

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY

Department of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies

HANDBOOK FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

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Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies at New York University

The study of the Middle East at NYU has a long and distinguished history, which may well have begun with the university's founding in 1831. It is known that by 1837 the faculty included both a professor of Arabic, Syriac, Persian and Ethiopic, and a professor of Hebrew and Oriental languages; courses were offered in Arabic, Persian, biblical and rabbinic Hebrew, Chaldaic and Syriac.

The Department of Near Eastern Languages and Literatures (NELL) was established in 1966; the late Professor R. Bayly Winder served as the department's first chair. In 1973 the department moved into its present quarters at the corner of Washington Square South and Sullivan Street, in the newly completed building (designed by Philip Johnson) which also houses the Hagop Kevorkian Center for Near Eastern Studies. NELL originally included faculty specializing in Hebrew and Judaic studies and the history, cultures and languages of the ancient Near East, but in 1986 the Skirball Department of Hebrew and Judaic Studies was established as a separate department. For some years NYU's Program in Religious Studies also operated under the aegis of NELL. To better reflect its changing composition and orientation, the department changed its name in 1996 to Middle Eastern Studies (MES) and in 2003 to Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies (MEIS).

People at NYU and elsewhere often confuse the Department of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies with the Kevorkian Center for Near Eastern Studies. In fact, although they share the same building, the two are distinct (if very friendly) entities. The Department of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies is an academic department with its own faculty and offers an undergraduate major and minor as well as a graduate program leading to the Ph.D.; it does not offer the M.A. degree, though doctoral students may be awarded the M.Phil. degree once they have completed required coursework, passed their exams, met their language requirements and defended their dissertation proposal.

In contrast, the Kevorkian Center for Near Eastern Studies is an area studies center, funded in part by the federal government, whose mission is to encourage and coordinate teaching and research on the Middle East at NYU and to sponsor educational, informational, and outreach programs for teachers, the general public, and other people interested in the region. The Kevorkian Center also administers the Program in Near Eastern Studies (NES) leading to the M.A., as well as joint M.A. degrees with business, journalism and museum studies. The Kevorkian Center is not an academic department and has no tenure-line faculty of its own.

You are encouraged to consult the MEIS webpage (<http://as.nyu.edu/meis.html>) for additional information, along various Graduate School of Arts and Science (GSAS) websites, including the GSAS Policies and Procedures manual (<https://gsas.nyu.edu/content/nyu-as/gsas/about-gsas/policies-and-procedures/policies-and-procedures-manual-and-forms.html>).

Finally, we encourage graduate students to participate actively in the intellectual life of the department and to communicate their interests and concerns to the faculty. To this end MEIS graduate student representatives are invited to participate in departmental faculty meetings and organize events.

The Graduate Program

The doctoral program of the Department of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies provides training in fields relating to the history, cultures, languages, literatures and religions of the Middle East, focusing on the period from the rise of Islam to the present. Members of the department are drawn from different disciplines and specializations (including history, anthropology, literature, Islamic studies, language instruction, sociology, and political science) and are committed to providing students with a solid disciplinary grounding; at the same time, the department fosters innovative interdisciplinary and comparative approaches to the study of the Middle East. Several of the department's faculty have joint appointments with other academic units at NYU.

MEIS offers a program of coursework and supervised research leading to the doctorate in Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies. Students in the MEIS doctoral program concentrate their studies in one of three tracks: Islamic Studies, Literature or Culture and Representation. In collaboration with the History Department, department also offers a Joint Ph.D. Program in History and Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies. MEIS seeks prospective graduate students who are academically well-prepared and strongly committed to pursuing the Ph.D.; as noted above, it has no M.A. program and does not offer that degree. Students who are interested in obtaining the M.A. should apply to the Kevorkian Center's Program in Near Eastern Studies, which offers a terminal M.A. in Near Eastern Studies.

Students in the Department of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies at NYU can take courses offered at institutions in the Inter-University Doctoral Consortium (IUDC), which includes Princeton University, Columbia University, CUNY Graduate Center, Rutgers University, Fordham University, Stony Brook, the New School University and Teachers College of Columbia University. Information about the IUDC is available at <http://gsas.nyu.edu/content/nyu-as/gsas/academics/inter-university-doctoral-consortium.html>; the registration form for Consortium courses is also available there. Consortium courses are available only for students who have completed at least one year of full-time doctoral study. The department encourages its students to explore the many opportunities for coursework, faculty assistance and research available in the New York area.

Advising and Mentoring

The student's advisor, the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS), and the Graduate Administrator are available to assist students with course selection, registration, and the fulfillment of program requirements. Students must consult with their advisor each term before registering for courses, planning exams, taking on teaching duties, and engaging in work on dissertation research and writing. It is the responsibility of students to remain in regular communication with their advisor and committee members at all stages of the doctoral program.

The DGS and Graduate Administrator work together to make sure that students are aware of the GSAS and departmental structures and policies, including matters related to fellowships and fees. These are detailed in the graduate student handbook, which is revised periodically; student input is welcome. GSAS rules and guidelines should also be followed.

Before you enter the department's graduate program, you will be assigned an advisor with whom you should consult regarding course selection and other questions; you should also feel free to discuss any

questions or concerns you may have with the DGS. After your first semester at NYU you may change advisors, with the approval of the DGS and relevant faculty. The DGS will need to approve your choice of dissertation advisor, to make sure that you are working with the faculty member most suited to your needs and interests. When the time comes, your dissertation advisor will also need to approve the choice of your exam field advisors and readers as well as the composition of your dissertation proposal defense committee and your dissertation committee. Under certain circumstances doctoral students may elect to have co-advisors.

You should plan on meeting your advisor(s) frequently – at a minimum, twice per semester. While you are still doing coursework, you will need to meet with your primary advisor at the beginning of each semester, before registering for courses, to discuss your plans for the semester. Once you’ve finished your coursework, you will need to meet regularly with your dissertation advisor and other faculty to discuss your dissertation research and/or writing and report on your progress and communicate plans for applying to fellowships and positions. This regular communication will ensure that you understand and are meeting departmental requirements and expectations, and that faculty are aware of your plans and ways they can support your progress. Planning dissertation defenses and applying to post-graduation positions requires coordination with advisors and committee members. Before applying to positions that require a PhD in hand in the following academic year, students must have the approval of advisors and any other faculty who will be asked to write letters of recommendation for such positions.

The MEIS faculty adopts the principles and policies outlined by the GSAS guidelines concerning the mentoring of graduate students. Students should familiarize themselves with all of these guidelines. In accordance with their spirit, a student’s primary advisor is expected to provide:

- Guidance on the student’s progress at a minimum of two meetings per semester when the faculty member is not on leave (note that students should take the initiative in arranging these meetings).
- An annual written review of the student’s progress over the past year and plans for the coming year, following an end-of-year meeting with the student. The review will be shared with the student and with the DGS, and a copy will be placed in the student’s file. The review should provide constructive suggestions, guidelines, and benchmarks for the student’s progress in the program. Reviews will take place in May and will be shared with students no later than June.
- Guidance in choosing appropriate courses and exam fields and in assembling exam committees, a dissertation prospectus committee, and a dissertation committee.
- Assistance in identifying a viable dissertation project that meets the interests and goals of the student, is compatible with the expertise of the faculty member, and makes contributions to relevant disciplines and fields
- Direction in finding and accessing the resources needed to conduct the dissertation research.
- Timely feedback regarding the student’s ideas, fellowship proposals, dissertation chapters, etc., as well as timely submission of letters of reference. The department considers one month to be the upper bound of timeliness for purposes of feedback on writing and submission of letters. (This assumes that sufficient notice—i.e., one month, minimum—is given to the faculty mentor with respect to deadlines for submission of proposals and letters.)
- Counsel on and support for next steps as the student approaches graduation—e.g., help in assembling a dissertation defense committee, assessing various career pathways, and identifying post-doctoral training and/or job opportunities.

If the faculty member becomes unable to fulfill these duties for any reason, that individual and the DGS should work with the student to find another appropriate faculty member to take over the advisory role in a timely manner.

Grievance Procedures

The Department of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies at New York University is committed to fostering a safe, supportive, and responsive environment in which our students can thrive. Students who experience stressful, negative, or neglectful situations should feel empowered to bring these concerns forward without threat of repercussions.

The chair of MEIS and DGS are committed to providing an environment where complaints can be made without fear of retaliation. While we cannot always guarantee confidentiality, we do guarantee privacy, which means that information will be shared only with individuals who "need to know" in order to assist in the resolution of the issue. The DGS and chair will also make every effort to maintain confidentiality to the extent possible, and to seek solutions to problems in consultation with the student. See [here](#) for more information on the difference between privacy and confidentiality. It is the responsibility of the chair and the DGS to work with the department's multiple constituencies—students, faculty, administrative staff—to foster a safe, responsive environment such that student concerns can be brought forward and addressed without threat of stigma or repercussion.

1) Grievances involving allegations of discrimination, harassment, retaliation, or sexual assault

Allegations of discrimination, harassment, retaliation, or sexual assault against NYU students or NYU employees (including students acting in their capacity as NYU employees) are governed by NYU's Non-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment Policy and Complaint Procedures for Students and for Employees. NYU students and employees are also governed by NYU's Sexual Misconduct, Relationship Violence, and Stalking Policy, which pertains to all university-based relationships. Students are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the above policies.

Individual cases may call for unique courses of action. We seek to empower students with information regarding the available channels. The following are some reporting, support, and advocacy services available at NYU. Students are also free to pursue legal channels and counseling options outside of NYU. A list of useful non-NYU resources is maintained [here](#) (under Section IV: New York City Resources).

- In accordance with NYU policy, students have the right to report any allegations of discrimination, harassment, retaliation, or sexual assault directly to the Executive Director of Equal Opportunity (OEO): 212-998-6807 or equal.opportunity@nyu.edu.
- Graduate student workers (Teaching Assistants, Research Assistants, and Graduate Assistants in administrative and other roles) are covered by GSOC-UAW 2110's [contract](#) with NYU, and have the right to file grievances over violations of NYU's Non-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment Policy. Graduate student workers also have the right to GSOC union representation at any OEO meeting and to pursue third party arbitration if they find NYU's response to a grievance unsatisfactory. Graduate workers can email gsoc@2110uaw.org or reach out to their graduate student union steward for confidential advice about grievance options. When a graduate worker files a workplace grievance against NYU over an instance of harassment or discrimination (including a hostile work environment caused by harassment that may not have targeted the worker directly), they are engaging in a legally protected process that is independent of NYU's OEO investigations. It is illegal for NYU to retaliate against graduate workers for filing a grievance.
- Students may also report allegations of discrimination, harassment, retaliation, or sexual assault to the chair, the DGS, other faculty members, or the Department Administrator. All of these employees are legally required to report allegations of discrimination, harassment, retaliation, or sexual assault to the Office of Equal Opportunity, which will maintain the privacy of the complainant, but may share

information on a need to know basis. Note that students who want their allegations to be recorded with the Office of Equal Opportunity but do not wish to file a formal complaint by going to OEO directly may approach faculty or staff. OEO will reach out to the original complainant(s) before deciding whether to open an investigation and will update third parties and the intermediary reporters (e.g., faculty or administrators) only in cases it deems necessary.

- NYU also provides [confidential support services](#) for students who have experienced sexual harassment, assault, relationship violence, and stalking. This includes a consultation about rights, options and services available, short-term individual counseling, group counseling and referral to off campus services through the Student Health Center's [Counseling and Wellness Services](#) and the [NYU Center for Sexual and Relationship Respect Services](#). The Center works alongside Crisis Response Counselors who can accompany a complainant to hospitals for evidence collection, medical services, and campus meetings or proceedings.
- Fully ordained clergy at the [multifaith chaplain](#) center can also offer confidential counseling services.
- NYU's Campus Safety has a [Victim Services](#) program that can assist students with safety on campus and navigating criminal or family courts systems off campus.

2) Grievances involving neglectful situations and general mentoring issues

Students who are experiencing difficulties in their relationship with an advisor or other mentor in the Department are encouraged to bring the issue to the DGS or the chair. The DGS or chair will discuss with the student the next steps, including, when appropriate, involving others. The Chair and DGS are committed to providing an environment where complaints can be made without fear of retaliation. Privacy is always guaranteed. Confidentiality will be maintained upon request and to the extent possible, and solutions to problems will be sought in consultation with the student as appropriate. For example, after discussion with the student and with the student's permission, the DGS or Chair may discuss the issue with the concerned faculty member, with or without the student present and with or without using the student's name.

If a satisfactory solution cannot be found to the problem, and at the student's request, the DGS and the Chair will assist the student in finding another appropriate faculty member to serve as the student's advisor or mentor.

If neither the DGS nor the Chair is appropriate, students can approach another MEIS faculty member. Students (in discussion with the DGS/Chair or independently) also have the right to report conflicts or stressful experiences with faculty members to the [Assistant Dean of Students at GSAS](#).

Evaluation and Screening

The department believes that the students it admits into its doctoral program have the ability and commitment to complete it. At the same time, the department has a responsibility to monitor and evaluate its students' performance, for a variety of reasons: to let students know how they are doing, to be able to recommend them for teaching and for fellowships, to certify that they are in good standing, and so on.

As noted above under "Advising," you should meet regularly with your advisor(s) to discuss your work in the graduate program. The more your advisor knows about your progress, problems, concerns, etc., the more effectively the department can provide help and guidance.

Advisors and other faculty will report to the department on a regular basis on the performance and progress of all students. In addition, department faculty will conduct a comprehensive evaluation of all graduate students at least once each academic year.

There are several points in the trajectory of your graduate career at which you will undergo screening by the department, to evaluate your academic performance and progress and to determine whether you should be permitted to enter the next stage of graduate study and receive financial aid. The point of this process is not to harass or intimidate you; it is simply to ensure that you have a clear idea of where you stand and what is expected of you, and that all the department's graduate students are pursuing their studies seriously, consistently and satisfactorily.

Students who fail one of their comprehensive exams may petition the department to be allowed to take it a second time, but the department has the right to deny that request and to require them to withdraw from graduate study. Failing the exam a second time will result in termination from the Ph.D. program. Students who fail to perform satisfactorily in their dissertation proposal defense may be required to withdraw from the graduate program. Finally, the department may compel any student who does not measure up to its academic standards to withdraw from the graduate program, temporarily or permanently.

Grades and Incompletes

The department expects that students will maintain a consistently strong academic record at NYU. Be aware that the department strongly discourages "incompletes" even if they are made up before the end of the following semester. Any grade of I (Incomplete) that appears on your transcript turns permanently into an F (Fail) one year after the beginning of the term in which the student took the course: for example, an I received in the fall 2020 semester would change to an F on the first day of the fall 2021 term. Incompletes, whether outstanding or made-up, may be taken into consideration when allocating teaching opportunities and waivers of maintenance of matriculation fees for which you might otherwise be eligible. You should also know that the total number of incompletes cannot exceed the number of years enrolled at NYU. All outstanding incompletes must be made up before you take your comprehensive exams.

Financial Aid

All graduate students admitted to MEIS are awarded MacCracken Fellowships, which normally provide for five years of tuition and stipend. Although teaching is not a condition of this fellowship support, students are strongly encouraged to serve as teaching assistants in departmental courses or in the College of Arts and Science's College Core Curriculum for an average of four semesters. We encourage students to bank at least some of the money they earn from teaching (either directly or through GSAS) to support research and dissertation writing after their semesters of MacCracken stipend are exhausted. The department sees teaching as an essential part of graduate training: apart from the intrinsic joys of teaching, it prepares you for an academic career and it will look good on your c.v. when you apply for academic positions or other jobs.

Limited GSAS and departmental funds are available to students for participation in conferences, for summer language study, and for summer research-related travel.

New and continuing students who are US citizens or permanent residents and studying Arabic, Persian, Turkish or certain other Middle Eastern languages may apply for the Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) Fellowship. Information about how to apply for summer and academic-year FLAS fellowships is circulated by the Kevorkian Center for Near Eastern Studies; the deadline for applications is usually toward the end of January each year.

Given the limited resources at its disposal, the department strongly urges all graduate students to apply for other sources of funding whenever possible, especially pre-dissertation and dissertation research fellowships from external funding institutions. A listing of NYU and external fellowships and grants can be found at <http://gsas.nyu.edu/financial-support/fellowships.html>. MEIS maintains its own list of NYU and external awards, grants, fellowships and employment opportunities, which are available via the department webpage.

As you go through your graduate studies you will need to plan ahead, especially with regard to applying for fellowships for pre-dissertation and doctoral dissertation research in the Middle East. Keep in mind that many research and writing fellowships have application deadlines about a year of when they begin: **that is, you may need to apply in September-November for fellowships that start in September of the following year.** That means that you must begin developing your doctoral dissertation research plans early in your graduate career.

Maximum Time-to-Degree

All graduate students in MEIS are subject to GSAS rules concerning the maximum number of years they may take to complete all degree requirements. If you enter a graduate program at NYU with a B.A., you have a maximum of ten years to complete the Ph.D. requirements. If you enter a graduate program already holding an M.A. and transfer 24 or more credits toward the Ph.D. degree, you have a maximum of seven years to complete all requirements for the Ph.D. Students who do not satisfy all degree requirements within these time limits may be terminated by the department. In special circumstances students may petition for an extension, but the department is under no obligation to grant such a request. You should be aware that GSAS will normally not waive students' maintenance and matriculation fees after their seventh year of graduate study.

Types of Courses

All graduate courses normally offered by the department are worth 4 points.

In addition to regular classroom-based courses, the department offers various forms of individualized study, which may carry 1-4 points. Before registering for any of the following types of individual study, however, you must use the form available in the department office to secure the approval of both the faculty member with whom you wish to work and the DGS. Certain restrictions apply to these courses:

Thesis Research for students entering without an M.A. Students who enter the department's Ph.D. program without an M.A. must complete either a thesis or (with your advisor's approval) two seminar papers, as specified below under Requirements. This work is normally completed by the end of a student's second year of full-time study. Such students may register for a maximum of 4 points of Thesis Research, to free them from regular coursework so that they can implement their research project or write their seminar papers.

Directed Study Over the two semesters preceding their comprehensive exams, students may register for a maximum of 4 points of MEIS-GA 2961: Directed Study for each field in which they will be taking an examination, in order to have adequate time to prepare for it. This will normally take the form of an informal reading course designed to work through the reading list they have developed (in consultation with their advisors) for the relevant field. However, if a formal "literature of the field" course is offered for that field, you may not take both that course and a Directed Study. Directed Study may also be used as a means for enabling graduate students to register and receive degree credit for undergraduate courses, when appropriate, but only with approval of the DGS.

Dissertation Research After the successful completion of the comprehensive exams, a student may register for a maximum of 4 points of MEIS-GA 3802: Dissertation Research, in order to formulate a dissertation proposal and prepare for its defense.

Independent Study With approval from both the faculty member with whom he or she wishes to work and the DGS, a student may register for no more than 4 points of MEIS-GA 2997: Independent Study in any academic year. Every Independent Study must include a writing assignment, for example a research paper or a bibliographical essay. Excessive use of Independent Study is however discouraged, and students should plan on pursuing and developing their research interests through regularly offered courses.

Reading Courses This category of courses allows a faculty member and a group of students some flexibility if they wish to work together on a specific set of texts. However, as with Independent Study, the department prefers that students rely primarily on regular departmental course offerings.

Students may not register for more than 4 points for Master's Thesis Research, Directed Study, Dissertation Research and/or Independent Study *combined* in any one academic year, unless they have obtained prior approval from the DGS.

The Ph.D. in Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies

Applicants interested in pursuing doctoral-level studies relating to the Middle East and Islam at NYU may apply to either the MEIS Ph.D. program or to the separate Joint Ph.D. Program in History and Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies, described below. Those who are admitted to the MEIS Ph.D. program must be in one of its three distinct tracks: Islamic Studies, Literature, and Culture and Representation.

Degree Requirements for the MEIS Ph.D.

You must complete at least 72 points of graduate coursework (normally 18 courses at 4 points a course) beyond the B.A., including at least 3 graduate seminars. GSAS allows graduate students to take a maximum of 12 points of “skills courses,” such as undergraduate language courses at the elementary and intermediate levels; however, no credit toward the degree will be awarded for undergraduate language courses.

At the discretion of the DGS, students may be granted up to 32 points of degree credit for graduate-level coursework done in an NYU department or program other than Kevorkian Center’s Program in Near Eastern Studies, or at another university. Students who have earned an M.A. from the Kevorkian and have been admitted to the Department of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies Ph.D. program may transfer up to 24 points of degree credit toward their Ph.D. However, students entering the Ph.D. program with their M.A. in hand normally transfer only 20 points so that they do not lose a year of MacCracken funding.

You must take MEIS-GA 1687 (Problems and Methods in Middle Eastern Studies) as soon as possible after your arrival at NYU, unless granted a waiver by the DGS.

You must submit *either* a research thesis *or* (with your advisor’s approval) two seminar papers, subject to the following conditions:

- the research thesis should be 60-80 typed doubled-spaced pages in length. It may be either an expanded seminar paper or an entirely independent project, but it should demonstrate your knowledge of a particular subject and the related scholarly literature as well as your ability to analyze a problem and effectively convey that analysis to others.
- at least one of the two seminar papers must include substantial original research based on primary sources, and both of the papers must have been substantially reworked such that they are roughly equivalent to work that might reasonably be submitted for publication in a scholarly journal in your field.

You should decide which of these options to pursue as early as possible in your second year of graduate study and obtain the approval of your advisor for both your choice and the topic(s) on which you plan to write. The completed thesis or seminar papers will be evaluated by your advisor and a second faculty reader, and must be discussed and approved at an oral defense that includes both the advisor and the second reader.

Please note that completion of a thesis or two seminar papers may be waived by the DGS if you have completed equivalent work (typically an M.A. thesis) in another graduate program at NYU or at another university.

You must achieve proficiency in Arabic, Turkish, Persian or Hebrew (or, with the approval of the DGS, another Middle Eastern language). This proficiency may be demonstrated either by passing a departmental or GSAS language exam, or by passing an advanced (i.e., beyond the elementary and intermediate levels) graduate course in that language with a grade of B+ or better. You must complete this requirement before you defend your dissertation proposal.

Before you defend your dissertation proposal, you must also attain sufficient command of a second language (other than English) relevant to your dissertation research project that will enable you to work with primary source materials in that language and/or engage with appropriate secondary sources. Your command of this second language must be confirmed either by passing a departmental or GSAS language exam or by passing an advanced (beyond the elementary and intermediate levels) course in that language with a grade of B+ or better.

Note that NYU has typically offered intensive summer language courses designed for Ph.D. students interested in acquiring a knowledge adequate for research purposes of a number of European languages; successfully completing one of these courses satisfies this second language requirement.

You must pass two written comprehensive exams, in two different major fields, at or near the end of your coursework (see the timeline below). The fields on which you are to be examined are to be chosen in consultation with your advisor and approved by the DGS. The exams will be based on your coursework and on a reading list for each field developed in consultation with your advisor(s) for that field. You may prepare for these exams either by enrolling in a relevant “literature of the field” course, if offered, or by registering for a Directed Study course of no more than 4 points with an appropriate faculty member.

Each exam will be set, read and evaluated by your advisor and a second reader. Each written exam will be followed by an oral exam, giving the two readers the opportunity to query you on your written essays but also to range more widely across the field. Your exam grade will reflect your performance on both the written and oral components.

A student who does not pass an exam may petition the department for permission to take it one more time. Failing the exam a second time will result in termination from the Ph.D. program.

After completing your comprehensive exams, you should begin to formulate a dissertation proposal, in close consultation with the faculty member who will serve as your primary dissertation advisor and with the two other faculty members who will also participate in your dissertation proposal defense. Your dissertation proposal should set forth the questions you plan to explore in your dissertation research and the approaches, methods and sources on which you plan to draw. It should also include an extensive critical bibliography of the relevant scholarly literature, a thorough discussion of how your proposal relates to that literature, and a discussion of how you plan to go about your research.

You may defend your dissertation proposal after you have completed all coursework (including all Incompletes), fulfilled your language requirements and passed your comprehensive exams. The three faculty members conducting the dissertation proposal defense may approve the proposal outright, require revisions or reject the proposal, as they see fit. Once you have successfully defended your proposal you will be considered to have attained ABD status and may be granted the M.Phil. degree.

Once your dissertation proposal is approved, you may proceed to research and write a doctoral dissertation, under the supervision of your dissertation advisor and the other members of your

dissertation committee, who must be approved by your advisor. The dissertation committee is composed of at least five members, three of whom must be current or recent full-time members of NYU's Faculty of Arts and Science. Three members of the committee (the advisor and two others, generally the committee members who approved your dissertation proposal) are designated core members; the other two (or more) committee members are termed readers.

The department strongly believes that students' dissertation committees should be composed of those scholars who will provide them with the most effective possible intellectual guidance, whether or not they are NYU faculty members. We encourage students to develop contacts with, and solicit guidance and feedback from, a wide range of scholars whose work is relevant to their interests.

The dissertation and its defense represent the culmination of your graduate education, demonstrating your mastery of the norms, concepts and methods of scholarship in your field and your ability to deploy them productively and creatively. The dissertation should make an original contribution to knowledge or understanding in a particular field, generally through the use of previously unexplored sources, the reinterpretation of already examined materials or the examination of a novel question or subject. A successful dissertation should provide the basis for a publishable monograph and/or a series of publishable articles. The dissertation should normally be 300-400 pages in length and must conform to all departmental and GSAS standards.

The completed dissertation must be approved as ready to be defended by your advisor and the two other core members of your committee, at which point a public oral defense can be scheduled. The dissertation defense is conducted by your three core committee members along with two or more readers. The dissertation may approve the dissertation as is, require revisions or reject it. To be accepted the dissertation must be approved by at least four of the five participants in the dissertation defense, in accordance with GSAS procedures. Students should consult GSAS guidelines to make sure they understand and follow all required steps and deadlines with regard to formatting and submitting the dissertation (see <http://gsas.nyu.edu/academics/submitting-your-dissertation.html>).

Tracks

MEIS offers several distinct tracks designed to allow students the opportunity to pursue specific topical and disciplinary concentrations within the field of Middle Eastern and Islamic studies.

Culture and Representation The Culture and Representation track provides a coherent academic framework for exploring a range of overlapping fields of inquiry, partly related to the interdisciplinary field of cultural studies, including popular culture, media studies, visual culture, cultural policy, along with cultural anthropology and cultural geography. The track builds on the strengths of MEIS as a broadly multidisciplinary area studies department and expands them by offering training in critical theory (e.g., narrative theory, performance theory, political theory, postcolonial critique) and methodologies (e.g., textual analysis, discourse analysis, institutional analysis, interviews, ethnography, digital methods). Students in the Culture and Representation track will, in consultation with their advisor(s), craft a program of coursework and supervised training in a range of areas, as well as departments such as Art & Public

Policy; Anthropology; Cinema Studies; Comparative Literature; Media, Culture and Communication; Performance Studies; and Social and Cultural Analysis.

Islamic Studies The Islamic Studies track is designed to offer students an integrated program of training in the academic study of the religion of Islam, combining the philological study of texts with the methodological perspectives of religious studies. Students opting for this track can draw on faculty expertise in such areas as Qur'an and exegetical traditions, Islamic law, Islamic history and historiography, Sufism, material culture and lived religion, while also taking advantage of the comparative and methodological resources of NYU's Program in Religious Studies. Several other NYU programs, including the Institute for the Study of the Ancient World and Silsila: The Center for Material Histories, offer a plethora of public events and conferences on topics (including early Islam and Islamic material culture) of interest to students in Islamic Studies. The broader resources of the Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies department also facilitate the integration of analytical tools adapted from history, anthropology and cultural studies to topics relating to Islamic Studies.

Courses within the department relevant to this track, taught by Professors Ismail Fajrie Alatas, Abigail Balbale, Ayşe Baltacıoğlu-Brammer, Marion Katz, and Philip Kennedy, include Problems and Methods in Islamic Studies (a core course required for students in the Islamic Studies track); Lived Islam; Islamic Space and Time; History of Islamic Law; Religion and Religious Movements in the Middle East; Sunni-Shia: Past and Present; and History, Fiction and Narrative in Arabic/Islamic Texts. In addition, students in the Islamic Studies track frequently take advantage of the Inter-University Doctoral Consortium and take classes at Columbia and Princeton.

Literature The Literature track builds on the strengths of MEIS as a broadly multidisciplinary area studies department and expands them by offering theoretical training that enables both the study of a single Middle East literature and comparatist projects. The track's departmental base makes for sound linguistic competence that supports comparatism between the literatures of the Middle East, or between literatures of the region and those of other parts of the world. Projects that address Translation Studies or the theoretical and intellectual production of the Global South are particularly welcome. Ample resources are in place for interdisciplinary approaches to the study of literature, both modern and pre-modern. Students in the track will, in consultation with their advisor(s), craft a program of coursework and supervised training in a range of areas, as well as other departments. Students are particularly encouraged to take courses in the Department of Comparative Literature and – depending on their dissertation projects – consider pursuing in its [Advanced Certificate in Poetics and Theory](#) or its Advanced Certificate [Comparative Approaches to the Literatures of Africa, the Middle East, and the Global South](#) (CALAMEGS).

The Joint Ph.D. Program in History and Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies

The Joint Ph.D. Program in History and Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies (referred to here as “the Joint Program”) was established by the departments of History and Middle Eastern Studies in 1996, with the aim of ensuring that all graduate students studying the history of the Middle East, regardless of period, topic, or geographical focus, receive the kind of training in historical thinking, methods and approaches that future historians focusing on other parts of the world receive – in short, a solid grounding in history as a discipline.

If you are in the Joint Program, you will work closely with both the historians based primarily in MEIS and the historians based primarily in the History Department; you may also work with members of the MEIS faculty who are not historians. You are strongly encouraged to participate actively in the intellectual and social life of the History Department as well as that of MEIS, by attending lectures and workshops, becoming involved in graduate student life, going to department social events, and so on.

All students in the Joint Program are formally affiliated with both History and MEIS and are entitled to avail themselves of the material (as well as intellectual) resources of both departments. This means, for example, that students in the Joint Program are entitled to apply for teaching assistantships, summer funding and other forms of financial support from the History Department as well as MEIS, and to participate in dissertation workshops organized by the History Department.

Degree Requirements

Requirements for the Joint Program are very similar to those for the regular MEIS Ph.D. program; the chief differences relate to required courses and to examination procedures.

You must complete at least 72 points of graduate course work (normally 18 courses at 4 points a course) beyond the B.A.

At the discretion of the DGS, students may be granted up to 32 points of degree credit for graduate-level coursework done in an NYU department or program other than Kevorkian Center’s Program in Near Eastern Studies, or at another university. Students who have earned an M.A. from the Kevorkian and have been admitted to the Joint Program may transfer up to 24 points of degree credit toward their Ph.D. However, students entering the Joint Program with their M.A. in hand normally transfer only 20 points so that they do not lose a year of MacCracken funding.

These courses must include at least 3 graduate seminars, at least one of which must be in a non-Middle Eastern field. You must take HIST-GA 3603 (Approaches to Historical Research and Writing); you must also take MEIS-GA 1687 (Problems and Methods in Middle Eastern Studies), unless granted a waiver by the DGS of MEIS. You should take whatever “literature of the field” or exam prep course(s) History or MEIS specifies for your specific major fields.

You must submit *either* a research thesis *or* (with your advisor’s approval) two seminar papers,

subject to the following conditions:

- the research thesis should be 60-80 typed doubled-spaced pages in length. It may be either an expanded seminar paper or an entirely independent project, but it should demonstrate your knowledge of a particular subject and the related scholarly literature as well as your ability to analyze a problem and effectively convey that analysis to others.
- at least one of the two seminar papers must include substantial original research based on primary sources, and both of the papers must have been substantially reworked such that they are roughly equivalent to work that might reasonably be submitted for publication in a scholarly journal in your field.

You should decide which of these options to pursue as early as possible in your second year of graduate study and obtain the approval of your advisor for both your choice and the topic(s) on which you plan to write. The completed thesis or seminar papers will be evaluated by your advisor and a second faculty reader, and must be discussed and approved at an oral defense that includes both the advisor and the second reader.

Please note that completion of a thesis or two seminar papers described above may be waived by the DGS if you have completed equivalent work (typically an M.A. thesis) in another graduate program at NYU or at another university.

You must satisfy the MEIS language requirements specified above in the section titled “Degree Requirements for the MEIS Ph.D.” GSAS allows graduate students to take a maximum of 12 points of “skills courses,” such as undergraduate language courses at the elementary and intermediate levels; however, no credit toward the degree will be awarded for undergraduate language courses.

Students in the Joint Program take exams in two different major fields, of roughly equal weight. Both of these may be fields offered by the historians primarily based in MEIS (including modern Middle Eastern history and Islamic history), or one may be an MEIS history field and the other a field offered by History. Students doing a field offered by History must take the exam prep course(s) specified for that field in the spring semester before the exam; students doing an MEIS-based history field must take the “literature of the field” course or other form of exam preparation specified for that field before taking the exam.

With the approval of the DGSs of both departments, a student may define an exam field for which they will prepare by working with an NYU faculty member who is not a historian based in either History or MEIS. In such cases, the student will take the exam for that field according to MEIS procedures, with examiners to be approved in advance by the DGSs of both departments.

A student who has prepared a field under the supervision of a member of the History Department will sit for one day of exams in that field on the day specified by the History Department in May, normally at the end of the student’s second year; that exam will conform to the History Department exam format and procedures. A student who has prepared for an exam under the supervision of one of the historians primarily based in MEIS will take that exam at a time, and in a format, specified by MEIS, with examiners who are either historians based in MEIS or History faculty. Both exams should normally be completed by no later than the end of a student’s fifth

semester in the joint program.

Each exam will be read and evaluated by your advisor for the exam field and another faculty member. Each written exam will be followed by an oral exam, giving the two readers the opportunity to query you on your written essays but also to range more widely across the field. Your exam grade will reflect your performance on both the written and oral components.

A student who does not pass an exam may petition the department for permission to take it one more time. Failing an exam a second time will result in termination from the Ph.D. program.

After completing your comprehensive exams, you should begin to formulate a dissertation proposal, in close consultation with the MEIS or History faculty member who will serve as your primary dissertation advisor and with the two other faculty members who will also participate in your dissertation proposal defense. Your dissertation proposal should set forth the questions you plan to explore in your dissertation research and the approaches, methods and sources on which you plan to draw. It should also include an extensive critical bibliography of the relevant scholarly literature, a thorough discussion of how your proposal relates to that literature, and a discussion of how you plan to go about your research.

You may defend your dissertation proposal after you have completed all required coursework (including all incompletes), fulfilled your language requirements and passed your comprehensive exams. The three faculty members conducting the dissertation proposal defense may approve the proposal outright, require revisions or reject the proposal, as they see fit. Once you have successfully defended your proposal you will be considered to have attained ABD status and are entitled to the M.Phil. degree.

Once your dissertation proposal is approved, you may proceed to research and write a doctoral dissertation, under the supervision of your dissertation advisor and the other members of your dissertation committee, who must be approved by your advisor. The dissertation committee is composed of at least five members, three of whom must be current or recent full-time members of NYU's Faculty of Arts and Science. Three members of the committee (the advisor and two others, generally the committee members who approved your dissertation proposal) are designated core members; the other two (or more) committee members are termed readers.

The department strongly believes that students' dissertation committees should be composed of those scholars who will provide them with the most effective possible intellectual guidance, whether or not they are NYU faculty members. We encourage students to develop contacts with, and solicit guidance and feedback from, a wide range of scholars whose work is relevant to their interests.

The dissertation and its defense represent the culmination of your graduate education, demonstrating your mastery of the norms, concepts and methods of historical scholarship in your field and your ability to deploy them productively and creatively. The dissertation should make an original contribution to knowledge or understanding in a particular historical field, generally through the use of previously unexplored sources, the reinterpretation of already examined materials or the examination of a novel question or subject. A successful dissertation should

provide the basis for a publishable monograph and/or for a series of publishable articles. The dissertation should normally be 300-400 pages in length and must conform to all departmental and GSAS standards.

The completed dissertation must be approved as ready to be defended by your advisor and the two other core members of your committee, at which point a public oral defense can be scheduled. The dissertation defense is conducted by your three core committee members along with two or more readers. The dissertation may approve the dissertation as is, require revisions or reject it. To be accepted the dissertation must be approved by at least four of the five participants in the dissertation defense, in accordance with GSAS procedures. Students should consult GSAS guidelines to make sure they understand and follow all required steps and deadlines with regard to formatting and submitting the dissertation (see <http://gsas.nyu.edu/academics/submitting-your-dissertation.html>).

Ph.D. Timeline

First year – Pursue coursework and (if you have not had this requirement waived) begin planning for your thesis or seminar papers. Begin thinking about your exam fields and Work to develop proficiency in your research languages.

Summer following first year – Conduct research for your thesis/seminar papers, if not waived. If you do not already have proficiency in your main Middle Eastern research language, work on acquiring it through an intensive summer program. You may also work on your second research language, possibly through a GSAS summer language course. Consider visiting archives and libraries that may help you begin to formulate your dissertation project.

Second year – Complete your thesis/seminar papers requirement, if it has not been waived. Develop reading lists for exams in collaboration with your field advisors; take up to 4 points of Directed Study with your major field advisor(s) for each field in which you will be taking an examination. If feasible take your first comprehensive exam in May, or at the latest in September of your third year. Apply for GSAS summer pre-dissertation research funding.

Summer following second year – Study for your second comprehensive exam. Conduct preliminary dissertation research and begin formulating your dissertation proposal and fellowship proposals.

Third year – As early as feasible, complete any outstanding exams and satisfy language requirements. Defend your dissertation proposal and attain ABD status. Apply for external funding if you need to do field research. You may be able to begin your dissertation research in the spring term.

Fourth and fifth years, and beyond – Conduct your dissertation research and begin drafting dissertation chapters by your fifth year. Complete a draft of your dissertation, incorporate feedback from your dissertation committee, and when ready defend your dissertation.