

MASTER OF ARTS IN THE FIELD OF ISLAMIC STUDIES

The master of arts in Islamic studies, offered by the Department of Religion, focus on the study of Islam in its classical and contemporary formations, with an emphasis on developing competence in classical Islamic intellectual traditions. The cross-disciplinary program allows students to study with a variety of faculty members who are knowledgeable about the classical formulations of Islam, and have on-the-ground experience in Muslim-majority countries and communities. Centrally located in Washington, DC, the program offers students the opportunity to interact with U.S. government agencies, think tanks, nongovernmental institutions, and the large Muslim community residing and working in the metro area. The program also offers nontraditional students, such as working professionals, civil servants, and employees of international agencies, the opportunity to tailor the program to their particular needs.

A concentration in Shi'ism is available in the MA program. The division between Sunnis and Shi'ites lies at the root of much of the strife in the Islamic world today. Our program uniquely features not only an education in Sunni Islam, but Shi'ite Islam as well. A comprehensive study must include both major branches of Islamic tradition for a full understanding of current issues in the world of Islam, and what its future holds.

Qualified applicants who intend to pursue the concentration in Shi'ism may be eligible for community supported fellowships. These fellowships are not sponsored, awarded, or managed by GW.

Visit the program website (<https://religion.columbian.gwu.edu/ma-islamic-studies/>) for additional information.

ADMISSIONS

Admission deadlines: Fall - February 1: Priority consideration for admission and funding; April 1: Guaranteed review for admission and consideration for funding, if available. (Applications for admission will continue to be accepted after April 1, when space remains available in the program.)

Spring – October 1

Standardized GRE not required.
test scores:

The Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), the academic International English Language Testing System (IELTS), or the PTE Academic is required of all applicants except those who hold a bachelor's, master's, or doctoral degree from a college or university in the United States or from an institution located in a country in which English is the official language, provided English was the language of instruction.

Minimum scores for the program are:

- Academic IELTS: an overall band score of 6.0 with no individual score below 5.0; or

- TOEFL: 550 on paper-based or 80 on Internet-based; or

- PTE Academic: 53

Applicants who do not meet minimum English language requirements may be eligible for our full-time Applied English Language program.

Recommendations: Two (2) recommendations required:

Prior academic records: Transcripts are required from all colleges and universities attended, whether or not credit was earned, the program was completed, or the credit appears as transfer credit on another transcript. Unofficial transcripts from all colleges and universities attended must be uploaded to your online application. Official transcripts are required only of applicants who are offered admission.

If transcripts are in a language other than English, English language translations must be provided. The English translation alone should be uploaded into your application.

Statement of purpose: In an essay of 250 – 500 words, state your purpose in undertaking graduate study in your chosen field. Include your academic objectives, research interests, and career plans. Also discuss your related qualifications, including collegiate, professional, and community activities, and any other substantial accomplishments not already mentioned on the application.

Additional requirement: Recent writing sample is required.

Interview: An interview may be required.

International applicants only: Please review International Applicant Information (<https://columbian.gwu.edu/international-graduate-applicants> (<https://columbian.gwu.edu/international-graduate-applicants/>)) carefully for details on required documents, earlier deadlines for applicants requiring an I-20 or DS-2019 from GW, and English language requirements.

Supporting documents not submitted online should be mailed to:

Columbian College of Arts and Sciences - Office of Graduate Studies
The George Washington University
801 22nd Street NW, Phillips Hall 107
Washington DC 20052

For additional information about the admissions process visit the Columbian College of Arts and Sciences Frequently Asked Questions (<https://columbian.gwu.edu/graduate-admissions-faq/>) page.

Contact:

askccas@gwu.edu
202-994-6210 (phone)

Hours: 9:00 am to 5:00 pm, Monday through Friday

REQUIREMENTS

The following requirements must be fulfilled:

The general requirements stated under Columbian College of Arts and Sciences, Graduate Programs (<http://bulletin.gwu.edu/arts-sciences/#degreeregulationstext>).

36 credits, including 18 credits in required core courses and 18 credits in pre-approved elective courses; students pursuing the degree with a concentration in **Shi'ism take 18 credits in required core courses, 12 credits in required courses in the concentration, and 6 credits in pre-approved elective courses.**

Language requirement

All students must complete at least four semesters of Arabic, which do not count toward the 36 credits required for the program. Alternatively, students may demonstrate competence in Arabic through examination. Depending on their focus of study, students also may be asked to take courses in other languages, which do not count toward the degree. In rare instances, students may substitute another language for Arabic, such as Persian, Turkish, or Urdu, if their research focuses on texts composed in one of these languages.

| Code | Title | Credits |
|------------------------------|--|---------|
| Required core courses | | |
| REL 6401 | Islamic Historiographies | |
| REL 6402 | Qur'an and Hadith | |
| REL 6441 | Islamic Law | |
| REL 6460 | Topics in the Study of Islam | |
| REL 6999 | Thesis Research (for a total of 6 credits) | |

Electives

Six courses (18 credits) selected from a pre-approved list in consultation with the graduate program advisor(s). Most of the selected courses should focus on Islam in the contemporary world.

| Code | Title | Credits |
|------|-------|---------|
|------|-------|---------|

Shi'ism Concentration

In addition to the required core curriculum, students pursuing the concentration in Shi'ism take the following:

Required

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|----------|---|
| REL 6412 | Shi'i Thought |
| REL 6413 | Philosophy and Mysticism in the Shi'i World |
| REL 6420 | Shi'i Political Thought |
| REL 6442 | Principles of Shi'i Jurisprudence |

Electives

Two courses (6 credits) selected from a pre-approved list in consultation with the graduate program advisor(s). Selected courses should focus on Islam in the contemporary world.