

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:

- Train proactive religious leaders capable of engaging in different spheres of Muslim-Christian relations.
- Strengthen the democratic management of religious and cultural pluralism in Lebanon and similar societies.
- Prepare students for doctoral studies.

PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES (COMPETENCIES)

- Develop objective knowledge through diverse religious and philosophical texts.
- Analyze religious realities from a humanities-based perspective.
- Build relationships in a pluralistic society with solid dialogue principles.
- Manage diverse communities and promote democracy and participation.
- Conduct research combining theory and fieldwork to foster dialogue.

ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

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 from the Master's program. Under certain international agreements, students can complete one full year (60 credits) at their home university and finish the second year (60 credits) at the Institute. For example, refer to the agreement with the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome.

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

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

Required Courses (108 Cr.)

Research Methodology Seminar (5 Cr.). Thesis Project Seminar (5 Cr.). Methodological Tools in the Humanities (5 Cr.). Dialogue Training and Projects (5 Cr.). Communication and Conflict Resolution Training (4 Cr.). Islamic-Christian Relations and Their Major Challenges in History and Today (4 Cr.). Critical Introduction to Christian Beliefs (4 Cr.). Critique of Jewish Religious Thought (4 Cr.). Interpretation of Religious Texts in Christianity (4 Cr.). Christian Theology and Interfaith Dialogue (4 Cr.). Geopolitics of Christians in the East (4 Cr.). Contextual Theology (4 Cr.). Interpretation of Religious Texts in Islam (4 Cr.). History of Islamic Legislation (4 Cr.). Regimes and Management of Diversity in the Arab World (4 Cr.). Studying Religious Movements from a Humanities Perspective (4 Cr.). Culture and Religions in the Arab World (4 Cr.). The Making of the Other's Image in the Religious and Political Discourse (4 Cr.). Ethics of Interfaith Dialogue (4 Cr.). Religious Freedom and Human Rights (4 Cr.). Thesis (20 Cr.). Philosophy of Dialogue (4 Cr.).

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

Hate Speech on Social Media (4 Cr.). Church and State (4 Cr.). Democracy and Religions (4 Cr.). Foundations of Brotherhood in Christianity and Islam (4 Cr.). Leadership (4 Cr.).

SUGGESTED STUDY PLAN

Semester 1

Code	Course Name	Credits
017RDEFM1	Islamic-Christian Relations and Their Major Challenges in History and Today	4
017CPJUIM2	Critique of Jewish Religious Thought	4
017TISLM1	Interpretation of Religious Texts in Islam	4
017CRITM1	Critical Introduction to Christian Beliefs	4
017SMETM1	Research Methodology Seminar	5
	Institution's Elective Course	4
	Total	25

Semester 2

Code	Course Name	Credits
017DUMEM2	Methodological Tools in the Humanities	5
017HILIM2	History of Islamic Legislation	4
017RCCTM2	Communication and Conflict Resolution Training	4
017TCHRM2	Interpretation of Religious Texts in Christianity	4
017GPCAM2	Geopolitics of Christians in the East	4
	Institution's Elective Course	4
	Total	25

Semester 3

Code	Course Name	Credits
017CONM2	The Making of the Other's Image in the Religious and Political Discourse	4
017RGMAM2	Regimes and Management of Diversity in the Arab World	4
017TCDIM2	Christian Theology and Interfaith Dialogue	4
017DRLIM2	Religious Freedom and Human Rights	4
017SMEMM2	Thesis Project Seminar	5
	Institution's Elective Course	4
	Total	25

Semester 4

Code	Course Name	Credits
017TCONM2	Contextual Theology	4
017ACREM2	Studying Religious Movements from a Humanities Perspective	4
017CRMAM1	Culture and Religions in the Arab World	4
017ETDIM2	Ethics of Interfaith Dialogue	4
017STAGM1	Dialogue Training and Projects	5
017STAGM1	Philosophy of Dialogue	4
	Total	25

Semesters 5 and 6

Code	Course Name	Credits
017MMASM2	Thesis	20

COURSE DESCRIPTION**Semester 1**

017RDEFM1	Islamic-Christian Relations and Their Major Challenges in History and Today	4 Cr.
------------------	--	--------------

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.

017CPJUIM2	Critique of Jewish Religious Thought	4 Cr.
-------------------	---	--------------

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.

017TISLM1	Interpretation of Religious Texts in Islam	4 Cr.
------------------	---	--------------

This course introduces students to contemporary theoretical approaches in text interpretation, particularly religious texts. It focuses on exploring the intellectual, existential, and life experiences embedded in the process of interpretation. Additionally, it enhances students' ability to understand texts and uncover the dynamic elements at play during the interpretive process.

017CRITM1	Critical Introduction to Christian Beliefs	4 Cr.
------------------	---	--------------

This course addresses Christian doctrines and the transformations that have accompanied the Church's theological discourse in response to the development of thought, societal challenges, and pivotal historical changes. Theology, as the core mission of the Church, is not merely an intellectual exercise that presents a list of key Christian beliefs and doctrines, emphasizing their foundations or defending them. Instead, it is a critical reflection and serious inquiry centered on understanding the truths of the Christian faith, uncovering their essence, and exploring their connection to divine revelation. This exploration affects human life and humanity as a whole, influencing the fate of all of humanity.

The primary function of theology is to lead individuals through “mindful thinking” toward a deeper understanding of truth and its manifestations in human history. The objective of this course is not to acquire comprehensive theological knowledge, but to develop a clear and open way of thinking that engages with the mystery of God and humanity. Therefore, theology becomes an ongoing search to understand both the other and the self, fostering a continuous, open dialogue with the world today.

017FFRAM1	Foundations of Brotherhood in Christianity and Islam	4 Cr.
------------------	---	--------------

This course delves into the concept of human brotherhood and its foundations in both Christianity and Islam. In the wake of the 2019 signing of the Document on Human Fraternity by Pope Francis and Sheikh Ahmed Al-Tayeb in Abu Dhabi, understanding this concept has become crucial for anyone engaged in Muslim-Christian relations. Through this course, students will explore a range of texts that address brotherhood and its philosophical and theological foundations in various Christian, Islamic, and Greek thought traditions. These texts will be examined

through a comparative lens in class discussions. The course also explores key questions: How does a believer's (or any person's) worldview influence their understanding of brotherhood and actions based on it? Are there shared foundations of brotherhood between Christianity, Islam, and secularism?

017SMETM1 Research Methodology Seminar**5 Cr.**

This seminar provides the fundamental elements for conducting academic research and starting the process of writing a final thesis. It aligns with the program learning outcomes, focusing on key themes.

017SMEMM2 Thesis Project Seminar**5 Cr.**

The thesis is an individual research project that showcases the student's analytical abilities, critical thinking, and capacity to engage with concepts and develop projects. It is an innovative scholarly work that is presented and defended before a jury.

This workshop equips students with the tools to conduct their research, formulate their thesis project, establish a theoretical framework, define research questions, and select appropriate methodologies and approaches. By the end of this seminar, students will register for the thesis and begin their work, with a specialized supervisor assigned to guide their work.

Semester 2**017DUMEM2 Methodological Tools in the Humanities****5 Cr.**

This workshop is one of three dedicated to methodologies. It equips students with the skills to conduct fieldwork, explore social realities, and extract data for analysis and theoretical application. The workshop supports students in developing the second applied section of their Master in Muslim-Christian Relations thesis.

017HILIM2 History of Islamic Legislation**4 Cr.**

This course provides a detailed overview of the development of *usul al-fiqh* (principles of Islamic jurisprudence) across the four major Sunni schools of thought after the 5th century Hijri (12th century CE). It examines the evolution of legislative sources up to the modern era, offering a concise explanation of the main evidences in *usul al-fiqh* (the Quran, Hadith, consensus, and analogy), as well as the methods for deriving legal rulings. The course also covers subsidiary sources such as *istihsan*, *istislah*, customary law, previous divine laws, the opinions of the companions, presumption of continuity, and the blocking of harmful means.

017RCCTM2 Communication and Conflict Resolution Training**4 Cr.**

This course equips students with the skills to navigate and manage conflicts in diverse cultural and religious contexts. It fosters a deeper understanding of both oneself and others while exploring conflict resolution strategies. The course also introduces the mediation process, along with the techniques and tools used by mediators to effectively handle such situations.

017TCHRM2 Interpretation of Religious Texts in Christianity**4 Cr.**

The Bible holds a revered position in Christianity as it is “a message from the Heavenly Father to humanity.” It serves as a reference, standard, and foundation for the lives of believers. The Apostle Paul reminded his disciple Timothy that the Scriptures “are useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16-17). For Christians, the Bible is both inspired and inspiring. Throughout the history of the Church, various interpretations and readings of the Bible have emerged, sometimes leading to severe divisions.

The theologian Christoph Theobald wrote that Christianity is “the religion of interpreting the Bible,” and Christians have often disagreed, not over the content of the scriptures, but over how they should be interpreted and understood. This explains many of the divisions within Christianity.

This course delves into the significance of the Bible within Christianity by exploring a range of topics, including the concept of inspiration, the canonical status of the books, the nature of truth in sacred texts, different methodologies for approaching the Bible, its historical context, principles for interpreting the text, the relationship between Christianity and the Old Testament, differences among Christians, and more.

017DMSOM2	Hate Speech on Social Media	4 Cr.
This course examines the issue of hate speech on social media in Lebanon, focusing on common patterns and their impact on individuals and communities. Through critical analysis, students will explore real-world cases from social media, learning strategies to combat hate and promote a more inclusive digital environment. The course combines case studies, practical examples, interactive discussions, and targeted exercises to equip students with the skills to foster pluralistic discourse and constructive online dialogue.		
017EGETM2	Church and State	4 Cr.
This course critically examines the evolving relationship between the Church and the State, focusing on the Catholic Church's experience, and cultural and religious background. It also explores key issues between the two institutions up to the Second Vatican Council and looks at contemporary models, particularly within the Lebanese context.		
The course will enable students to:		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Understand the issues and motivations behind the Church-State relationship. 2. Explore the Church's teachings on the role of the State and its background. 3. Analyze the Church-State relationship within the Lebanese context. 		
017STAGM1	Dialogue Training and Projects	5 Cr.
This course aims to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical fieldwork, particularly as many students engage in civil society organizations to promote religious and dialogical values. It prepares students for fieldwork by encouraging the development of ideas and projects and familiarizing them with the various stages of implementation required for these initiatives.		
017GPCAM2	Geopolitics of Christians in the East	4 Cr.
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 3		
017CONM2	The Making of the Other's Image in the Religious and Political Discourse	4 Cr.
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?		
017RGMAM2	Regimes and Management of Diversity in the Arab World	4 Cr.
This course delves into the core challenges of political systems in the Arab world, focusing on the fundamental issues of freedom and humanity. It emphasizes that the root of the problem lies within the Arab individual, as political systems are secondary and stem from human behavior. Students will critically and objectively analyze these systems by exploring key obstacles that prioritize collective freedom over individual, existential freedom. Topics include nationhood, nationalism, political parties, culture, tribalism, authoritarianism, social dynamics, economics, politics, and other collective structures.		

017TCDIM2 Christian Theology and Interfaith Dialogue 4 Cr.

This course focuses on the theology of religions, a central theme in contemporary Christian theology, given the challenges posed by religious pluralism in today's world. It introduces a new approach to understanding the other, recognizing their role in reflecting the universal truth that illuminates every person. The course is grounded in the belief that God's salvific will includes all, fostering a culture of encounter, dialogue, mutual enrichment, and peaceful coexistence with others.

017DEREM1 Democracy and Religions 4 Cr.

This course explores the relationship between democracy and major world religions within various historical and cultural contexts. While democracy is widely regarded as the most effective and widespread form of governance, its liberal and universal principles raise significant challenges in regions with distinct religious and cultural traditions, questioning their adaptability and acceptance.

The course aims to help students:

1. Understand the challenges that democratic principles pose to major religions in regions where they exert significant influence.
2. Examine the concerns raised by religions regarding the compatibility of democratic principles with their beliefs and historical contexts.
3. Critically assess the role of religion in democratic societies.

Semester 4**017TCONM2 Contextual Theology 4 Cr.**

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.

017PHDIM1 Philosophy of Dialogue 4 Cr.

This course explores the concept of dialogue through the perspectives of ancient, medieval, and contemporary philosophers, including Plato, Martin Buber, Gabriel Marcel, and others. It examines dialogue from an anthropological and existential standpoint, highlighting the key factors that led to the development of the "philosophy of dialogue." Building on this, the course focuses on religious dialogue, particularly Christian-Muslim dialogue, as a crucial means of understanding differing beliefs, avoiding blind fanaticism, and preventing self-imposed isolation. Ultimately, it serves as a foundation for fostering genuine peace rooted in mutual understanding.

017ACREM2 Studying Religious Movements from a Humanities Perspective 4 Cr.

This course equips students with the analytical and practical tools used in the humanities to address and study the issue of religious movements in both historical and contemporary contexts, focusing on their historical trajectory and current realities.

017DRLIM2 Religious Freedom and Human Rights 4 Cr.

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 related issues and challenges.

017CRMAM1 Culture and Religions in the Arab World 4 Cr.

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.

017ETDIM2 Ethics of Interfaith Dialogue 4 Cr.

This course examines the intersection of the personal and the collective, the interplay between human identity and religious sectarianism, and the interconnection of social and political dimensions. It focuses on identifying objective criteria to distinguish between actions that should be prioritized—both as a matter of preference and necessity—and those that should be avoided. Ultimately, the course aims to ensure that words and actions align with the pursuit of the common good in the context of interfaith dialogue.

017LEADM1 Leadership 4 Cr.

The objective of this course is to raise the standards by which leaders are judged and evaluated. During this course, students will learn the meaning of leadership and how they can use it to create a significantly better future, something that would not be possible otherwise.

017MMASM2 Thesis 20 Cr.

The thesis marks the culmination of the master's journey. It addresses the main pillars of the program and is rooted in the religious foundations of the chosen research topic, aiming to tackle a new research problem. The research may remain theoretical or extend into practical and fieldwork dimensions. Work on the thesis usually spans two academic semesters, and should not exceed four semesters. Upon registration, the administration assigns a specialized supervisor for the research topic, preferably from the Institute's teaching staff, to maintain quality and adhere to the established methodology. Upon completion, the administration appoints a discussion committee consisting of the supervisor, a chairperson, and a reader.