

UNIVERSITY DIPLOMA IN MUSLIM AND CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY AND MYSTICISM

Main Language of Instruction:

French ☐ English ☐ Arabic ☒

Campus Where the Program Is Offered: CSH

OBJECTIVES

- Explore the mystical experience through texts, contemplation, and spiritual guidance.
- Explain the different spiritual paths in religions.
- Prepare students to contribute to intercultural and interreligious dialogue.

PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES (COMPETENCIES)

- Identify the core beliefs of Christianity and Islam.
- Identify the similarities and differences between Christianity and Islam, including their various schools of thought, within a comparative religious and historical framework.
- Carry out an academic research project using appropriate research methods.

ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

- Candidates wishing to obtain a University Diploma must hold a University degree.
- Candidates wishing only to obtain a certificate of attendance and participation must hold the Lebanese Baccalaureate or its officially recognized equivalent, as determined by the Equivalence Committee of the Lebanese Ministry of Education and Higher Education.

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

30 Credits: Required Courses (30 credits)

Required Courses (30 Cr.)

Islamic Mysticism and Gnostic Insight (3 Cr.), Islamic Sufism and its Historical, Social, and Political Context (3 Cr.), Sufi Interpretation of the Qur'an (3 Cr.), A Journey to God and the Depths of the Self in Islamic Sufism (3 Cr.), Spiritual Discernment Among the Desert Fathers (3 Cr.), Syriac-Eastern Christian Mysticism in the 7th and 8th Centuries: Themes, Schools, and Texts (3 Cr.), Mysticism in the Bible: A Pact with the Unseen (3 Cr.), Following the Spiritual Masters of the West: A Study of Major Spiritual and Mystical Schools (3 Cr.), Jewish Mysticism between Kabbalah and Hasidism (3 Cr.), A Psychological Reading of the Spiritual Experience (3 Cr.).

COURSE DESCRIPTION

017MMIRL2	Islamic Mysticism and Gnostic Insight	3 Cr.
This course introduces Sufi thought in Islam through the study of the lives and teachings of major medieval mystics and philosophers, including al-Ghazali, al-Suhrawardi, Ibn Arabi, and al-Kashani. It examines a central mystical theme or path, such as mercy or asceticism as a case study, and offers a critical reading of Sufi approaches that transcend legal, sectarian, geographical, and religious boundaries in the search for truth and the Absolute.		
017MHSPL2	Islamic Sufism and its Historical, Social, and Political Context	3 Cr.
This course examines the roots of asceticism as the earliest stage of Sufism in the Arabian Peninsula prior to the emergence of the Muhammadan message, and subsequently within the Qur'anic text and the life of the Prophet. It then studies the rise of the ascetic movement in the decades that followed, in the context of major political and social transformations in Arab society, beginning with the Great Civil Strife (al-Fitna al-Kubrā) and culminating in the establishment of a hereditary imperial state following the end of the Rightly Guided Caliphate.		

017ISCOL2	Sufi Interpretation of the Qur'an	3 Cr.
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This course examines the difference between traditional Qur'anic exegesis—whether transmitted (narrative) or rational—and Sufi and gnostic interpretation, through a comparative analysis of exegetical texts on selected sūras and verses. Students will thereby identify the key features of Sufi and gnostic approaches to interpretation from the second century AH to the present day.

017VVDIL2	A Journey to God and the Depths of the Self in Islamic Sufism	3 Cr.
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This course explores the inner Sufi path through its main stages, namely the spiritual stations (maqāmāt), states (aḥwāl), and the stage of spiritual stabilization (tamkin). It pays particular attention to the lived spiritual experience of both male and female Sufi practitioners, as well as the notion of “taste” (dhawq) that expresses each deep immersion in the self and the longing for union with God. The course is based on the analysis of selected passages from major classical works of Sufi literature.

017DSPDL2	Spiritual Discernment Among the Desert Fathers	3 Cr.
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This course examines spiritual discernment in early monastic ascetic literature, with particular attention to the Egyptian tradition following Abba Anthony, known as the Father of Monasticism. It traces the development of this concept from Scripture to monastic writings, highlighting both its richness for understanding the Christian spiritual and mystical path and the ways it has been distorted through moralistic or psychological interpretations that distance it from its original meaning. Restoring discernment of spirits to its foundational role requires intellectual work in dialogue with contemporary challenges.

017MSCYL2	Syriac-Eastern Christian Mysticism in the 7 th and 8 th Centuries: Themes, Schools, and Texts	3 Cr.
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This course introduces Eastern Syriac Christian mysticism (the Syriac–Eastern mystical tradition) as a theological and spiritual path oriented toward union with God. It presents its classical progression through repentance and purification, illumination, and ultimately pure prayer, loving knowledge, and the vision of God according to the limits of grace. This tradition is understood not as a philosophy or a psychological experience, but as a way of life grounded in prayer (especially the prayer of the heart and stillness), ascetic struggle (fasting, vigilance, and watchfulness), growth in the virtues, and participation in sacramental and ecclesial life. The course situates this mystical tradition within the monastic milieu of the Eastern regions (Mesopotamia, Nineveh, Nisibis, Beth ‘Abē, Qatar, and others) during the seventh and eighth centuries, a period marked by the expansion of monasticism and spiritual schools. It also examines how the need to articulate a mature spirituality—capable of preserving identity amid emerging doctrinal controversies (including Messianism and certain Origenist or interpretative currents)—strengthened the emphasis on spiritual discernment. Finally, the course develops key mystical concepts such as the cloud (hidden divine presence), unknowing (knowledge beyond reason), ecstasy or rapture (divine attraction by grace), the mirror (purity of heart enabling vision), and unending progress (an ever-deepening movement toward God), ensuring that these notions are understood within a theological, ascetical, and ecclesial framework rather than psychological or emotional categories.

017MBIBL2	Mysticism in the Bible: A Pact with the Unseen	3 Cr.
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This course explores the dynamic relationship between God and the human being in Jewish and Christian traditions, where union with God is often expressed in symbolic terms and marked by an inherent asymmetry. It raises key questions about the possibility of approaching the God of the Covenant, who is both absolutely transcendent and actively present in human history, as well as how this divine closeness is understood in terms of incarnation and redemption. It also examines the meaning of the diverse biblical images that describe the covenant between God and humanity. The course offers a journey into the believer's longing for the Absolute through the study of selected texts from the Old and New Testaments, which express the tension between divine transcendence and the human desire for union with God.

017TSOCL2	Following the Spiritual Masters of the West: A Study of Major Spiritual and Mystical Schools	3 Cr.
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This course examines the major figures who shaped Western Christian spirituality and laid the foundations of enduring spiritual and mystical traditions. Given the scope of the subject, it focuses on a selected group of key figures and movements. It studies the Benedictine tradition as the principal Western monastic school, which played a central role in forming the spiritual and cultural foundations of Europe. It also explores the Franciscan tradition and the reforming impact of Saint Francis on the Western Church, as well as the way of life he established and its continued influence today. Special attention is given to the Carmelite tradition for its strong mystical orientation, through the writings and teachings of three Doctors of the Church: Teresa of Ávila, John of the Cross, and Thérèse of the Child Jesus.

017MJKHI2	Jewish Mysticism between Kabbalah and Hasidism	3 Cr.
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This course introduces mysticism in Judaism by tracing its biblical and rabbinic foundations, then following its development through Kabbalah and key mystical texts such as the Zohar, as well as later movements, particularly Hasidism, and the renewal it brought to Jewish life. It also presents the main concepts of Jewish mystical experience, including divine manifestations, wisdom, emanation, and light. In addition, the course explores the esoteric dimension of this tradition, along with its narrative and lived expressions, and the major figures who shaped and transmitted it.

017LPSYL2	A Psychological Reading of the Spiritual Experience	3 Cr.
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This course is based on a scholarly examination of psychological approaches to lived spiritual experience. It draws on different psychological theories and analytical frameworks to explore the relationship between spiritual experience and inner psychological life.