

Hindi and Urdu Program Course Descriptions

Hindi-Urdu is one of the largest spoken languages in the world and it is used as a lingua franca in the multilingual regions of South Asia. The Hindi-Urdu Program at MESAAS is one of the largest and leading programs in the country. The program offers Hindi courses at four levels, while Urdu is offered at the advanced level in Fall semester. In addition, it has developed accelerated courses in both Hindi and Urdu for students of South Asian background who already possess limited speaking and listening skills in either language.

The program is designed for students to achieve proficiency in speaking, listening, reading, and writing in Hindi and Urdu for personal, academic, and professional needs. The curriculum integrates Standards for Foreign Language Learning and proficiency guidelines by ACTFL.

Students wishing to study above the introductory level must take a placement test before registration. Those seeking to waive a language requirement must take a proficiency test. The placement test is usually given during the week before classes begin.

Elementary Level: MDES UN1610 (Fall) and UN1611 (spring)

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This is a first-year (fall and spring semesters) course. In the fall semester, students begin with an introduction to the Devanagari script. The course covers foundational grammatical constructions, emphasizes vocabulary enrichment, and develops students' knowledge of Hindi through exposure to a variety of cultural topics.

After completing the course, students will be able to:

- Provide basic information in Hindi about themselves, family, interests, likes, dislikes, and daily activities.
- Understand and participate in simple conversations on everyday topics (e.g., weather, meeting people, school, shopping).
- Read edited texts on familiar topics, understand the main ideas, and pick out important information from authentic texts (for example, menus, signs, timetables, etc.).
- Fill in forms requesting information, write letters, notes, postcards, or messages providing simple information.
- Use and understand a range of essential vocabulary related to everyday life.

- Pronounce Hindi well enough and produce it with sufficient grammatical accuracy to be comprehensible to a Hindi speaker accustomed to conversing with non-native speakers. This prepares students for the Intermediate Hindi Course.

To achieve these goals, students are introduced to a variety of materials, including literature, newspapers, folk tales, jokes, magazine articles, films, songs, commercials, and other kinds of audiovisual materials. These texts relate to language functions in daily personal and social life situations.

2. Intermediate Level: MDES UN1612 (Fall) and UN1613 (Spring)

This is a second-year (fall and spring semesters) course. Students practice reading and writing in Devanagari and continue to improve their proficiency in Hindi to:

- Successfully handle most uncomplicated communicative tasks and social situations.
- Initiate, sustain, and close a general conversation.
- Write letters and short compositions and read consistently, fully understanding simple connected texts dealing with personal and social needs.
- Get the main ideas and information from texts, including description and narration.

To achieve these goals, students are introduced to a variety of materials, including literature, newspapers, folk tales, jokes, magazine articles, films, songs, commercials, and other kinds of audiovisual materials. These texts relate to language functions in daily personal and social life situations.

3. Advanced Level

i. Advanced Hindi: MDES I GU4624 (Fall) and MDES II GU4625 (Spring)

The third-year Hindi courses are Advanced Hindi I and II, respectively, in the fall and spring semesters. Students continue to practice reading and writing in Devanagari and build upon their existing skills in Hindi.

The third-year Hindi courses, Advanced Hindi I and Advanced Hindi II, aim to build upon students' existing skills in listening, speaking, reading, writing, and cultural understanding. Students will engage with various authentic materials, including stories, plays, newspapers, magazines, videos, and film clips. They will be expected to expand

their vocabulary, enhance their grammatical accuracy, and develop cultural appropriateness through active participation in classroom activities and immersion in the Hindi-speaking community outside of class.

The objective of the course is to promote meaningful interaction with literary texts and strengthen students' language skills, enabling them to understand and describe situations and people in diverse academic contexts using modern Hindi. Writing in the target language will be emphasized throughout the semester to help students effectively use their varied vocabulary and grammatical structures.

ii. Advanced Urdu (Fall) (Middle East GU4640)

This is a one-semester advanced Urdu language course offered in the fall semester. Enrollment requires two years of prior study in Urdu, completion of *Urdu for Heritage Speakers I & II* at Columbia University, or approval from the professor.

The course aims to enhance students' linguistic skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—while enhancing both literary and cultural understanding of Urdu. It offers in-depth exposure to some of the finest works of classical and modern Urdu prose, including authors such as Mir Amman, Premchand, Ghalib's letters, Sir Syed, Nazir Ahmad, Saadat Hasan Manto, Ismat Chughtai, Qurratul Ain Hyder, Patras Bukhari, and Mushtaq Ahmed Yousufi. Students will also engage with newspapers, texts, and video materials to discuss politics and contemporary social and political issues related to South Asia, with a particular focus on India and Pakistan.

Special emphasis is placed on building high-register vocabulary. Grammar points are explained as needed to develop an accurate and nuanced understanding of the language. Written assignments will be completed in Urdu.

By the end of the course, students will:

- Be able to read and appreciate Urdu classics and critical academic texts across various genres, including old tales, short stories, essays, history, satire, criticism, and discussions of politics and current issues.
- Acquire effective speaking skills for active interaction in Urdu-speaking communities and advanced academic discussions.
- Gain a deeper understanding of South Asian society and culture.

4. Hindi for Heritage Speakers: MDES UN1608 (Fall) and UN1609 (Spring)

This is a fast-paced course that compresses two years of Hindi into one year. It is for students of South Asian background who already possess limited speaking and listening skills in Hindi or Urdu. Non-heritage students who have some exposure to Hindi or Urdu and South Asian cultures may also take this course.

It begins with an introduction to the Devanagari Script, which enables students to acquire basic reading and writing skills. They then build on their listening and speaking skills. To achieve these goals, students are introduced to a variety of materials, including literature, newspapers, folk tales, jokes, magazine articles, films, songs, commercials, and other kinds of audiovisual materials. These texts are related to language functions in daily personal and social life situations.

It focuses on vocabulary enrichment by exposing students to a variety of cultural topics and developing knowledge of basic Hindi grammar. By the end of the semester, students will develop productive skills in reading, writing, and speaking and will be able to:

- speak about themselves and their environment, and initiate conversations on topics of general interest.
- Understand most of the basic sentence structures of Hindi in formal and informal registers.
- Write correspondence related to daily life, letters, short essays, and compositions on various topics.
- Learn some basic vocabulary related to aspects of Indian life, such as family life, social traditions, and education.
- Initiate and sustain conversations on a range of topics related to different aspects of Indian culture, social, and family life.

On the first day of classes, there will be an interview/placement test to establish the proficiency level. Please come directly to class. If accepted, the department will register you internally.

5. Urdu for Heritage Speakers: MDES UN1614 (Fall) and UN1615 (Spring)

This intensive, fast-paced course condenses two years of Urdu instruction into one year. It is tailored for students of South Asian heritage who possess basic speaking and listening skills in Urdu or Hindi. Non-heritage students with prior exposure to Urdu or Hindi, as well as South Asian cultures, are also encouraged to enroll.

An interview will be conducted on the first day of class to assess speaking and listening comprehension proficiency levels.

The course begins with an introduction to the Urdu script, enabling students to develop essential reading and writing skills. It then enhances listening and speaking abilities using a diverse range of materials, including literature, newspapers, folk tales, jokes, magazine articles, films, songs, commercials, and other audio-visual resources. These materials are thoughtfully selected to support language development in everyday personal and social contexts.

The curriculum places a strong emphasis on vocabulary expansion, cultural understanding, and a foundational grasp of Urdu grammar. By the end of the first semester, students will have developed practical skills in reading, writing, and speaking. Specifically, they will be able to:

- Speak about themselves, their surroundings, and engage in conversations on general topics.
- Understand and use basic sentence structures in both formal and informal Urdu.
- Write letters, short essays, and compositions on a variety of everyday topics.
- Acquire vocabulary related to key aspects of South Asian life, including family dynamics, social traditions, and education.
- Initiate and sustain conversations about South Asian culture, social life, and family traditions.

6. Readings in Urdu Literature (Spring) (GU4636)

This stand-alone course, offered in the spring semester, is open to students who have completed *Urdu for Heritage Speakers* or *Advanced Urdu*, or who have obtained the instructor's permission.

The course is designed to cultivate an appreciation for various genres of Urdu poetry, with a particular focus on *ghazals* and *nazms*. It examines major poets in chronological order, starting with Vali Dakni (late 17th and early 18th century) and progressing to modern poets such as Parveen Shakir, Kishwar Naheed, and Jaun Elia. Along the way, students explore the works of Khwaja Mir Dard and Mir Taqi Mir (18th century), Mirza Ghalib (19th century), and Muhammad Iqbal and Faiz Ahmed Faiz (20th century).

While this is not primarily a language skill development course, all classes and discussions are conducted in Urdu. A strong emphasis is placed on students learning and using Urdu terminology to critically analyze and appreciate poetry. Assignments, which involve analyzing Urdu verses and exploring their multiple interpretations, are submitted in English. Students are also required to write their midterm and final papers in English.