

From the fall of 2006 through the fall of 2007, the Committee on Majors reviewed a proposal from the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations (NELC) and the Council on Middle East Studies (CMES) for a new major in Modern Middle East Studies (MMES) to be governed by a committee appointed by the Dean of Yale College. The Committee received testimony from John Darnell, Chair of NELC, and Ellen Lust-Okar, Chair of CMES, and from the Deans of Yale College and the Graduate School. We also heard a report from Deputy Provost Charles Long and Associate Provost Emily Bakemeier on the feasibility of the proposed major.

The Committee on Majors recommends that the Yale College Faculty approve the creation of the Major in Modern Middle East Studies for an initial five-year period, with the curricular requirements outlined in the attached document.

There is strong student interest in the study of the Middle East, which is an area of tremendous political and social importance that possesses a great cultural heritage. Yale currently has area studies programs representing East Asia, South Asia, Russia and Eastern Europe, Africa, Latin America, and the United States. Western European material is well covered by existing majors, including the national literature departments. One of the few major areas of the world lacking a formal place in our undergraduate curriculum is the Modern Middle East, clearly a region of the world that future leaders trained at Yale need to understand. The considerable efforts of NELC and CMES has now made it feasible to repair this major hole in Yale's offerings.

Enrollments in language courses as well as courses on the history, politics, and society of the Middle East, indicate a large and growing pool of potential majors. 48 students currently enrolled in language courses related to the region responded to a survey in January, 2007. 40 of these indicated that they would be interested in majoring in Modern Middle East Studies if such a major were available.

Curricular Design

The proposed major offers an opportunity to bridge the expertise of NELC in language and culture and the expertise of CMES members in the society, politics, and economics of the region. The proposed major is robustly interdisciplinary, requiring advanced knowledge of one regional language, advanced seminars in Classical and Modern Thought of the region and a Seminar on the Modern Middle East. The remaining courses will be spread geographically and substantively across the region and the relevant disciplines.

Resources

With recent expansion of faculty strength in the region of the Middle East, the University now has the necessary resources to offer a major in the Modern Middle East. 16 faculty in seven departments currently teach courses that will be applicable to the MMES degree, and several of these have expressed their willingness to serve as Director of Undergraduate Studies for the new major or to teach its required seminars. The university offers a wide range of language courses in Hebrew and Arabic and a smaller range in Turkish and Persian. NELC and CMES are eager also to add to the University's strength in Turkish and Persian; further resources in these areas will depend to a large extent on student interest. The Committee encourages NELC, CMES, and the University to look into the possibility of establishing more extensive funding opportunities for

students who wish to study in the Middle East, on the model of the Light Fellowships, which have been so successful in helping students to learn East Asian languages. The CMES has been particularly successful at raising resources for the study of the Middle East, and Yale has been named a National Resource Center for the study of the region.

In closing, the Committee notes that, while it has in general tried to restrain the growth in new majors in Yale College, this seems like a new major that has a strong intellectual justification, good faculty and administrative support, and a substantial body of potential students. The introduction of a well-designed and supported major in Modern Middle East Studies will create a formal place in Yale's undergraduate curriculum for the study of this crucial region. It will mark an important stage in Yale's quest to become a truly global university.

Respectfully submitted,

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Proposed Major Requirements for Modern Middle East Studies

A governing committee of members of the ladder faculty, appointed by the Dean of Yale College, will oversee the major. It will normally have one half of its members drawn from NELC and the remainder from other Middle East-related faculty. The major will be administered and staffed by faculty members from FAS departments who regularly teach undergraduate courses on Middle East-related topics.

The major will offer students the possibility to focus on the culture, history, religion, politics, and society of the Modern Near East in its full geographical breadth, using any one (or more) of its four major languages, Arabic, Hebrew, Persian, or Turkish. The Major will rely on courses in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations as well as other FAS departments, such as Anthropology, Art History, History, Political Science, and Religious Studies.

Prerequisites. There are no prerequisites.

Requirements. The major consists of twelve term courses.

Foundational Requirements. Three term courses are required, including 1) Modern Thought; 2) Classical Thought; and 3) Seminar on the Modern Middle East.

Elective Courses. Six further term courses on the modern Middle East that examine culture and thought, history, religion, politics and society. Courses are to be spread geographically and substantively including courses focusing on at least two different sub-regions and from two or more departments.

Language Courses and Requirements. Before applying language credits towards the major, students are required to have achieved language proficiency at the intermediate level in one of the four dominant languages of the Middle East: Arabic, Hebrew, Persian, or Turkish. This may be met by successful completion of an intermediate course, such as ARBC 103 or HEBR 102, or by departmental examination. (However, no term credit is earned by passing such an examination.) After satisfying the requirements at the intermediate level, all students are required to complete a full year of language training at the third- or fourth-year level, depending on their level of competence. Students enrolling in language courses may apply one year (two credits) of language training at the third- or fourth-year level toward the 12-course requirement: ARBC 104 Advanced Modern Standard Arabic or HEBR 103 Advanced Modern Hebrew or PERS 103 Persian Seminar or TKSH 103 Advanced Turkish.

Senior Essay. All students in the major undertake a senior essay that involves serious use of materials in one or more of the four modern Middle Eastern languages. The topic and prospectus, signed by an advisor, are to be submitted to the director of undergraduate studies by the end of the fourth week of classes in either term of the senior year. The student will choose an advisor from among the faculty with language competence, offering courses approved for the major in consultation with the director of undergraduate studies. Senior essays will be graded by their advisor and a second reader.