Middle East Studies and Languages

The faculty of the Middle East Studies minor program at Saint Louis University strongly encourages its students to pursue knowledge of Arabic or another language relevant to study or life in the Middle East. Though Saint Louis University does not currently offer courses in any of these languages, this document outlines why language study is so important and provides a number of options for students to gain language knowledge.

First and foremost, knowing a language is an essential way to get to know this region that is so rich in traditions, to become acquainted with its people and customs, and to learn about its history and literature in written, aural, and oral manners.

Moreover, students are better prepared for their next steps with exposure to foreign language in college. If you have an interest in this part of the world, you might wish to seek further study eventually in a graduate school program or work in an international / nonprofit / government / NGO (non-governmental organization) job related to this part of the world. In speaking to colleagues who work in career services or in the field, we understand that applicants do better with such a language exposure already. Some graduate programs do require language for entry, and others, though they do not require it, given a choice, might select a student who has had an introduction to the language over one who has not. Consider as well that taking language courses demonstrates intentionality and planning that employers and professors like to see in their applicants.

Options for language choices:
The MES faculty generally suggests Arabic as a language of study for its minors because it is the predominant language in the Middle East today. Yet there are many other options. For example, Hebrew, Farsi, and Turkish might be languages that you learn, each with connections to specific geographic areas or areas of study related to the Middle East.

Options for language learning:
There are multiple ways to take a Middle Eastern language.*:

1. Take a language abroad. We highly suggest that this is the best way to learn the language and the culture. University programs can be accepted for credit at SLU, and elective credits on all sorts of Middle East-related topics can also be approved towards your minor from these programs. The MES program is working to instigate an officially approved Middle Eastern study abroad program (in progress in 2017), which would make it easier for SLU students to go abroad
to the Middle East. Speak to the Middle East Studies director and/or the International Services office about study abroad options. Many programs abroad across the Middle East offer language study, with some respected sample offerings being through the following programs:

- CIEE
- AMIDEAST
- SIT

2. **Take a course at another university.** You could look here locally during the semester or in the summer wherever you might be.
   - In St. Louis, there are options in Arabic, Hebrew, and Persian (Farsi) at **Washington University in St. Louis**, and at **St. Louis Community College**. Such credits might also transfer for credit to SLU.
   - You might find online university courses as well.

3. **Participate in intensive summer language programs.** Summer programs, with credits that might transfer to SLU, exist in the U.S., such as:
   - Middlebury Institute at Monterey [http://www.miis.edu/academics/language/programs/summer](http://www.miis.edu/academics/language/programs/summer)
   - The University of Chicago [https://summerlanguages.uchicago.edu/](https://summerlanguages.uchicago.edu/)
   - The University of Washington [http://www.summer.washington.edu/courses-programs/intensive-foreign-language-courses](http://www.summer.washington.edu/courses-programs/intensive-foreign-language-courses)
   - Beloit College [https://www.beloit.edu/cls/](https://www.beloit.edu/cls/)
   - University of Pittsburgh Summer Language Institute [http://www.sli.pitt.edu/](http://www.sli.pitt.edu/)

4. **Apply for national scholarship programs for language study.** Several scholarship programs to fund Middle East languages study exist, such as:
   - Boren Scholarships [https://www.borenawards.org/scholarships/program-basics/boren-scholarship-basics](https://www.borenawards.org/scholarships/program-basics/boren-scholarship-basics)
   
   For more information on these, please speak to the Program Coordinator of Competitive Fellowships and Scholarships ([https://www.slu.edu/honors/competitive-fellowships](https://www.slu.edu/honors/competitive-fellowships)) at SLU in 119 Verhaegen Hall or contact honors@slu.edu.

5. **Take a course online.** Though non-university programs would not transfer directly to SLU, you could still gain valuable knowledge of the language. Various online for-profit programs exist, such as:
   - [https://arabiconline.eu/complete-arabic/](https://arabiconline.eu/complete-arabic/)

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*Note that mention of these many options does not represent an MES endorsement but rather suggests a resource for the student to investigate further.*