

Language

Before you start studying the detail of the language with us, you'll find it helpful to have an overview of it. Many modern languages, including English, have distinctly different formal and informal versions, but there's a certain amount of mixing and mingling, in writing as well as orally. Arabic is rather different. Mixing and mingling happen orally, but not in writing, and a lot of "oral" Arabic, especially the kind that you'll be taught, is actually formal Arabic spoken from a written script, as in news broadcasts. This formal language, whether written or spoken, is known by many names, including Modern

do this independently of learning the language! It's a good thing to do over the summer. If you come equipped with good handwriting, you'll be able to take notes more quickly and more accurately, understand what's written on the whiteboard, and generally have a head start.

Here is a **free** online resource which teaches written forms, not imitations of

As for the other components of this degree – History, Literature, Religion, Art – you may like to have a look in your local library. Modern Middle Eastern History, for example, ought to be something on which you could find a fair few resources!

at Oxford, has a small gallery; other (sometimes larger) galleries can be found at the Victoria and Albert Museum, the British Museum, the Fitzwilliam Museum (Cambridge), the Artz-i Islamic Art and Gifts Gallery (Bradford), The Manchester Museum (Manchester), Leeds City Museum (Leeds) and several others. Have a look online and see if there are any exhibitions coming up!

Classical Literature

The Library of Arabic Literature is a project which produces facing-text Arabic editions and English translations of Arabic writing of all genres and all places and periods stopping short of the twentieth century (poetry, cookery, law, sufism, history, storytelling, philosophy, travel). You can buy many of its titles for about £15 online.

More importantly, however, its [blog](#) is a treasure trove of writing and ideas about the books that have been translated and it's completely free!

Beyond that, the best two anthologies that we would recommend are:

***Robert Irwin (ed.), *The Penguin Anthology of Classical Arabic Literature* (2006)

Geert Jan Van Gelder (tr.), *Classical Arabic Literature: A Library of Arabic Literature Anthology* (2013)

Other classic texts are being translated frequently. You may want to have a browse of any of the following titles:

Tale of the Princess Fatima, Warrior Woman (tr. Melanie Magidow)

The Travels of Ibn Battuta (ed. Tim Mackintosh Smith)

Arabian Nights' Entertainment (OWC edition) (tr. Robert L. Mack) – for really

interested students, you might instead opt for the 3 volume P4.80 (r)2.90 ()]6 (s)-1.6eestrhe 3 P

Al-Nuwayri, *The Ultimate Ambition in the Arts of Erudition* (tr. Elias Muhanna)

Modern Literature

There are not many free resources for modern Arabic literature. You might like to have a browse of [ArabLit Quaterly](#), which includes articles and interviews about the subject. You might also want to have a listen to the Bulaq podcast, which features interviews and discussions about modern Arabic literature.

Beyond that, below is an excellent anthology of modern Arabic literature:

*** Sabry Hafez and Catherine Cobham, *A Reader of Modern Arabic Short Stories* (2001)

Otherwise, head down to your local bookshop or library and have a look out for translated fiction or poetry. Some recent(-ish) excellent titles and some classics include:

Jokha Alharthi, *Celestial Bodies* (tr. Marilyn Booth)

Ahmed Saadawi, *Frankenstein in Baghdad* (tr. Jonathan Wright)

Hassan Blasim, *The Iraqi Christ* (tr. Jonathan Wright)

Tayyib Salih, *Season of Migration to the North* (tr. Denys Johnson-Davis)

Tayyib Salih, *The Wedding of Zain and Other Stories* (tr. Denys Johnson-Davis)

Khalil Gibran, *The Prophet*

Naguib Mahfouz, *The Cairo Trilogy* (tr. Various)

Sonallah Ibrahim, *Zaat* (tr. Anthony Calderbank)

Ghada al-Samman, *Beirut Nightmares* (tr. Nancy Roberts)

Ghassan Kanafani, *Men in the Sun* (tr. Hilary Kilpatrick)

Mahmoud Darwish, *Unfortunately, It Was Paradise* (Selected Poems)

Nizar Qabbani, *On Entering the Sea* (tr. Lena Jayyusi and Sharif Elmusa)