

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE MEDIEVAL STUDIES MA CURRICULA

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Program director of the 1YMA program: Katalin Szende ([szendek@ceu.edu](mailto:szendek@ceu.edu))

Program director of the 2YMA program: Baukje van den Berg ([vandenberg@ceu.edu](mailto:vandenberg@ceu.edu))

Program coordinator of the 1YMA and 2YMA programs: Zsófi Göde ([godezs@ceu.edu](mailto:godezs@ceu.edu))

General information on useful materials on the MEDS [departmental website](#).

- [MA forms](#) (such as “Exemption from a Course” form, the “Independent Study” form): under Programs/MA Forms, Student Rights & Regulations.
- Booklet for the 1YMA program (including the curriculum): under Programs/Master of Arts in Late Antique, Medieval and Early Modern Studies (one-year)/Program & Course Structure (bottom of the page).
- Booklet for the 2YMA program (including the curriculum): under Programs/MA in Comparative History: Late Antique, Medieval, and Renaissance Studies (two years)/ Program & Course Structure (bottom of the page).
- This document (“MEDS MA Curricula FAQ\_2021 August”): under Programs/MA Forms, Student Rights & Regulations.

### ***1. What is the basic structure of the academic year in AY 2021/2022?***

Some of the following dates are featured also in [CEU's Academic Calendar](#).

Orientation Week (for incoming students): September 6 – 10, 2021.

Zero Week (for all students): September 13 – 17, 2021.

Fall Term: September 20 – December 10, 2021.

Winter Break: December 10, 2021 – January 10, 2022.

Winter Term: January 10 – April 1, 2022.

Research Break (tentative): April 2 – end of May, 2022.

Spring Term (tentative): end of May to early June, 2022.

### ***2. Am I allowed to be absent from classes? If yes, how many times and under what circumstances?***

In the Fall Term and the Winter Term, when 2-credit classes comprise 12 sessions, you are allowed maximum two absences that need not be medically or officially justified.

However, we expect you in these cases, too, to notify your course instructor about your absence for reasons of courtesy.

In the Spring Term, out of the 6 sessions you are allowed to miss one without medical or official justification.

***3. At the beginning of the academic year, do I have to register for courses in the Fall Term only or also in the Winter and the Spring Terms?***

At the beginning of the academic year, you are required to register for courses in all three terms of the year in accordance with your curriculum. However, before the start of the Winter Term and later, before the start of the Spring Term, the registration system will be open again and you can modify your course selection. In other words, at the beginning of the year, you are required to make a definite plan for the Fall Term and a tentative plan for the Winter and Spring Terms.

***4. What is the timeline for course registration?***

Registration period for the Fall Term: September 13 – 27, 2021. (Start of the Fall Term: September 20.) You have to register for courses in this period not just for the Fall Term but also for Winter and Spring Terms.

Registration period for the Winter Term: December 13, 2021 – January 17, 2022. (Start of the Winter Term: January 10.) In this period, you can modify your registrations for the Winter and Spring Terms.

Registration period for the Spring Term: March 21 – April 11, 2022. In this period, you can modify your registrations for the Spring Term.

NB: Unlike the dates of the Fall and the Winter Terms, which are fixed across all departments, the dates of the Spring Term vary within CEU. (The abovementioned Spring Term registration period is the same for all departments, however.) The dates of the Medieval Studies Spring Term are not fixed yet but customarily, our intensive Spring Term starts in late May and ends in early June.

Furthermore, Spring Term classes comprise 6 sessions unlike Fall and Winter Term classes, which have 12 sessions.

***5. Will I receive assistance in putting together my study plan for the year? And will my Program Coordinator approve my course registrations and give me feedback throughout the process? I am worried that I will make mistakes and I will realize it too late.***

During the Zero Week (September 13 – 17), every incoming 1YMA and 2YMA student will have an individual planning session with their program director and two additional faculty members, who usually become the student's supervisor(s). The aim of this session

is to help you shape your study plan in light of your research topics and general interests. For example, you will be advised on whether or not you have to take source languages, if yes, what language(s) and on what level.

Moreover, in each registration period, the Program Coordinator is responsible for supervising the registration process of each student, providing feedback on whether the plans align with the curricula and giving advice regarding the students' prospective workload.

### ***6. Can I take courses above the minimum credits of my program? Will my extra credits be recognized and factor into my GPA?***

The answer to all three questions is "Yes" and ambition is certainly not discouraged. (The only curriculum block where certain credit restrictions apply is the Source Language/Advance Text Reading Seminar/Textual Skills block – you can read about this in detail under points 18 and 19.)

Our general experience, however, is that students who plan to go significantly above the minimum program credits struggle with meeting their obligations, including their deadlines. This is especially pertinent for 1YMA students who are also expected to produce a thesis in one academic year as well. For this reason, we often recommend a reasonable compromise, whereby students do not have to give up on their interests but they do not increase their workload drastically: auditing.

Auditing means that you attend a course and are expected to keep up with the readings but you are exempted from writing papers or class journals, giving presentations, etc. If you audit a course, it is worth 0 credits but it will show up on your transcript.

### ***7. What does "mandatory," "mandatory elective" and "elective" course mean?***

Mandatory courses are the specific ones that you must take during your studies. Examples include the *MA Thesis Seminars*, *Introduction to Interdisciplinary Medieval Studies* (1YMA), *Interdisciplinary Methods of Comparative History* (2YMA). The curricula you find in the MA booklets indicate these courses clearly.

Mandatory elective courses are a group of courses that belong to the same category from which you are required to take a certain number during your studies. (There is a possibility to seek exemption from these courses in well-justified cases. See point 15 for details.) For 2YMA students, mandatory electives include *Topical Survey* courses; for 1YMA and 2YMA students, so-called "core classes plus tutorials" and classes in the Source Language/Advanced Text Reading Seminar/Textual Skills curriculum block. As "survey" and "core" suggest, these courses are meant to be either foundational to your studies or to provide you with the opportunity for a more in-depth study of a specific area than the average elective would allow.

Elective courses are the remaining courses, essentially: as your curricula shows, you are required to take a certain credit worth of electives during your studies similarly to

mandatory electives, but electives comprise a significantly larger group of courses. Furthermore, unlike in the case of mandatory electives, the nature and structure of these courses can be very different from one another.

### **8. What does “HIME” stand for?**

“HIME” is an acronym for “History” and “Medieval.” “HIME” is most often used in reference to courses that are almost always co-taught by professors of the Departments of History and Medieval Studies and which are either mandatory or mandatory elective for 2YMA students. The HIME courses are:

*Historiography: Topics in its History and Theory* (lecture)  
*Historiography II: Grand Debates* (three regional variants)  
*Topical Survey courses* (e.g. *Gender History, Empires, etc.*)  
*Interdisciplinary Methods of Comparative History*  
*MA Thesis Planning Seminar*  
*MA Thesis Prospectus Workshop*

### **9. What does SLTG/ATRS/TS stand for?**

It is the short form of “Source Language Teaching Group/Advanced Text Reading Seminar/Textual Skills.” In both the 1YMA and 2YMA curricula, this is an example of mandatory electives courses.

### **10. How do I know which source languages are accepted by my department and which courses are in the Advanced Text Reading Seminar/Textual Skills category?**

Please, note that not all source languages listed on the Source Language Teaching Group’s [website](#) are accepted by our department. The accepted languages are: Latin, Ancient Greek, Arabic, Persian, Ottoman Turkish, Classical Syriac, Modern Hebrew, Yiddish, Russian.

Advanced Text Reading Seminars and Textual Skills courses are marked in the yearly course table, prepared by your Program Coordinator, but here they are listed as well:

#### **Fall Term:**

- Gregory Bar ‘Ebroyo (Barhebraeus): *Laughable Stories* - A Medieval Joke Collection in Classical Syriac
- Latin Palaeography, Book Hand (4th-15th c.)
- Medieval Codicology: The Physical and Intellectual Production and Use of Manuscripts (8th-15th c.)
- Advanced Source Readings in Ottoman Historiography (14th-16th Centuries)
- Greek Reading Seminar I. – cross-listed from Philosophy
- Ibn Khaldun's *Muqaddima*: History and Theory of the State - reading course – cross-listed from History

### Winter Term:

- Reading Medieval Latin Charters (Palaeography)
- Byzantine Writers on the Lives of Saints and Emperors: Between Fact and Fiction
- Manuscripts, Textual Flow, New Audiences. Production and Reception of Texts (14th-15th Centuries)
- Gospels, Graffiti, Grocery Lists: Writing Culture and Its Material Evidence in Antiquity and the Middle Ages
- Greek Reading Seminar II. – cross-listed from Philosophy
- Advanced Seminar in Intellectual History: Reading the Classics – cross-listed from History
- Advanced Readings in Arabic Historiography – cross-listed from History

### **11. What is “Independent Study”? Is it equivalent to taking an elective?**

*Independent Study* is a 2-credit Pass/Fail “course,” which is functionally equivalent to taking an elective. Those students whose special interests fall outside of the scope of the regular course offerings can register for *Independent Study* instead of an elective course and read important works together with their supervisor(s) that pertain specifically to their thesis research.

Both 1YMA and 2YMA students may earn maximum 2 credits from *Independent Study* during their studies. 1YMA students are allowed to take *Independent Study* already in the Fall Term; 2YMA students can take it from their first Winter Term onwards.

If you want to take *Independent Study*, discuss it first with your supervisor(s) – if they agree, during the registration period, you have to fill out the “Independent Study Form,” make a study plan with your supervisor and submit the form to your Program Director and Program Coordinator for approval. The form can be downloaded from the list of forms [here](#).

### **12. What does it mean that “Introduction to Research Resources for Medievalists” is “strongly recommended”? Is this a de facto mandatory course? If so, what happens if I do not take it?**

Up until AY 2020/21, this course was strictly mandatory. In the interest of harmonizing the US and Austrian MA curricula, the course has been demoted to a “strongly recommended” elective since AY 2020/21. Insofar as this course is no longer mandatory, students are not obliged to take it and can earn their degree without it. However, as the course’s past mandatory status suggests, it is a foundational one that is meant to prepare students for the efficient navigation of various research resources and institutions in Vienna and at CEU, such as libraries and archives. Most if not all students will have to turn to those research resources for their thesis research and are therefore highly advised to

take this course. This Pass/Fail course takes place during the Orientation Week and the Zero Week and its one credit is allocated to the Fall Term.

**13. What is a “cross-listed” course?**

If our departments cross-lists a course from another department, it means that the course in question is added to our departmental course list. In other words, if you take a cross-listed course, it counts as if you had taken a course from your home department – and so those credits do not count towards your extra-departmental credits. Cross-listed courses are indicated in our departmental course list.

**14. How strictly do I have to follow the model curriculum? What if, for instance, I would like to take two core classes and their tutorials within one term while the curriculum says one core class and one tutorial in a given term?**

With the notable exception of mandatory courses, which must be taken in the specific terms the curricula indicate them, there is considerable latitude with regard to other course types, such as the core classes plus tutorials or electives. It is possible that in one term, none of the core class and tutorial offers interest you but in another, you are interested in more than one. Our programs can accommodate such scenarios. The model curriculum is meant to give you concrete guidance and a balanced, pedagogically sound plan when it comes to distributing your workload and for these reasons, we strongly encourage students to stay close to it.

However, the model curriculum is also a flexible construct and ultimately, what matters is that *by the end of your program* you will have accumulated at least the minimum number of credits per each course category. Rather than focusing on the semesters too narrowly, we invite you to look at your credits per course type for the program as a whole.

**15. I understand now that my curriculum is quite flexible in terms of distributing my workload but how strict are the course categories themselves? Can I substitute one type of course for another type?**

In certain cases, substitution is possible.

Strict: mandatory courses. Mandatory courses cannot be substituted and you have to take them in the specific terms in which your curriculum indicates them.

Strict: Source Languages/Advanced Text Reading Seminar/Textual Skills curriculum block. If you are a 1YMA student, you have to earn at least 4 credits in this block by the end of your studies; if you are a 2YMA student, then you have to earn at least 8 credits. You can distribute the credits however you like: for example, as a 1YMA student, you can earn all your 4 credits already in the Fall Term or as a 2YMA student, you can take all your 8 credits in your first year. It is up to you. The important detail is that the credits have to come from these specific types of courses. You are not obliged to “switch things up,”

however, so you can earn the credits solely from the study of source languages, for example.

Flexible: Topical Survey courses (2YMA), core class plus tutorials (1YMA and 2YMA). These courses can be substituted with electives but the substitution is not automatic and you have to seek permission. More on this at points 20 and 21.

***16. How many extra-departmental, non-cross-listed courses am I allowed to take during my studies?***

As CEU's [Student Rights, Rules, and Academic Regulations](#) stipulate, all MA students are entitled to take 4 extra-departmental, non-cross-listed credits per academic year without seeking special permission.

***17. I have decided to add an advanced certificate program/specialization to my degree (Religious Studies, Jewish Studies, Eastern Mediterranean Studies, etc.) and I am concerned that the 4 non-cross-listed credits per year will not be enough for me to comply with the requirements of the advanced certificate program/specialization. To whom should I turn?***

If you decide to sign up for an advanced certificate program/specialization, you should let your Program Coordinator know as soon as you have made your choice, not just the coordinator of the given certificate program/specialization. If you need to take more than 4 non-cross-listed credits within an academic year in order to satisfy the specific requirements of your advanced certificate program/specialization, you should write your Program Coordinator with your requests, which will be then forwarded officially to the Student Records Office.

***18. I see in my curriculum that the Source Language/Advanced Text Reading Seminar/Textual Skills credits are maximized at 4 per semester. If I take more than that, what happens?***

First and foremost, the maximum is better understood by program rather than a single semester. This means that for 1YMA students, 8 credits/program are the maximum (and 4 credits are the minimum); for 2YMA students, 14 credits/program are the maximum (and 8 credits are the minimum). In cases when you go above the minimum credits in one semester, the Program Coordinator will count the surplus credits towards a future semester. If you hit the program maximum but you still want to take courses in this block, first consult your supervisor(s) as to whether it is really needed and if you have their support, turn to your Program Director for final approval.

It is also important to keep in my mind that Advanced Text Reading Seminars and Textual Skills courses can also be counted as electives (depending on where you need the credits more in order to satisfy the curriculum). Source languages, however, cannot be counted

as electives. They can only be counted towards your credits in the Source Language/Advanced Text Reading Seminar/Textual Skills curriculum block.

**19. Why is there a credit maximum in the first place in the Source Language/Advanced Text Reading Seminar/Textual Skills curriculum block? There are no maximum credits for other type of courses, such as core classes plus tutorials and electives.**

The Department of Medieval Studies prides itself on its multidisciplinary character. This is reflected in the wide gamut of courses it offers and it is also implicitly formulated in its curricula. This means that the department's MA students are not only encouraged but are also required, up to a reasonable point, to take courses that fall somewhat outside of their primary research interests. Maximizing credits in the language block is meant to preempt the scenario in which students would focus very narrowly on their thesis topic and fill up a disproportionately large portion of their credits by language learning to the detriment of topical courses.

The learning of source languages is a key component of the department's MA programs and so are the topical courses. Maximizing the credits in this block serves to keep a balance between these two elements.

**20. I am a 2YMA student. Am I absolutely required to take a Topical Survey course?**

If you are a first-year 2YMA student, you can substitute the *Topical Survey* course requirement in the curriculum by taking the seminar component of *Historiography: Topics in its History and Theory* without seeking permission. The lecture component of *Historiography: Topics in its History and Theory* is mandatory for all first-year 2YMA students; the seminar part is an elective. If you take the seminar part as well, you need not take a *Topical Survey* course in your first Fall Term. (If you would like to do both, then the *Historiography* seminar will count towards your elective credits.)

If you are a second-year 2YMA student, after discussing the matter with your supervisor(s), you can seek exemption from the *Topical Survey* course requirement in your second year and choose an elective instead by submitting the "Exemption from a Course" [form](#) to your supervisor(s), your Program Director and your Program Coordinators. Please, do not take it for granted that the exemption will be approved; first and foremost, you need your supervisor's consent in this matter.

**21. I am a 1YMA/2YMA student. Am I absolutely required to take the number of core classes plus tutorials enlisted in my curricula? (For 1YMA students, 2 core classes plus tutorials per program; for 2YMA students, 3 core classes plus tutorials per program.)**

Core classes and their respective tutorials – overall 4 credits – are meant to provide an opportunity for a more in-depth study of a specific area than the average elective would allow. The department tries to cover as many areas as possible with these core classes

(and their tutorials) but it is inevitable that each student's interests cannot be catered to perfectly. In such cases, students can seek an exemption from this curriculum requirement and choose two electives instead to earn those 4 credits. (The exemption is not automatic, however. You should run your idea through your supervisor(s) first, then, if they support your decision, fill out the "Exemption from a Course" [form](#) and send it to your supervisors and Program Director for formal approval, and cc your Program Coordinator.)

***22. Can I take a core class without a tutorial? Can I take the tutorial without the core class?***

You can take a core class, for 2 credits, without the tutorial component but not vice versa. Tutorials build upon the material presented in the core class and offer you a chance to delve deeper into each week's topic. Tutorials, thus, cannot stand on their own as courses.

If you take a core class without the tutorial, that will count the same as if you had taken an elective. NB: for the satisfaction of the "core class plus tutorial" curriculum block, you must take the tutorial as well. Taking a core class without the tutorial component makes the most sense if you happen to be very interested in two core classes within one semester: in that case, you can take one of those core classes with its tutorial (and satisfy the abovementioned "core class plus tutorial" curriculum requirement) and the other core class without the tutorial will be counted towards your elective credits.

***23. Is there a limit to how many times I can request exemption from a Topical Survey course or the core class plus tutorial curriculum requirement?***

In theory, there is no limit but the following is advisable. For 2YMA students to take at least one *Topical Survey* course during their studies since these are foundational courses. As for core classes and their tutorials, the recommendation for both 1YMA and 2YMA students is to take at least one core class with its tutorial during their studies. Core classes plus tutorials are different in nature from electives and provide you with a distinct educational experience that is integral to the department's programs.

***24. Can I use source language classes for my "core class plus tutorial" curriculum requirement exemption?***

No. The exemption has to be satisfied with two electives with which you can earn those 4 credits. (However, Advanced Text Reading Seminars and Textual Skills courses can be counted as electives and so they can work for the purposes of this exemption.) In general, the two electives you choose for the purpose of your exemption request should be reasonably close to your thesis topic.

***25. When is it acceptable for me to take a source language course for Pass/Fail? Can I audit source language courses?***

You can audit Advanced Text Reading Seminars or Textual Skills courses but not source language courses. However, once you have already satisfied your program's minimum credit requirements in the Source Language/Advanced Text Reading Seminar/Textual Skills curriculum block (4 credits for 1YMA students and 8 credits for 2YMA students), then you can take source language courses for Pass/Fail rather than Grade.

***26. All the one-credit Spring Term mandatory electives are considerably far from my research topic. Do I really need to take two of them? What if I just take an additional two-credit elective during the Fall or Winter Term instead?***

The Spring Term mandatory electives, which are traditionally offered after the submission deadline of the MA thesis and MA thesis prospectus, are meant to broaden the intellectual horizon of students and are often taught by visiting professors. For this reason, you indeed need to take them since their rationale is not rooted in furthering your research per se. Of course, for certain students these courses do pertain to their research areas but that does not change these courses' original rationale.

***27. I am a 1YMA/2YMA student and I have already earned 26/52 classroom credits. If I add the thesis (4/8 credits) to that, then I have satisfied the minimum credit requirement of my program. Do I still need to take two one-credit Spring Term classes in my last term?***

Yes. In each Spring term of your CEU studies, you have to take two one-credit courses no matter how many credits you have already. As elaborated in the answer to the previous question, Spring classes have a particular reason for their existence, which is to introduce you, in a compact format, to interesting areas of study that may be rather distant from your primary research interests. These Spring mandatory electives are always Pass/Fail.

***28. Can I take more than two credits worth of Spring Term mandatory elective courses?***

If you would like to go above the two credits, any additional Spring mandatory elective course should be taken for audit. Spring classes entail a significantly lower workload than other courses at MEDS, which is why this rule has been introduced: to prevent the accumulation of "easy" credits in the Spring.

***29. I am worried that I will not be able to submit my thesis on time and if I cannot, I will lose my chance to earn this degree. Is there hope for me?***

To end this lengthy FAQ on a reassuring note: there is hope. If by the end of your studies at CEU, you have accumulated the minimum number of classroom credits prescribed by

your curriculum and also satisfied all program requirements except for the submission and successful defense of your thesis, then the Student Records Office can set your status to “Absolutorium, thesis due,” which will allow you to still submit a thesis within the next two years. You will no longer be enrolled as a student in that period but thesis submission will still be possible.

The “Absolutorium, thesis due” status, however, should really be your last resort. Finishing a thesis can be very challenging once you are no longer in an academic environment, especially if you have to work full-time as well, which is the case for most people. It is very important that you communicate whatever hardship you may be experiencing to your supervisor(s) in a timely manner so they can provide you with additional assistance to meet the deadline. Similarly, you can always turn to your Program Coordinator and Program Director in such situations, who will treat such matters confidentially, can advise you on your options, act as a liaison with your supervisor(s) if need be and generally, can lend a sympathetic ear in tough times.