Why Study Arabic, Hebrew, Persian, or Turkish?

The Middle East and North African (MENA) region stretches from Morocco to Iran. It is one of the linguistically most diverse regions. We teach the four most commonly spoken languages of the region: Arabic, Hebrew, Persian, and Turkish.

Proficiency in a MENA language presents unparalleled opportunities to address the complex political and economic questions involving the MENA region and the world. It also is a real asset for the private and nonprofit sectors, as well as businesses which seek to better understand emerging markets and institutions in the Middle East. Knowledge of a MENA language prepares students for many pursuits, including archeology, business, government, history, journalism, law, political science, and technology, to name just a few.

Both new language learners and heritage speakers have excelled in our Program and have received many awards, grants, fellowships and scholarships.

Our Program immerses students in both the languages and the rich cultures of the region. We offer language tables, holiday celebrations, cultural festivals, authentic meals, guest speakers, art exhibits, and film events. The vast scope of cultural exposure expands how our students see, understand, talk about, and interact with the world.

Several of our courses can satisfy requirements for:
- a WCAS Distribution (*);
- a Minor or Major in MENA Studies, German, German Studies, Hebrew Studies, or Jewish Studies;
- the ISP Cert. of Distinction in Foreign Language.

ARABIC
First-Year and Second-Year Language sequences
Colloquial Arabic
topics include Egyptian, and Levantine
Media Arabic
Third-Year Language sequence
Language & Culture
topics include Arab Immigration, and
Cairo: The Seven Layers of Civilization
Current Events: Arab Society thru Online Media
Translation in Practice
Arabic Poetry*
Classic Arabic Texts*
topics include One Thousand and One Nights*
Arabic Prose*
topics include Arab Woman*, and I am an Arab*

HEBREW
First-Year and Second-Year Language sequences
Third-Year and/or Fourth-Year Language courses
topics include the bridge course Fun Stuff,
Current Events: Israeli Society thru Online Media,
The Four-Dimensional Jerusalem*,
Parents & Children in Israeli Society*, and
Between Two Writers: Sayed Kashua and Etgar Keret*

PERSIAN
First-Year and Second-Year Language sequences

TURKISH
First-Year and Second-Year Language sequences
capstone course is Istanbul: Gateway between East & West
STUDY ABROAD PROGRAMS

One of the best ways to become proficient in a language, to expand cultural interests, and to meet different people and native speakers is to live and study abroad. Northwestern University classrooms extend well beyond the Evanston campus. Study Abroad Programs that are affiliated with NU are offered in Morocco, Jordan, Lebanon, Israel, and Turkey.

Notably, Arabic, Hebrew, Persian, and Turkish are considered "important" or "critical" languages by the U.S. Department of State. There are many grants, fellowships, and scholarships available to students who develop language and cultural expertise in the countries where the languages are spoken. Review our students' Study Abroad Experiences on our website!

Arabic is the fifth most common language, with over 300 million native speakers. It is one of the six official languages of the U.N.

Hebrew has 9 million speakers worldwide. It is the language of the Bible and it was not spoken for centuries, until it was revived 140 years ago.

Persian is spoken by over 130 million people. It has a storied literary history, and Persian poetry is inscribed in the Halls of the U.N.

Turkish is the native language of 80 million people. Turkey is home to some of the earliest advanced civilizations in human history.

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