

Interdisciplinary Major Proposal: Middle Eastern Studies

Gavin Schalliol, Class of 2011

The political situation in the Middle East has been hopelessly entangled since nearly the beginning of recorded history. Peace has seldom reigned in this culturally and ethnically diverse region. With the proclamation of the state of Israel, the climate has become more violent, more bitter, and more intractable. The terrorist attacks on the World Trade Towers on September 11, 2001 have thrust the United States into a direct confrontation with states and organizations in the region. In order for us to understand why the Middle East has such a tortured relationship with the Western world, we need to study the history, religion, culture, language, and politics of this region in detail. All of these subjects are woefully underinvestigated in modern academia, even as they become more important year by year.

I have been interested in studying the Middle East ever since I was told, as a child, that it had been the location of a war lasting over 2,000 years. Obviously, this figure was a bit of an exaggeration, but, as a solution-minded person, I was instantly interested in what might be done to solve such an age-old problem. Though the problems of the region run deep, I recognize its importance as a geopolitically strategic location, a source of much of the world's oil, the birthplace of three of the world's major religions, and as the cradle of civilization. If we, as the human race, want to prove that we can solve the problems we have created, there is no better place to start than the Middle East.

The interdisciplinary major I am proposing draws the majority of its courses from two disciplines: History and Politics. These two departments will help connect the past to the present, with an eye toward future solutions. Of course, no study of the Middle East would be complete without a cultural aspect to it, so I am including a Religion course coupled with an Anthropology course. Finally, I intend to study Arabic abroad in

order to verse myself in the language of the region – something few Westerners have done.

My proposed major contains a number of survey courses, though they are more specific than traditional survey courses. All in all, seven of my proposed courses could be considered a “survey” course of some form or another. No major would be complete without theory courses as well, so therefore I am including three theory courses (HIST 300 – Historiography, POLI 251 – Theories of International Relations, and POLI 353 – Conflict Management and Resolution). Finally, my capstone will consist of a Senior Research Seminar aimed at producing a substantial thesis-length paper.

Completed courses:

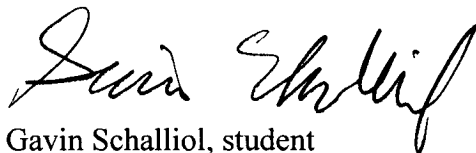
POLI 100 – Issues in Politics: Terrorism (Fall 07)  
HIST 243 – The Modern Middle East (Fall 08)

Proposed additional courses:

Bourguiba Institute of Modern Languages - Introductory Arabic Program  
Six-week intensive program in Tunis. This course has been approved in principle by the Registrar's office for transfer credit.

POLI 373 – Palestine, Israel, and the Middle East  
HIST 300 – Historiography  
ANTH 325 – People & Cultures of the Near East  
HIST 310 – The Iraq War  
HIST 341 – The Arab-Israeli Conflict  
POLI 251 – Theories of International Relations  
RELI 339 – Contemporary Islamic Thought  
POLI 353 – Conflict Management & Resolution  
POLI 497 – Senior Research Seminar

Signed,




Gavin Schalliol, student



Dr. Todd Berryman, major advisor

Dr. Ian King, committee member

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