

“Arabism” in Western Medieval Studies
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Panel Conveners:
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Outside of Near Eastern Studies disciplines, the extended focus on Arabic as a language and literary tradition, or the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) as a region of interest, has generally been called “Arabism”: but what is Arabism, and how has it evolved in medieval studies, particularly in the 21st century? What types of projects have led medieval scholars, otherwise firmly rooted in the West—geographically, culturally, intellectually—to undertake mastery of the Arabic language or else make substantial use of MENA primary sources? How can we measure the impact of Arabism on Western medievalism? This panel on Arabism in medieval studies seeks to explore the origins, evolution, and future of this sub-specialty, particularly how it resists or upends Orientalism, with varying success.

Paper topics may include but are not limited to

- Studies in the transmission of knowledge: how authorized knowledge (e.g. the studies of Qur’ān recitations, Ḥadīth science, jurisprudence, and even the Arabic language) has been passed and preserved across continents and centuries.
- Adaptations: Classical Arabic “medievalisms” on the colonial, postcolonial, and globalized stage, allowing us to trace the legacies and various applications of and claims to “golden ages”
- Single-author, single character studies, or moveable characters
- Humor across intercultural lines
- The long history of the European Other and cosmopolitanisms
- Chronicles & crusade narratives
- Diplomacy, with a focus on court wazirs, diplomats, officials, dignitaries, missions
- Plague, with a focus on pandemics
- Polemics
- Non-modern cities

We welcome proposals from scholars in all language and literature departments, history, philosophy, religion, archaeology, art—and even from Near Eastern Studies departments for a view of Arabism from the inside!

Please send proposals of approximately 300 words to rebecca.hill@ucla.edu by June 1st for consideration.