NEAR EASTERN LANGUAGES AND CIVILIZATIONS

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

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Senior Lector II Shiri Goren

Senior Lectors I Sarab al-Ani, Muhammad Aziz, Jonas Elbousty, Dina Roginsky, Farkhondeh Shayesteh
Lectors Elham Alkasimi, Ozgen Felek, Selim Tiryakiol, Orit Yeret

FIELDS OF STUDY
Fields include Arabic Humanities, Assyriology, the Classical Near East, and Egyptology.

SPECIAL ADMISSIONS REQUIREMENTS

Applicants should state their specific field of study and intended specialization and must submit scores from the General Test of the GRE. Evidence of reading knowledge of both French and German is required of all Ph.D. students. Proficiency in one of these languages is normally a prerequisite for admission and is demonstrated by passing a departmental examination upon registration at Yale. Proficiency in the second language must be achieved before admission to the second year of study. 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 course given by the French or German department at Yale (or the equivalent elsewhere, with the approval of the director of graduate studies [DGS]). 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 DGS. For students in the M.A. program, evidence of 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 yearlong courses or eight term courses per year are considered a full load. 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 yearlong 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 exceptional 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.

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 Humanities: Arabic and one other Near Eastern language, typically Hebrew, Persian, or Turkish. Assyriology: Sumerian and Akkadian. Classical Near East: Arabic and at least two of the following: Armenian, Aramaic (Babylonian or Syriac), Coptic, Greek, Hebrew, Middle Persian, New Persian, or Sanskrit. 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 Humanities, 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 such departments and programs as Comparative Literature, French, History, History of Science and Medicine, Italian, Judaic Studies, Linguistics, Medieval Studies, Philosophy, Religious Studies, Spanish and Portuguese, or others as applicable.

Students in all four fields 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. Teaching Fellow assignments will be made by the DGS in consultation with the relevant faculty and will, whenever possible, take student preferences into account.

Examinations and the Dissertation

The qualifying 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. For students who enter with advanced standing, the qualifying examination could be taken at the end of the second year.

Qualifying 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. Qualifying examinations may be based in part on reading lists of primary core texts and secondary literature compiled in advance by the student and the relevant faculty. Primary texts and secondary literature from course work may also be topics of the examination. For language examinations, unseen texts may also be included. In the case of the program in Arabic Humanities, for students electing to do a minor, the written portion will consist of two language examinations and one subject in the minor field, and the oral will consist of two subjects in Arabic studies and one in the minor field. Written examinations are set by the individual faculty members responsible for particular areas of study, but the oral portion may be conducted by the full staff of the department. The dissertation proposal is normally submitted one month after completing the qualifying examination.

In their final term of course work, students may, with the permission of the DGS and the relevant faculty, 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 selected aspects of the topic in a research paper. Students availing themselves of this option may 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. Automatic petition for the M.A. degree is not available to students in Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations.
COURSES

AKKD 501a or b, Elementary Akkadian II  Eckart Frahm
Introduction to the language of ancient Babylonia and its cuneiform writing system, with exercises in reading, translation, and composition.

AKKD 503a, Advanced Akkadian: Akkadian Literary Texts  Eckart Frahm

ARBC 500a, Elementary Modern Standard Arabic I  Muhammad Aziz
A two-term course for students who have no previous background in Arabic. Students learn the Arabic alphabet, basic vocabulary and expression, and basic grammatical structures and concepts, and concentrate on developing listening and speaking skills. The course aims at developing the following skills: reading to extract the gist of written Modern Standard Arabic texts; speaking with increased ease, good pronunciation, sound grammatical forms, and correct usage; writing to respond to simple daily life issues; forming and recognizing grammatically correct Modern Standard Arabic.

ARBC 501b, Elementary Modern Standard Arabic II  Staff
A two-term course for students who have no previous background in Arabic. Students learn the Arabic alphabet, basic vocabulary and expression, and basic grammatical structures and concepts, and concentrate on developing listening and speaking skills. The course aims at developing the following skills: reading to extract the gist of written Modern Standard Arabic texts; speaking with increased ease, good pronunciation, sound grammatical forms, and correct usage; writing to respond to simple daily life issues; forming and recognizing grammatically correct Modern Standard Arabic.

ARBC 502a, Intermediate Modern Standard Arabic I  Staff
A two-term course for students with previous background in Arabic. It is designed to improve proficiency in aural and written comprehension as well as in speaking and writing skills. The course aims to develop the following skills: reading to extract the gist as well as key details of written Modern Standard Arabic texts on a variety of academic, social, cultural, economic, and political topics; speaking with greater fluency and enhanced engagement in conversations on a variety of topics; mastering writing, easily forming and recognizing grammatically correct Arabic sentences. Prerequisite: ARBC 501 or successful completion of a placement test.

ARBC 503b, Intermediate Modern Standard Arabic II  Staff
A two-term course for students with previous background in Arabic. It is designed to improve proficiency in aural and written comprehension as well as in speaking and writing skills. The course aims to develop the following skills: reading to extract the gist as well as key details of written Modern Standard Arabic texts on a variety of academic, social, cultural, economic, and political topics; speaking with greater fluency and enhanced engagement in conversations on a variety of topics; mastering writing, easily forming and recognizing grammatically correct Arabic sentences. Prerequisite: ARBC 501 or successful completion of a placement test.

ARBC 504a, Advanced Modern Standard Arabic I  Sarab Al Ani
Focus on improving the listening, writing, and speaking skills of students who already have a substantial background in the study of modern standard Arabic. Prerequisite: ARBC 503 or permission of the instructor.

ARBC 505b, Advanced Modern Standard Arabic II  Sarab Al Ani
Focus on improving the listening, writing, and speaking skills of students who already have a substantial background in the study of modern standard Arabic. Prerequisite: ARBC 503 or permission of the instructor.

ARBC 509a, Intermediate Classical Arabic I  Shawkat Toorawa
Introduction to classical Arabic, with emphasis on analytical reading skills, grammar, and prose composition. Readings from the Qur’an, Islamic theology, and literature and history of the Middle East, as well as Jewish and Christian religious texts in Arabic.

ARBC 510b, Intermediate Classical Arabic II  Shawkat Toorawa
Introduction to classical Arabic, with emphasis on analytical reading skills, grammar, and prose composition. Readings from the Qur’an, Islamic theology, and literature and history of the Middle East, as well as Jewish and Christian religious texts in Arabic.

ARBC 513a, Modern Arabic Political Thought  Sarab Al Ani
An advanced course in Arabic language. The main objective is to offer a comprehensive introduction to selected original writings of some of the most influential leaders, politicians, and scholars who have shaped contemporary intellectual trends in political theory/philosophy in the Arab world. Conducted in Arabic.

ARBC 526a / NELC 558a, Creative Writing in Arabic  Jonas Elbousty
This course combines both analysis and production of literary texts. Students study modern Arabic literary texts as a vehicle for generating their own creative prose and to engage with prose, personal essay, and other literary genres, attending particularly to how authors evoke experience through character, setting, dialog, etc. The class looks to popular fiction in Arabic and focuses upon the writer’s craft to create vivid and engaging narratives. This analysis provides inspiration for students writing their own unique creative pieces and encourages them to polish their ability to express themselves in Arabic. Prerequisite: ARBC 503.

ARBC 560a or b, Graduate Arabic Seminar: Medieval Prose  Staff
Study and interpretation of classical Arabic texts for advanced students. The focus this year is medieval prose.
EGYP 500a, Introduction to Classical Hieroglyphic Egyptian I  Gaelle Chantrain
A two-term introduction to the language of ancient pharaonic Egypt (Middle Egyptian) and its hieroglyphic writing system, with short historical, literary, and religious texts. Grammatical analysis with exercises in reading, translation, and composition.

EGYP 501b, Introduction to Classical Hieroglyphic Egyptian II  Gaelle Chantrain
A two-term introduction to the language of ancient pharaonic Egypt (Middle Egyptian) and its hieroglyphic writing system, with short historical, literary, and religious texts. Grammatical analysis with exercises in reading, translation, and composition.

EGYP 510a, Elementary Biblical Coptic I  Stephen Davis
The native Egyptian language in the Roman and Byzantine periods. Thorough grounding in grammar and vocabulary of the Sahidic dialect as a basis for reading biblical, monastic, and Gnostic texts. Credit only on completion of EGYP 520.

EGYP 510b, Elementary Biblical Coptic II  Stephen Davis
Continuation of EGYP 510. Prerequisite: EGYP 510.

EGYP 528a / ANTH 528a / ARCG 528a, Magic and Ritual in Ancient Egypt  John Darnell
Introduction to ancient Egyptian magic and rituals with an overview of the use of magic and discussion of the different rituals and festivals attested in ancient Egypt.

EGYP 533a, Intermediate Egyptian I: Literary Texts  John Darnell
Close reading of Middle Egyptian literary texts; introduction to the hieratic (cursive) Egyptian script. Readings include the Middle Kingdom stories of “Sinuhe” and the “Eloquent Peasant” and excerpts from wisdom literature. Prerequisite: EGYP 501.

EGYP 579a, Directed Readings: Egyptology  John Darnell

HEBR 500a, Elementary Modern Hebrew I  Dina Roginsky
A two-term introduction to the language of contemporary Israel, both spoken and written. Fundamentals of grammar; extensive practice in speaking, reading, writing, and comprehension under the guidance of a native speaker. No previous knowledge required. Successful completion of the fall term required to enroll in the spring term.

HEBR 501b, Elementary Modern Hebrew II  Orit Yeret
A two-term introduction to the language of contemporary Israel, both spoken and written. Fundamentals of grammar; extensive practice in speaking, reading, writing, and comprehension under the guidance of a native speaker. No previous knowledge required. Successful completion of the fall term required to enroll in the spring term.

HEBR 502a, Intermediate Modern Hebrew I  Shiri Goren
A two-term review and continuation of grammatical study leading to a deeper comprehension of style and usage. Focus on selected readings, writing, comprehension, and speaking skills. Prerequisite: HEBR 501 or equivalent.

HEBR 503b, Intermediate Modern Hebrew II  Orit Yeret
A two-term review and continuation of grammatical study leading to a deeper comprehension of style and usage. Focus on selected readings, writing, comprehension, and speaking skills. Prerequisite: HEBR 502 or equivalent.

HEBR 504a, Advanced Modern Hebrew: Daily Life in Israel  Orit Yeret
An examination of major controversies in Israeli society. Readings include newspaper editorials and academic articles as well as documentary and historical material. Advanced grammatical structures are introduced and practiced.

HEBR 505b, Contemporary Israeli Society in Film  Shiri Goren
Examination of major themes in Israeli society through film, with emphasis on language study. Topics include migration, gender and sexuality, Jewish/Israeli identity, and private and collective memory. Readings in Hebrew and English provide a sociohistorical background and basis for class discussion. Conducted in Hebrew. Prerequisite: HEBR 502, placement test, or permission of the instructor.

HEBR 513a, Intermediate Biblical Hebrew I  Staff
A two-term review and continuation of instruction in grammar and vocabulary, supplemented by readings from the Bible. Prerequisite: HEBR 510 or equivalent.

HEBR 514b, Intermediate Biblical Hebrew II  Staff
Continuation of HEBR 513.

HEBR 519a, Israel in Ideology and Practice  Dina Roginsky
An advanced Hebrew class that focuses on changing ideology and politics in Israel. Topics include right- and left-wing political discourse, elections, state-religion dynamics, the Jewish-Arab divide, and demographic changes. Materials include newspapers, publications, online resources, speeches of different political and religious groups, and contemporary and archival footage. Also, this course draws comparisons to American political and ideological discourse. Prerequisite: HEBR 502 or equivalent.
HEBR 524a / JDST 671a, Creative Writing in Hebrew  Orit Yeret
An advanced language course with focus on creative writing and self-expression. Students develop knowledge of modern Hebrew, while elevating writing skills based on special interests, and in various genres, including short prose, poetry, dramatic writing, and journalism. Students engage with diverse authentic materials, with emphasis on Israeli literature, culture, and society.

HEBR 636b / JDST 692b, From Biblical to Modern Hebrew  Dina Roginsky
This course aims to support students who have reading knowledge of Biblical Hebrew but cannot read or converse in Modern Hebrew. The course concentrates on reading and aims at enabling students to use Modern Hebrew for research purposes. The texts chosen are tailored to students’ particular areas of interest. Prerequisite: two years of Biblical or Modern Hebrew studies, or permission of the instructor. Conducted in English.

MESCO 506a, Selected Mesopotamian Texts: Bilingual Texts  Eckart Frahm
MESCO 512a, Women in Assyria and Babylonia  Eckart Frahm
Study and interpretation of historical inscriptions, letters, legal treatises, and religious and literary texts related to the life of Assyrian and Babylonian women. Prerequisite: knowledge of Akkadian.

MESCO 544a, Mesopotamian Selected Texts: Sumerian  Eckart Frahm
Study and interpretation of omen treatises, medical texts, and commentaries from Babylonia and Assyria. Prerequisite: knowledge of Akkadian.

NELC 509a, The Age of Akhenaton  John Darnell
Study of the period of the Egyptian pharaoh Akhenaton (reigned 1353–1336 BCE), often termed the Amarna Revolution, from historical, literary, religious, artistic, and archaeological perspectives. Consideration of the wider Egyptian, ancient Near Eastern, African, and Mediterranean contexts. Examination of the international diplomacy, solar theology, and artistic developments of the period. Reading of primary source material in translation.

NELC 515a, The Bible in Its Ancient Near Eastern Setting (Seminar)  Eckart Frahm
History of the Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian empires of the first millennium B.C.E., and how their rise and fall influenced the politics, religion, and literary traditions of biblical Israel. Topics include the role of prophecy and (divine) law, political and religious justifications of violence, the birth of monotheism, and the historical reliability of the Hebrew Bible.

NELC 58a / ARBC 526a, Creative Writing in Arabic  Jonas Elbousty
This course combines both analysis and production of literary texts. Students study modern Arabic literary texts as a vehicle for generating their own creative prose and to engage with prose, personal essay, and other literary genres, attending particularly to how authors evoke experience through character, setting, dialogue, etc. The class looks to popular fiction in Arabic and focuses upon the writer's craft to create vivid and engaging narratives. This analysis provides inspiration for students writing their own unique creative pieces and encourages them to polish their ability to express themselves in Arabic. Prerequisite: ARBC 503.

NELC 601a, The Arabian Nights, Then and Now  Shawkat Toorawa and Ayesha Ramachandran
The medieval Arabic cycle of stories known as The Arabian Nights or The Thousand and One Nights is a classic of world literature. In the first part of this course, we read the Nights and discuss both its dominant themes — inter alia deceit, love, sex, revenge, violence, and justice — and its storytelling contexts and antecedents, such as the Middle Persian Tales of Bidpai. In the second part, we explore the ways in which these themes and tales have been adapted and appropriated by later authors, including Neil Gaiman, Mary Zimmerman, and G. Willow Wilson in English, Jorge Luis Borges in Spanish, and Naguib Mahfouz in Arabic. We also study the films of Korda, Pasolini, and Barron.

NELC 605b, Global Environmental History  Harvey Weiss
The dynamic relationship between environmental and social forces from the Pleistocene glaciations to the Anthropocene present: Pleistocene extinctions; transitions from hunting to gathering to agriculture; Old World origins of cities, states, and civilization; adaptations and collapses of Old and New World civilizations in the face of climate disasters; the destruction and reconstruction of the New World by the Old. In the foreground of each analysis are the issues of adaptation, resilience, and sustainability: what forced long-term societal changes? Also F&ES 873.

NELC 636b / CLSS 845b / HSAR 641b / MDVL 520b / RLST 633b, Images of Cult and Devotion in the Premodern World  Jacqueline Jung
This seminar explores the use of shaped materials, mostly figural but sometimes aniconic, in the formal rituals and private devotional practices of premodern people. Various religious traditions are represented, including ancient Near Eastern and Greek polytheism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, and early and medieval Christianity. We look at both the distinctive features of image use in these cultures and the links among them, including the connection of sacred images to the dead, the numinous presence of relics, the importance of concealment and revelation, the instrumental power of votive objects, the role of images in sacrificial rites, and problems of idolatry and iconoclasm.

NELC 704a / JDST 725a / RLST 757a, The Dead Sea Scrolls and the History of Ancient Judaism: The Damascus Document  Steven Fraade
Study of the Damascus Document, one of the most important of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Attention to the document's place in the history of biblical interpretation and ancient Jewish law; the nature and rhetorical function of its textual practices, both narrative and legal; and its relation to the central sectarian writings of the Qumran community. Prerequisite: reading proficiency in ancient Hebrew. EMWAR area of
concentration designations: STHJ, ScrInterp. The course also provides important historical context for students concentrating in Rabbinic Judaism.

PERS 500a, Elementary Persian I  Farkhondeh Shayesteh
A two-term introduction to modern Persian with emphasis on all four language skills: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. The objective is to allow students to develop the foundational knowledge necessary for further language study. Designed for nonnative speakers.

PERS 501b, Elementary Persian II  Farkhondeh Shayesteh
A two-term introduction to modern Persian with emphasis on all four language skills: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. The objective is to allow students to develop the foundational knowledge necessary for further language study. Designed for nonnative speakers.

PERS 502a, Intermediate Persian I  Farkhondeh Shayesteh
This two-term course is a continuation of PERS 501 with emphasis on expanding vocabulary and understanding of more complex grammatical forms and syntax. Designed for nonnative speakers. Prerequisite: PERS 501 or permission of the instructor.

PERS 503b, Intermediate Persian II  Farkhondeh Shayesteh
This two-term course is a continuation of PERS 501 with emphasis on expanding vocabulary and understanding of more complex grammatical forms and syntax. Designed for nonnative speakers. Prerequisite: PERS 501 or permission of the instructor.

PERS 505b / JDST 670b, Middle Persian  Kevin Van Bladel
This one-term course covers the grammar of Middle Persian, focusing on royal and private inscriptions and the Zoroastrian priestly book tradition. Permission of the instructor required.

PERS 561a, Persian Culture and Media  Farkhondeh Shayesteh
Advanced study of Persian grammar, vocabulary, and culture through the use of authentic Persian media. Examination of daily media reports on cultural, political, historical, and sporting events in Iran, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, and other Persian-speaking regions. Designed for nonnative speakers. Prerequisite: PERS 140 or permission of instructor.

SMTC 523a / RLST 826a, Intermediate Syriac I  Staff
This two-term course is designed to enhance students’ knowledge of the Syriac language by reading a selection of texts, sampling the major genres of classical Syriac literature. By the end of the year, students are familiar with non-vocalized texts and are capable of confronting specific grammatical or lexical problems. Prerequisite: SMTC 521 or knowledge of Syriac.

SMTC 545a / RLST 835a, Northwest Semitic Inscriptions: Aramaic  Jimmy Daccache
This two-term course is designed to familiarize students with Aramaic epigraphy from the first millennium BCE. The Aramaic grammar is illustrated through early monumental inscriptions on stones from Anatolia and the abundant papyri of the Persian period from Egypt.