NEAR EASTERN LANGUAGES AND CIVILIZATIONS

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M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D.

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FIELDS OF STUDY
Fields include Arabic and Islamic studies (also with interdisciplinary minor), Graeco-Arabic studies, Assyriology, and Egyptology.

SPECIAL ADMISSIONS REQUIREMENTS
Applicants should state their specific field of study and intended specialization. Evidence of a reading knowledge of both French and German is required of all Ph.D. students. Proficiency in one of these languages is normally prerequisite for admission, and deficiency in the second language must be rectified before admission to a second year of study. Proficiency will be certified by passing a departmental examination upon registration at Yale. Ph.D. students admitted with only one of the two required languages or who fail the departmental examination are expected to enroll in an appropriate full-year course given by the French or German department at Yale. Completion of such a course with a grade of A or B will be accepted as fulfilling the proficiency requirement in either language; exceptions, for instance, for native speakers of French or German, may be made by the department upon recommendation of the director of graduate studies (DGS). For students in the M.A. program, evidence of a reading knowledge of either French or German is sufficient.

SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS FOR THE PH.D. DEGREE

Course Work
The department normally requires three full years of course work, four year courses or eight term courses per year being considered a full load. This may be reduced to two years in cases of exceptional background in Near Eastern languages. Normal progress in course work is considered to be consistent achievement of grades of High Pass or better, and at least four term courses or two year courses with Honors per year.

Of the twenty-four required courses for graduate study, at least eighteen should be taken within the department, usually within the student’s primary field of study. Courses taken outside of the department should be clearly related to the student’s primary field or constitute a coherent second field. For students who take no courses outside of the department, minimum competence in a second field within NELC is required, defined as follows: at least two terms of a Near Eastern language to be evaluated either by examination or a course grade of High Pass or better, or at least two terms of nonlanguage courses outside the area of specialization.

Advanced standing In rare cases, upon presenting evidence of successful completion of graduate courses at other universities or at Yale prior to their matriculation in the Ph.D. program, students with significant prior knowledge in their primary fields of study may apply for a waiver of up to eight courses toward the twenty-four required for candidacy. The faculty adviser and the DGS will normally present such applications to the faculty of the department, with a recommendation, no later than the end of the second year.

Interdisciplinary minor In Arabic-Islamic Studies, up to eight courses taken in one outside department and inclusion of that department’s subject in the comprehensive exams constitute an interdisciplinary track.

Committees
While doing course work, students are mentored by a faculty adviser from their field and by the DGS. Students writing dissertations may, if they so wish, be mentored by a committee headed by a primary adviser from NELC (not necessarily the faculty adviser from the course work years) and staffed with one, two, or more additional members, from either inside or outside the department, depending on the student’s specific needs. Committees are to be approved by the DGS. Interested students are encouraged to seek out suitable and willing faculty to serve on their advisory committees.
Special Language and Course Requirements

Course work should be planned to meet two departmental general standards: core languages for the primary fields of study, and minimum competence in a secondary field. The core languages in each of the major fields of study are as follows: Arabic and Islamic Studies: Arabic, Persian (Farsi) or Syriac or Greek; Assyriology: Sumerian and Akkadian; Egyptology: Egyptian and at least four terms of Demotic or Coptic. Minimum competence in a secondary field of study is defined as follows: at least two terms of a Near Eastern language to be evaluated either by examination or with a course grade of High Pass or better, or at least two terms of nonlanguage courses outside the area of specialization. A minimum grade of High Pass in these courses will be considered successful fulfillment of this requirement.

In Arabic and Islamic Studies, the minimum competence can be extended to an interdisciplinary course of study in a minor field. Minors may include six to eight term courses in the following departments and programs: Anthropology, Classics, Comparative Literature, French, German, History, History of Science and Medicine, Italian, Judaic Studies, Linguistics, Medieval Studies, Philosophy, Political Science, Religious Studies, Sociology, Spanish and Portuguese, or others, by permission of the DGS. Students in all programs of the department will be expected to declare their choice of a secondary language or area, or a minor field, by their third term of study.

Training in Teaching

NELC students normally acquire four terms of teaching experience, between their second and fourth years in residence. Once faculty have determined the courses that they plan to teach in the upcoming academic year, they will inform the DGS of courses that may require Teaching Fellows. The DGS will compile a list of these courses and circulate it among NELC graduate students who have completed the first year of study. Students may then inform the DGS of those courses for which they would prefer to serve as Teaching Fellows. The faculty members in charge, in consultation with the DGS, will subsequently choose the Teaching Fellows for their courses.

Examinations and the Dissertation

The comprehensive examination is normally taken at the end of the third year of study or no later than the beginning of the fourth year of study. When advanced standing has been granted, the comprehensive examination could be taken at the end of the second year. Comprehensive examinations normally include three written and one oral examination including language, literature, history, and other topics to be determined by the DGS in consultation with the student and the relevant faculty. Comprehensive examinations may be based in part on reading lists of primary core texts and secondary literature compiled well in advance by the student and the relevant faculty. Primary texts and secondary literature studied by the students during their years of course work may also become topics of the examination. For language examinations, texts that the student has not seen may also be included. In the case of the program in Arabic and Islamic Studies with an interdisciplinary minor, the written portion will consist of two language examinations and one subject in the minor field, and the oral of two subjects in Arabic studies and one in the minor field. The written examinations will be set by the individual faculty members responsible for particular areas of study, but the oral portion will be conducted by the full staff of the department. The dissertation proposal is normally submitted one month following the completion of the qualifying examination.

In their final term of course work, students may, with the permission of the DGS and the instructor, enroll in a Directed Readings course related to the general field of the prospective dissertation topic. Course work should include preparation of a comprehensive, annotated bibliography for the prospective topic and exploration of some aspects of the topic in a research paper. Students availing themselves of this option should also present some of their work at the NELC Roundtable.

The dissertation prospectus may comprise up to thirty pages, excluding the bibliography. A two-page summary of the prospectus will normally be circulated among and voted upon by the faculty, though the full prospectus will be available for consideration. Successful completion of the comprehensive examination and submission of an acceptable prospectus will qualify the student for admission to candidacy for the Ph.D. degree. After completion of the dissertation, the candidate may receive a final examination concerned primarily with the defense of the thesis.

ARCHAIA GRADUATE QUALIFICATION

Students can participate in the Yale Program for the Study of Ancient and Premodern Cultures and Societies (Archaia) and receive a graduate qualification by fulfilling the necessary requirements. For further information, see Archaia, under Non-Degree-Granting Programs, Councils, and Research Institutes.

MASTER’S DEGREES

M.Phil. See Degree Requirements under Policies and Regulations.

Terminal Master’s Degree Program Applicants who do not enroll in the Ph.D. program may pursue a Master of Arts degree. Students enrolled in the M.A. program should complete a minimum of twelve term courses with at least two term grades of Honors and an average of High Pass in the remaining courses, and will be required to submit a master’s thesis no later than April 1 of the fourth term of study. No financial aid is available. Students enrolled in the Ph.D. program are also eligible for this degree by meeting the same requirements. Because of the thesis requirement, the Graduate School procedure of automatic petitions for the M.A. degree is not available to students in Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations.
COURSES