation and experimental discovery. It traces the development of scientific inquiry that occurred due to interactions with the ancient traditions of learning and consequently, how the innovations that resulted may have influenced European scientific thinking. The rise of modern science in Muslim societies is discussed and the epistemological challenges it presents are explored through a series of subjects such as evolution and cosmology.

## Elective Courses (continued)

Code	Credits	Course Title	Description
CIS 612	3 credits	Muslim Societies in Diaspora	Diasporic Muslim communities have existed throughout history, and while diasporic communities are an integral part of Islam, they have often been considered a case apart. In the context of globalization, their specificity appears more limited than before. Taking diverse cases from the past and present, this course examines the formation of diasporas and their role in the spread of Islam, changing relations to the "homeland" and the broader Muslim community, legal issues related to the minority condition, and the interplay of culture and religion in the formation of their identity.
CIS 613	3 credits	Modern History of the Muslim World	The course offers an introduction to the history of the modern Muslim world, with a focus on the Middle East and the Gulf region in particular. It surveys the emergence of the contemporary state-system since the early 19th century in relation to broader processes of social and cultural transformation. It retraces changes on the levels of identity and spatial organization and examines the competing visions of legitimate political order which continue to structure Muslim polities today. Looking at various nationalist and Islamic movements, the course examines the interplay between modernization policies, social change, and intellectual developments, thus introducing students to key analytical concepts for their study.
CIS 710	3 credits	Muslim Encounters with Other Societies	This course introduces students to the overarching principles that have generally governed Muslim interaction with various non-Muslim societies and how diverse Muslim communities have traditionally interpreted these principles under similar and varying circumstances. The course highlights some of the best practices that Muslims were able to develop in their interaction with other societies which might be taken into consideration by non-Muslim communities in their encounter with others. Furthermore, contemporary models of successful interaction between religious communities would be examined to identify what challenges they pose to Muslim communities and to what extent Muslims can benefit from such models.

## Faculty

<b>Dr. Alexandre Caeiro</b>	Program Director, Associate Professor of Islamic Studies
<b>Dr. Dheen Mohamed</b>	Professor of Comparative Religion
<b>Dr. Emad El-Din Shahin</b>	Professor of Islamic Studies
<b>Dr. Ibrahim Zain</b>	Executive Dean, Professor of Islamic Studies and Comparative Religion
<b>Dr. Joseph Lumbard</b>	Associate Professor of Quranic Studies
<b>Dr. Mohamed El-Gammal</b>	Professor of Practice of Comparative Fiqh
<b>Dr. Muhammad Modassir Ali</b>	Assistant Dean of Student Affairs, Senior Researcher

## Admission requirements

Applicants seeking admission to the Master of Arts In Contemporary Islamic Studies should have a bachelor's degree with a strong academic record (minimum 3.0 GPA out of 4.0) from a recognized institution.

Please refer to the following table for a summary of the admission criteria:

<b>Program</b>	<b>MA in Contemporary Islamic Studies: Specialization in Contemporary Islamic Thought</b>
<b>Required Field of Study</b>	Islamic Studies, Middle Eastern Studies, Religious Studies; or relatable areas within the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences with appropriate experience.
<b>Language Proficiency</b>	Further details about the language proficiency requirement and the process to seek exemption (where this is an option) are available on the website: <a href="https://admissions.hbku.edu.qa">admissions.hbku.edu.qa</a>

## Application requirements

A completed online application form: [admissions.hbku.edu.qa](https://admissions.hbku.edu.qa)

## Academic transcripts

Official electronic copies of transcripts should be submitted as part of the online application. Final transcripts and graduation statements are required for all previous university studies. All transcripts submitted should include an explanation of the grading system.

For those who have not completed their current studies, transcripts must include results from the last completed semester of coursework. Transcripts in languages other than English or Arabic must be accompanied by an official translation. Applicants who are admitted to the program based on copies of or incomplete transcripts will be required to provide original transcripts upon enrollment in order to register for courses.

## Standardized test results

Official copies (where required) must be sent directly to HBKU. Please refer to the institutional codes below:

- ▶ GRE: 7551
- ▶ GMAT: H6S
- ▶ TOEFL: 4981
- ▶ IELTS: No code required. Students should ask the IELTS center where they tested to send the IELTS TRF to HBKU

Applicants should also submit copies of their test scores with the online application.

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### **Letters of recommendation**

Applicants should submit two letters of recommendation, one of which must be from an academic referee. Applicants should include their referees' names and email addresses in the online application. Referees will receive an email requesting them to complete their references.

### **Personal statement of interest**

Applicants should submit a personal statement as part of the online application.

The statement should explain why the candidate is applying to the program, and how their studies will contribute to the achievement of their personal objectives, including information about the applicant's research interests and achievements (minimum of 300, maximum of 500 words).

### **Resume/Curriculum vitae**

Applicants should submit a copy of their current resume or curriculum vitae as part of the online application.

This should include the following information:

- ▶ Academic Qualifications
- ▶ Professional Experience
- ▶ Publications
- ▶ Research Projects
- ▶ Academic Awards or Honors
- ▶ Conference Presentations

### **Identification document**

Applicants should submit an electronic copy of their passport as part of their online application. Nationals and residents of Qatar should also submit their valid Qatar ID.


### **Student funding**


The College of Islamic Studies provides opportunities for scholarships and funding on a competitive basis. Further information will be provided to applicants who are admitted to the program.

### **Contact Information**


#### **Admission inquiries**

[admissions.cis@hbku.edu.qa](mailto:admissions.cis@hbku.edu.qa)

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