

MASTER IN MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN RELATIONS

Main Language of Instruction:

French ☒ English ☐ Arabic ☐

Campus Where the Program Is Offered: CSH

OBJECTIVES

The Master in Muslim-Christian Relations aims to:

- Equip executives with intellectual skills for effective intervention in Christian-Muslim relations.
- Strengthen the democratic management of religious and cultural pluralism in Lebanon and similar societies.
- Prepare students for doctoral studies.

PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES (COMPETENCIES)

- Identify the theological and anthropological foundations of Christianity and Islam (cross-cutting logic) by analyzing their soteriological and eschatological dynamics.
- Assess the intelligibility and historicity of religious beliefs.
- Develop projects that integrate religious diversity to collectively build a society of justice and peace.
- Conduct scientific research using both speculative and operational tools.
- Develop mediation skills for managing interreligious conflicts.

ADMISSION REQUIERMENTS

Candidates must:

- Hold the Lebanese baccalaureate or its equivalence
- Hold a Bachelor in any discipline.
- Complete prerequisite courses (University Certificate in Islamic-Christian Initial Culture) if they do not have a background in religious education.

COURSES/CREDITS GRANTED BY EQUIVALENCE

Up to 16 credits may be granted based on agreements with foreign universities. For instance, agreements with Pontifical Gregorian University and Aix-Marseille University can equate to up to 60 credits, which is equivalent to one year of study.

PROGRAM REQUIERMENTS


120 credits : Required Courses (108 credits), Institution's Elective Courses (12 credits).

Required Courses (108 Cr.)

Research Methodology Seminar (5 Cr.). Methodological Tools in Social Sciences (5 Cr.). Analysis of Problematics and Research Project (5 Cr.). Islam and Contemporary Issues (4 Cr.). Discovering the Quran and Quranic Disciplines (4 Cr.). Discovering Islamic Tradition (Sunna, Hadith) (4 Cr.). Introduction to Islamic Mysticism (4 Cr.). Contemporary Hermeneutics of Islam (5 Cr.). Christian Theology of Religions (4 Cr.). Contextual Theology (4 Cr.). Geopolitics of Christians in the East (4 Cr.). Critique of Christian Doctrine (4 Cr.). Christian-Muslim Relations in the Middle Ages and Modern Times (4 Cr.). Culture and Religions in the Arab World (4 Cr.). Communitarianism in Lebanon (4 Cr.). Political Regimes and Management of Diversity in the Arab World (4 Cr.). Religious Freedom and Human Rights (4 Cr.). The Making of the Other's Image in the Religious and Political Discourse (4 Cr.). Study (Analysis) of Religious Movements (4 Cr.). Critique of Jewish Religious Thought (4 Cr.). Introduction to Muslim Theology (4 Cr.). Thesis (20 Cr.).

Institution's Elective Courses (12 Cr.) to be chosen from the list below:

Social Justice and Gender (4 Cr.). The Question of the Other (4 Cr.). Church and State (4 Cr.). Foundations of Political Ideas in Christianity and Islam (4 Cr.). Comparative Ethics and Interfaith Dialogue (4 Cr.).



SUGGESTED STUDY PLAN

Semester 1

Code	Course Name	Credits
017ISQCM2	Islam and Contemporary Issues	4
017DCORM2	Discovering the Quran and Quranic Disciplines	4
017COMLM1	Communitarianism in Lebanon	4
017THCRM2	Christian Theology of Religions	4
018SEMKM1	Research Methodology Seminar	5
017INTMM1	Introduction to Muslim Theology	4
	Total	25

Semester 2

Code	Course Name	Credits
018MSHM2	Methodological Tools in Social Sciences	5
017FCULM2	Culture and Religions in the Arab World	4
017REMA1	Christian-Muslim Relations in the Middle Ages and Modern Times	4
017RPMAM1	Political Regimes and Management of Diversity in the Arab World	4
017FDRLM1	Religious Freedom and Human Rights	4
017STHCM2	Contextual Theology	4
	Institution's Elective Courses	4
	Total	29

Semester 3

Code	Course Name	Credits
017MYMUM2	Introduction to Islamic Mysticism	4
017DEHAM1	Discovering Islamic Tradition (Sunna, Hadith)	4
017HERMM2	Contemporary Hermeneutics of Islam	5
017FSHEM1	The Making of the Other's Image in the Religious and Political Discourse	4
017GCHOM2	Geopolitics of Christians in the East	4
	Institution's Elective Courses	4
	Total	25

Semester 4

Code	Course Name	Credits
017CCHRM1	Critique of Christian Doctrine	4
017CJUIM2	Critique of Jewish Religious Thought	4
017ANALM1	Study (Analysis) of Religious Movements	4
18ANALM4	Analysis of Problematics and Research Project	5
	Institution's Elective Courses	4
	Total	21

Semesters 5 & 6

Code	Course Name	Credits
017MEMOM4	Thesis	20

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Semester 1

017ISQCM2	Islam and Contemporary Issues	4 Cr.
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This course addresses pressing questions related to Islam and contemporary society from various perspectives within Muslim thought, including political Islam, traditionalism, liberalism, and Salafism. It explores religious and social issues (the Other, internal diversity, and women's roles) as well as political topics (the relationship between religion and state, jihad, non-violence, and liberation theology).

017DCORM2	Discovering the Quran and Quranic Disciplines	4 Cr.
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This course explores the Quran, which Muslims believe to be the very word of God and the primary source of dogma and law in Islam. As such, it governs both the spiritual life (*dîn*) and the temporal life (*dunyâ*) of Muslims, and even of non-Muslims in Islamic countries. Surrounding the Quranic text are multiple disciplines that have emerged to elucidate its meaning and provide all possible methodological approaches. Despite this meticulous approach, profound divergences have emerged throughout the history of Islam, crystallizing into numerous schools and sects that continue to play a significant role in contemporary Islam.

017COMLM1	Communitarianism in Lebanon	4 Cr.
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This seminar examines communitarianism, which has emerged in recent decades as a significant school of political thought. However, its roots go deep into the history of political philosophy, dating back to Plato and Aristotle, and specifically Hegel in the early period of his philosophy of recognition. Communitarianism is a school of thought that presents itself as a critique of both liberalism or republicanism, focusing not on the core theories of these ideologies but rather on their implications and applications in the light of post-modernism and the societal and geopolitical changes following what Habermas calls "the fall of the nation-state."

With communitarianism, we enter a new era of political thought concerning the individual and the citizen as both independent and belonging to a community of values, and as participants in political life based on their dual belonging. This includes the possibility for the community of values to be recognized beyond the internal forum, extending into the public space.

This movement has resonated in Lebanon through the political theory of consociation and consensual democracy. This seminar selects a few classic representatives of this movement, then focuses on two typical examples of its relative reception in the Lebanese context.

017THCRM2	Christian Theology of Religions	4 Cr.
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This course presents a new horizon in theology that addresses the foundations of the Christian faith, from the revelation in Christ, and the fullness of the Word of God to the affirmation of the uniqueness of the salvation God offers.

By combining historical and reflective approaches, this course revisits different conceptions of religious pluralism and analyzes the theological issues raised by authors involved in this debate.

The course progression will be guided by Christological, soteriological, and ecclesiological queries, highlighting the position of the Magisterium of the Catholic Church.

Closely linked to the way religions are approached, the issue of interreligious dialogue will be addressed from both theological and methodological perspective, emphasizing its relevance, conditions, and challenges in the encounter between Christianity and other religions.

018SEMKM1	Research Methodology Seminar	5 Cr.
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This seminar provides the basic elements for researching and writing a Master thesis (with all content applicable to PhD research). It aims to develop the skill of producing scholarly output using speculative and operational tools.

017INTMM1	Introduction to Muslim Theology	4 Cr.
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This course addresses the often debated existence of Muslim theology, a question raised by Muslim thinkers who prioritize law over theological considerations. However, the central theological question—human discourse about God—occupied Muslim scholars during the classical period. This course explores these essential controversies, the consequences of which remain significant today in all areas of Islamic religious sciences.

Semester 2

018MSHM2	Methodological Tools in Social Sciences	5 Cr.
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This seminar is part of the three methodology seminars offered in the master's program. It introduces students to the study of the field using methods from the humanities, notably the quantitative methods of sociology, and the qualitative method specific to anthropology. It aims to approach a pastoral or socio-religious reality in order to understand it from within. This is the essence of the inductive method, which helps to question theory and, by extension, the essence of practical theology. This seminar is offered to students in the Master in Pastoral Management (MAGP) program, as well as those in the Master in Muslim-Christian Relations (MRIC) program. In both programs, the end-of-study thesis largely relies on the practical approach to the studied reality.

017FCULM2	Culture and Religions in the Arab World	4 Cr.
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This course aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the various cultural and religious components in the Arab world. It specifically focuses on presenting Eastern Christianity and Islam, with a particular emphasis on Shiite Islam. Additionally, it addresses the socio-anthropological issues that arise between minority and majority groups. Furthermore, this course discusses at least two minority groups. The contribution of students is of paramount importance, as they are expected to complement the teaching of this course.

017REMAM1	Christian-Muslim Relations in the Middle Ages and Modern Times	4 Cr.
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This course explores the historical development and contemporary challenges of Christian-Muslim dialogue from the 7th century to the 21st century. It analyzes foundational texts, key debates, and significant milestones, culminating in the Document on Human Fraternity signed by Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Ahmed al-Tayyeb, on February 4, 2019. Particular attention will be given to current theological and social issues that influence this dialogue.

017RPMAM1	Political Regimes and Management of Diversity in the Arab World	4 Cr.
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This course requires students to conduct a critical and objective analysis of political regimes in the Arab world. It addresses selected issues to facilitate an understanding of the challenges that hinder approaches promoting communitarian freedom at the expense of personal freedom. Key topics include the nation (the *Umma*), Pan-Arabism, culture, tribalism, authoritarianism, Baathism, political, economic, and social theories, among others.

017FDRLM1	Religious Freedom and Human Rights	4 Cr.
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The course, in its first part, focuses on the fundamental concepts and principles governing human rights, the characteristics and specifics of each of these rights, and the international, regional, and national instruments ensuring their protection and effectiveness.

In its second part, the course targets, within a framework based on the principles and concepts of human rights, religious freedom in its specificity and components, its scope, its relationship with other rights, its applicability, and its significance.

The course explores the current realities of the right to religious freedom, addressing the related issues and challenges.

017STHCM2	Contextual Theology	4 Cr.
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This course explores the evolution of theology over the past several decades, emphasizing that it can no longer be practiced as before. Rather than being considered a timeless or immutable discipline, theology is now understood as contextual, with context serving as a fundamental element alongside the Bible and Tradition in developing theological discourse.

Since the 1970s, several Lebanese theologians from different churches have embraced this challenge, addressing major issues related to Christian presence in the Arab world, including Christian-Muslim dialogue, ecumenism and church reform, as well as political theology (Israeli-Palestinian conflict and confessionalism in Lebanon).

This course sheds light on contextual theology in a general sense, and Arab contextual theology in its Lebanese aspect.

Semester 3

017MYMUM2	Introduction to Muslim Mysticism	4 Cr.
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This course introduces the Muslim mystique known as Sufism according to its prominent figures, historical trajectory, core ideas, and practices.

017DEHAM1	Discovering Islamic Tradition (Sunna, Hadith)	4 Cr.
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This course examines the Islamic tradition (Sunna, Hadith), which comprises narratives recounting the words, actions, and tacit approvals of the Prophet Muhammad. It serves as the second source of Islamic law, both doctrine and practices. It is easy to imagine the importance this tradition has had in religion, culture, and Islamic societies throughout history, and the profound influence it continues to exert today. It is through this lens that the Islamic tradition finds its place alongside other foundational religious texts, within the framework of education in Islamic-Christian studies.

Skill framework and learning outcomes: the study of Islam—whether in its historical context or its current relationships with Christianity—requires a thorough understanding of this second foundation of Islam. A diachronic and synchronic analysis of Hadith texts is essential to clarify the theological and anthropological foundations of Islam.

Students trained in this field will develop the ability to analyze the texts of the tradition, distinguish between what is fundamental and what is not, understand their functioning, and specify their religious significance and impact on the societies concerned.

017JUSGM1	Social Justice and Gender	4 Cr.
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This course introduces the themes of social justice and gender. It encourages reflection on both visible and invisible discriminations at various levels (household, community, institution, national and international collective) and across different domains (laws, practices, roles). It provides an overview of intersectional approaches, sharing gender approaches, and public policy approaches in light of human rights and their impacts on all individuals. This course aims to enable students to analyze the gender profile of various national or private institutions and interpret their capacity to be transformative, as well as enable everyone to access their rights without discrimination. Students should be able to analyze the causes of discrimination and their consequences on human rights, and provide programs and interventions focused on social justice. This course also aims to analyze issues of discrimination and gender-related injustice in various spheres of society.


017HERMM2	Contemporary Hermeneutics of Islam	5 Cr.
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This course explores the contentious issues currently challenging Islam, focusing on the interpretations of the Quran that shape the perception of the religion. Daily, we witness acts of terrorism and crimes committed in the name of the Quran, or more accurately, in the name of specific interpretations of it. Consequently, Islam often appears to the public as conservative, aggressive, paralyzed, and regressive. As Malek Chebel notes, it both “worries and inspires.” The future face of Islam will largely depend on how the Quranic text is interpreted, as reform within the Muslim faith hinges on this foundational text.

The growing interest in Quranic interpretation is evidenced by the success among Western readers of novels such as Eric-Emmanuel Schmitt’s “The Man Who Could See Through Faces.” Identifying as “the religion of the book,” Islam inherently embraces the concept of interpretation. As Ali ibn Abi Talib stated, “The Quran is silent; it is men who speak in its name.”

Emerging Muslim voices are calling for readings of the Quran that are both new and faithful to the values of Islam while meeting the requirements of human sciences (sociology, anthropology, linguistics, history, etc.). These “new thinkers of Islam” (Rachid Benzine) challenge the literal and legal interpretations imposed by traditional Quranic schools, which, according to them, has led to a rigid, violent, and intolerant Islam. They advocate for the reopening of ijtihad (independent reasoning) and a “return to the sources” for a more direct engagement with the Quran, enabling it to inspire contemporary Muslims and guide them in their actions and identities.

Despite their intentions, these calls for reinterpretation are often condemned by official Muslim authorities, with the authors labeled as “traitors” and “apostates” as any hermeneutical innovation is deemed blasphemy (Mouchir Aoun). Yet, these thinkers assert their Muslim faith and commitment to the Islamic community, insisting that a new reading of the Quran does not undermine its sanctity.



Through this course, students will have the opportunity to engage with these controversial issues within Islam and explore the perspectives of notable figures who have proposed new hermeneutics, such as Mohammed Arkoun, Abdelmajid Charfi, Nasr Abou Zeid, and Farid Esack. Although these voices may be isolated and uncoordinated, they represent a significant unease among many Muslim intellectuals who feel that their heritage no longer meets modern demands.

017FSHEM1 The Making of the Other's Image in the Religious and Political Discourse	4 Cr.
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This course examines the complex process of constructing figures such as the hero, saint, and enemy within the collective conscious and unconscious. To understand this phenomenon, it is important to identify its causes, mechanisms, and stages. How are the invincible hero, the saint, and the enemy shaped? What roles do they play, and how are they utilized in political, economic, and social contexts? What typologies and situations prompt the creation of these figures? If these constructs emerge from discourse and become embedded in collective consciousness, is deconstruction possible? Furthermore, what impact would such deconstruction have on the unfolding of events?

017GCHOM2 Geopolitics of Christians in the East	4 Cr.
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This course addresses the future of Christians in the Middle East, challenging the assumption that they constitute a single, uniform reality across the region. However, the diversity of these communities extends beyond ecclesiastical, cultural, liturgical, or theological differences. Christians in the Middle East experience very different and varied conditions in the countries where they reside. Therefore, a geopolitical analysis of their presence is essential. This analysis considers political, religious, historical, demographic, cultural, and economic realities, focusing on the countries of the Arab Middle East: Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Palestine, Israel, Egypt, and Iraq.

Semester 4

017CCHRM1 Critique of Christian Doctrine	4 Cr.
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This course explores the role of theology as a function of the Christian Church, emphasizing its need to oscillate between two poles: the eternal truth of its foundation and the temporal situation in which the eternal truth must be received.

Engaging in theology today does not mean endlessly repeating scriptures and dogmas, but rather updating their understanding and interpreting their implications for the social, ecclesial, spiritual, and moral lives of believers. As discourse about God, theology pursues a deeper understanding of faith.

It is an act of faith and reason, constantly called to renewal. Theological reflection serves as a process of deepening Christian life confronted with the realities and diversities of humanity, societies, and religions. This process fosters both personal and communal growth.

The value of this approach lies in contextualizing the questions posed to Christian faith today, enabling a grasp of their significance and fostering the conviction that the changes observed are not only desirable but necessary for theology to fulfill its intended role.

017CJUM2 Critique of Jewish Religious Thought	4 Cr.
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This course examines Judaism from a historical perspective, recognizing it as the first of the Abrahamic religions to emerge in the ancient Middle East (in the 5th, 4th, and 3rd centuries BCE). Its study is fundamental for understanding other Abrahamic religions, such as Christianity and Islam. Like other religions, Judaism has experienced "orthodox" interpretations that have created tensions among its various schools and currents, as well as between its followers and adherents of other faiths. Furthermore, its foundational texts have been read literally, leading to fundamentalist political thought tied to geography and ethnicity, which has fueled ideologies behind the wars in the region.

This course critically examines Judaism by starting from key reference texts and exploring its beliefs, as well as its religious, social, and political thought. The aim is to foster an understanding of Jewish doctrine that contributes to building a society based on justice and peace while helping to resolve conflicts and establish reconciliation.



017ANALM1	Study (Analysis) of Religious Movements	4 Cr.
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This course draws on the latest research and socio-anthropological theories of “social movements” to guide in reading and understanding the concept of “religious movements” in relation to issues raised by the humanities (especially the socio-anthropology of religions). Students will analyze these movements from a historical and diachronic perspective setting the stage for reflections on the various terms currently in use: new religious movements, sects, and fundamentalism.

017ECDIM1	Comparative Ethics and Interfaith Dialogue	4 Cr.
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This seminar aims to achieve conceptual and operational precision in ethical discernment in general, with a particular focus on its application within the context of Muslim-Christian dialogue. By the end of the seminar, students should be able to:

Identify the various layers of ethical reflection from both rational and religious perspectives.

Analyze and critique a text that addresses the relationship between Christians and Muslims.

Apply this process in various fields of religious difference.

018ANALM4	Analysis of Problematics and Research Project	4 Cr.
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The Master thesis consists of personal research that demonstrates analytical skills, critical thinking, sound judgment, and the ability to conceptualize and/or design projects. It represents the culmination of original research, followed by a defense before an academic jury. Before writing the thesis, students must first develop a research proposal that defines the research topic, determines the theoretical framework, outlines the different research axes, and select the techniques and approach to be adopted.

This seminar focuses on the practical application of the methodologies students have acquired. Guided by a conceptual framework and operational tools, students will work toward successfully completing their own research project.

011PHPDM1	The Question of the Other	4 Cr.
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This course offers a philosophical reflection on the question of the other and the different ways of entering into relationships with others. Drawing from classical and contemporary texts—literary, mystical, and philosophical—it examines the nature of intersubjectivity, the forms of presence to the other, as well as the tensions between radical otherness and closeness. The course highlights the complexity of human connections and explores the conditions that make a true encounter possible.

017MEMOM4	Thesis	20 Cr.
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The Master’s thesis consists of an independent research project that demonstrates analytical skills, critical thinking and judgement, as well as an aptitude for conceptualization and/or project design. The thesis is the culmination of original research work, followed by a defense before an academic jury.