Course content

In this course, the student will explore theoretical and empirical perspectives on current discussions about religious practitioners as well as discourse's role in contemporary Middle Eastern communities. The course takes its theoretical starting point in constructivist, intersectional and postcolonial perspectives on the role of religion in social, political, and cultural processes.

With a historic starting point in the region's modernity and reform processes from the mid-19th century and the national independence movements of the 20th century, the course mainly focuses on the end of the cold war with the increased geopolitical complexity that characterized the region since then, which also influenced the role of religion in political discourses and practitioners. Geographic focus is the so-called Arab world, Israel, Turkey, and Iran.

The course offers critical perspectives on how approaches to religious concepts, ritual use and historiographies, influence power relations. The student explores such perspectives based on rich and varied empirical material and provides an opportunity for individual specialization as well as joint research in seminars. Examples include texts, images, internet-based materials as well as art and cultural life. In addition to formal religious-political texts such as constitutions and program explanations from influential organizations, the course also highlights how religious norms and references in a late modern and globalized context are orchestrated with innovative approaches: in fashion industry, cultural life, and discipline of public spheres.