



Informational Brochure



BERLINER INSTITUT FÜR ISLAMISCHE THEOLOGIE

A Central Institute of the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin (HU)



About Us

We are an institute of theological diversity that researches and educates in multiple strands of Islamic thought and practice, particularly in Sunni and Shiite traditions, through a comparative and interdisciplinary approach.

Our research and teaching takes place in close cooperation with Christian theologians and other scholars of religion at the HU, as well as with Berlin's broader academic community. Given that Berlin is home to roughly 300,000 Muslims, we have made it our mission to train young theologians, providing them with qualifications for academic scholarship, teaching at schools, employment at mosques, civil society, chaplaincy, and the media.

Origins

The BIT began teaching students in the winter semester of 2019–20. This was the culmination of an establishment process led by Prof. Michael Borgolte on the basis of a 2018 agreement between Muslim organisations in Berlin and the Berlin Senate and Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin (HU). Concurrently, a Central Institute for Catholic Theology was established at the HU, enriching its theological curriculum alongside the (Protestant) Faculty of Theology which dates back to the university's founding.

The establishment of Islamic Theology as a separate university discipline in Germany was a response to a 2010 recommendation by the Wissenschaftsrat (German Council of Science and Humanities). The BIT is the fifth of six centres of Islamic Theology in Germany to receive funding from the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, and the only one of them located on the territory of former East Germany.



Studying at the BIT

The BIT of HU is a vibrant department in the heart of Berlin, training students in the disciplines of Islamic theology. We make the most of Berlin's rich culture, and students can expect to learn from the city's museums, libraries, and places of worship, as well as within our class rooms. We are very proud of our diverse student community who come to the BIT from across Germany, Europe, and around the world.

The degree programmes take a broad and integrated approach to education, with a focus on imparting a comprehensive understanding of Islamic theology's scholarly foundations to our students, through a comparative approach. They provide a critical understanding of the field's most important sources, theories, principles, and methods. The programmes also equip students with transferable skills to approach problems critically and analytically, within their professional, academic, and personal lives, beyond the field of Islamic theology.

The curriculum covers the disciplines of Islamic textual scholarship and hermeneutics (Qur'ān and hadith), Islamic law, Islamic religious practice, Islamic philosophy, kalām and mysticism, Islamic religious education and pedagogy, practical theology, and Islamic intellectual history. The programmes also encompass supplementary topics regarding inter-faith issues, comparative theology, the plurality of Islamic schools of thought, and the lived realities of Muslims in Germany and Europe. Students are also given the opportunity to explore Islamic theologians' career options for themselves in a fieldwork study. Students also have the option to train as teachers for Islamic religious education in schools through a teaching-oriented study programme.

A core component of the programme is Arabic language training, with the aim of fostering proficiency in speaking, and reading comprehension of both classical and modern texts.



Our Degree Programmes

BA in Islamic Theology

(as a single-track programme or in combination with another subject)

BA Education in Primary Schools
(course of study: Islamic Theology)

Master's programmes are planned and currently in development. Berlin's first MA degree programme in Islamic Theology is scheduled to launch in the winter term 2022–23. Another MA programme with a robust connection to contemporary social issues is scheduled to launch in the winter semester of 2023–24, along with a foundational bachelor's degree programme aimed at training secondary school teachers.



Our Professorships

Islamic Law in Past and Present (Prof. Serdar Kurnaz)

Professor Kurnaz focuses on the emergence and development of Islamic law and Islamic legal schools in both historical and present day contexts, with a particular emphasis on Islamic legal theory as well as the philosophy of law. Professor Kurnaz investigates the possibilities of applying Islamic law within secular contexts that considers its dynamic nature, and endeavours to make innovative contributions to broader research questions in the realm of legal philosophy.

Islamic Religious Education and Practical Theology (Prof. Tuba Isik)

Professor Isik's research interests cover multiple sub-disciplines, emphasising Islamic religious learning in classroom settings, the didactic models of the subject in schools, and the parameters of such classes and corresponding training for prospective teachers. Isik's professorship is particularly concerned with aesthetic learning, especially music and art.

Practical Theology deals with the practical application of Islamic theology and praxeology, that is, all areas of activity for religious practice. As part of Practical Theology, students are introduced to the theories of various practical areas.

Islamic Foundations of Belief, Philosophy, and Ethics (Prof. Mira Sievers)

Proceeding from a non-denominational notion of theology, Professor Sievers focuses on various theological and philosophical manifestations of Muslim thinking in regard to fundamental religious questions. The emphasis here is on Islamic ethics, the Islamic systematic theology (kalām) and gender-related issues in Islamic theology. Professor Sievers' research particularly focuses on Islamic beliefs and theological concepts through the lens of intellectual history; it also involves reflecting upon their significance for the world of today.



Our Professorships

Islamic Intellectual History (Prof. Mohammad Gharaibeh)

Professor Gharaibeh focuses on developments in the histories of Islamic ideas and theology, past and present. Given that no central institution has canonized or censored Islamic knowledge to standardise theology, the discursive tradition and the negotiation processes among Muslim scholars stand in the centre of the research. The production of Islamic theological knowledge, its transmission, and evolution are considered as processes of specialisation and hybridisation, in light of developments in regionalism, mobility, and political patronage. In addition, Professor Gharaibeh considers the reception of theological concepts in contemporary theological debates and discourses, considering their [re]interpretations in these contexts.

Comparative Theology from an Islamic Perspective (Prof. Ufuk Topkara)

Professor Topkara's research agenda employs an innovative discursive approach to developing an Islamic theology for the 21st century, one rooted deeply in the Islamic tradition while taking seriously the challenges presented by both other theologies and contemporary philosophy. A particular emphasis is directed at intra-theological (Shia-Sunni relations) and inter-theological research (relations between Islamic theology and Jewish or Christian theology). In order to foster a discourse between Islamic theology and other theologies and philosophies, it is necessary to understand how other religious thinkers brought plural thought traditions into productive conversation with one another in the past: to learn from the steps that they took while developing an own path.

Islamic Textual Studies (Qur'an and Hadith) (vacant, appointment planned for summer semester 2022)



Research at the BIT

The BIT is committed to a theology of diversity, and as such it aims to critically investigate the various Islamic traditions in themselves and in comparison with non-Islamic teachings. The researchers at the BIT approach these questions through interdisciplinary methods that encompass ethnographic, philosophical, hermeneutical, and historical analysis, with a view to highlighting the relevance of Islamic theology to contemporary issues.

The professors at the BIT cooperate on joint projects, such as “Ways to an Ethics: New Approaches from Theology and Law between Modern Challenges and Islamic Tradition.” Drawing on studies of classical and post-classical theological sources, this project aims to identify ethical approaches in various Islamic disciplines. It elaborates their practical application in many areas, for example on questions of sexual ethics.

Other projects are also conducted collaboratively with external partners. For example, a research group in partnership with scholars in Osnabrück and Fribourg, Switzerland was dedicated to the relationship between canon and censorship in Islamic history and the tensions of negotiating authority. Through case studies, the group investigated reception history and the factors that facilitated or inhibited the establishment of specific theological concepts and texts.

The Linked Open Tafsīr project is a cooperative research project with scholars in Frankfurt am Main, investigating the genesis of exegeses of the Qur’ān as well as Islamic law within earlier traditions of Qur’ānic exegesis. In the process, the project seeks to highlight intersections with the digital humanities in the hope of enriching Islamic theology in this area.



Research at the BIT

The Working Group Islamic Philosophy of Law (IPL) aims to promote the interdisciplinary study of Islamic philosophy of law. In doing so, it will elaborate how the traditional Islamic sciences that engage with questions related to the philosophy of law could be brought together and form a new discipline called Islamic Philosophy of Law.

Under the premise that the theologies of Judaism, Christianity and Islam have always taken shape in response and in relation to one another, the BIT also engages in research collaborations on interfaith theology.

With the goal of establishing a joint graduate school, the BIT aims to examine these inter-theological exchanges through historical, theoretical, and practical lenses in partnership with the HU's Christian theological schools, the School of Jewish Theology at the University of Potsdam, and Sankt Georgen Graduate School of Philosophy and Theology in Frankfurt am Main.

The BIT also participates in the intertheological Gender in the Theologies Working Group.

In addition, the BIT is home to two junior research groups dedicated to "Perspectives of Religious Diversity in Islamic Theology" and "Theology in Context: Scholarship and Society" funded by Federal Ministry of Education and Research.

The junior research group „Islamic Theology in Context: Scholarship and Society“ aims to expand the knowledge bases and reference points of Islamic theology to include various fields and concepts of (religious) practice of Muslims such as spatial, material, and corporal dimensions as well as the interrelation between doings, norms, and social structures. In two post-doc projects and two dissertation projects, the group is highlighting Muslims' food practices, interreligious family practices, artistic practices, ecological practices, and Ramadan-practices, respectively.

The BIT awards doctorates in Islamic theology with the titles of "Dr. theol." and "Dr. phil."



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THE BIT IN NUMBERS

183 STUDENTS IN THE 2021-22
WINTER SEMESTER

5 PROFESSORS

1 GUEST PROFESSOR

14 RESEARCH ASSOCIATES

29 MODULES OFFERED IN THE
SUMMER SEMESTER OF 2021



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