NEAR EASTERN LANGUAGES AND CIVILIZATIONS (NELC)

* NELC 005a / HUMS 005a, The Ancient Egyptian Empire of the New Kingdom  Nadine Moeller
For most of the duration of the New Kingdom (1550-1069 BCE), the ancient Egyptians were able to establish a vast empire and became one of the key powers within the Near East. This course is an introduction to the history, archaeology and literary sources of one of the most dynamic periods of ancient Egyptian history. We investigate the development of Egyptian foreign policies and military expansion, which affected parts of the Near East and Nubia to the south. We also examine and discuss topics such as ideology, imperial identity, political struggle and motivation for conquest and control of wider regions surrounding the Egyptian state as well as the relationship to other powers and their perspective on Egyptian rulers, as, for example, described in the famous Amarna letters, the world’s earliest diplomatic correspondence. Throughout the semester, we consider the different sources that have survived in the archaeological and textual record for understanding Egypt’s first empire within its ancient geopolitical context. All primary texts are read in translation.  

* NELC 026a / ARCG 031a / EVST 030a, Origins of Civilization: Egypt and Mesopotamia  Harvey Weiss
The origins of the earliest civilizations in Mesopotamia and Egypt along the Nile and Tigris-Euphrates Rivers explored with archaeological, historical and environmental data for the origins of agriculture, the classes and hierarchies that marked earliest cities, states and empires, the innovative monumental architecture, writing, imperial expansion, and new national ideologies. How and why these civilizational processes occurred with the momentous societal collapses at periods of abrupt climate change. Enrollment limited to first-year students. Preregistration required; see under First-Year Seminar Program.  

NELC 102b / HIST 38b / MMES 102b / SOCY 102b, Introduction to the Middle East  Jonathan Wyrtenz
Introduction to the history, politics, societies, and cultures of the Middle East. Topics and themes include geopolitics, environment, state formation, roles of Judaism/Christianity/Islam, empire&colonialism, nationalism, regional & global wars, Palestine-Israel conflict, US and other Great Power intervention.  

NELC 112b / AFST 112b / ARCG 222b / RLST 141b, Egyptian Religion through the Ages  John Darnell
Diachronic approach to topics in Egyptian religion. Religious architecture, evidence for protodynastic cults, foreigners in Egyptian religious celebrations, music and vocal expression in Egyptian religion, Re and Osiris, the Amarna interlude and the Ramesside solar religion, and the goddess of the eye of the sun. Readings in translation.  

NELC 115b, The Bible in Its Ancient Near Eastern Setting  Eckart Frahm
History of the Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian empires of the first millennium B.C.E.; 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 128a / HUMS 128a, From Gilgamesh to Persepolis: Introduction to Near Eastern Literatures  Kathryn Slanski
This lecture course is an introduction to Near Eastern civilization through its rich and diverse literary cultures. We read and discuss ancient works, such as the Epic of Gilgamesh, Genesis, and “The Song of Songs,” medieval works, such as A Thousand and One Nights, selections from the Qur’an, and Shah-name: The Book of Kings, and modern works of Israeli, Turkish, and Iranian novelists and Palestinian poets. Students complement classroom studies with visits to the Yale Babylonian Collection and the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, as well as with film screenings and guest speakers. Students also learn fundamentals of Near Eastern writing systems, and consider questions of tradition, transmission, and translation. All readings are in translation.  

* NELC 169a / MMES 179a / PERS 180a, Reading Persian Texts  Farkhondeh Shayesteh
Students are presented with opportunities to enhance their knowledge of Persian, with primary focus on reading skills. The course involves reading, analyzing, and in-class discussion of assigned materials in the target language. Authentic reading excerpts from history, art, philosophy, and literature, as well as art history materials from medieval to modern times are used. This course is taught in Persian. Prerequisite: L4 and instructor permission.  

NELC 201b / ENGL 191b / HUMS 206b / LITR 318b / MMES 215b, The Arabian Nights, Then and Now  Robyn Creswell
Exploration of Arabian Nights, a classic of world literature. Topics include antecedents, themes and later prose, and graphic and film adaptations.  

* NELC 237b / ARBC 171b / ARBC 527b / LITR 267b / MMES 177b / NELC 598b, Hunger in Eden: Mohamed Choukri’s Narratives  Jonas Elbousty
A survey of the work of Mohamed Choukri, one of the most prominent Moroccan, if not Arab, writers to have shaped the modern Arabic literary canon. His influence has been instrumental in forming a generation of writers and enthusiastic readers, who fervently cherish his narratives. Students dive deeply into Choukri’s narratives, analyzing them with an eye toward their cultural and political importance. The class looks to Choukri’s amazing life story to reveal the roots of his passion for writing and explores the culture of the time and places about which he writes. Through his narratives, students better understand the political environment within which they were composed and the importance of Choukri’s work to today’s reader regarding current debates over Arab identity. This class surveys the entirety of his work, contextualizing within the sphere of Arabic novelistic tradition. Prerequisite: ARBC 151, L4 or equivalent, or permission from the instructor.
* NELC 243a / ARCG 245a, Archaeology of Ancient Egypt: An Introduction  Gregory Marouard
This seminar is an introductory class that examines in detail the chronology and development of ancient Egyptian civilization, covering about 4000 years of institutional development and change, the focus of this course is on the long-term development of the ancient Egyptian state, its institutions, and its culture. The course introduces students to the history and culture of ancient Egypt from the rise of the central state to the early Christian period. General historical trends, the relationship of Egyptian history to other contemporary ancient cultures, and the legacy of Egypt to the “West” are also considered. At the end of the course, students have an understanding of the material culture and the historical development of ancient Egypt, and an appreciation for the relationship of the ancient sources to the construction of ancient Egyptian history.  HU

NELC 311a / CLCV 219a / HIST 311a, Egypt of the Pharaohs  Joseph Manning and Nadine Moeller
Egypt was among the first centralized territorial states in the world, and, because Egyptian history offers us 4000 years of institutional development and change, the focus of this course is on the long-term development of the ancient Egyptian state, its institutions, and its culture. The course introduces students to the history and culture of ancient Egypt from the rise of the central state to the early Christian period. General historical trends, the relationship of Egyptian history to other contemporary ancient cultures, and the legacy of Egypt to the “West” are also considered. At the end of the course, students have an understanding of the material culture and the historical development of ancient Egypt, and an appreciation for the relationship of the ancient sources to the construction of ancient Egyptian history.  HU

* NELC 390b / EVST 351b, The Anthropocene  Harvey Weiss
“The Anthropocene” is the recent and informal designation for the period during which human activity has transformed the Earth. The Anthropocene is now the subject of intense research and debate among environmental historians, archaeologists, botanists, and climate system modelers. The reasons for this are clear: we need to know the history of the Earth’s transformation(s) in order to understand present rates of atmospheric, climatic, environmental, demographic, land use, and biodiversity change. What were the magnitudes and rates of these changes, individually or synchronously, over the past 10,000 years? 4000 years? 100 years? Are these rates of change “normal,” unusual, benign, unimportant, or “dangerous?”  SO

NELC 402b / MMES 171b, The Islamic Near East from Muhammad to the Mongol Invasion  Kevin van Bladel
The shaping of society and polity from the rise of Islam to the Mongol conquest of Baghdad in 1258. The origins of Islamic society; conquests and social and political assimilation under the Umayyads and Abbasids; the changing nature of political legitimacy and sovereignty under the caliphate; provincial decentralization and new sources of social and religious power.  HU

* NELC 453a / ARBC 450a / LING 327a, History of the Arabic Language  Kevin van Bladel
This course covers the development of the Arabic language from the earliest epigraphic evidence through the formation of the Classical ‘Arabiyya and further, to Middle Arabic and Neo-Arabic. Readings of textual specimens and survey of secondary literature. Prerequisite: ARBC 140 and permission of instructor.  HU

* NELC 473a / ANTH 473a / ARCG 473a / EVST 473a, Climate Change, Societal Collapse, and Resilience  Harvey Weiss
The coincidence of societal collapses throughout history with decadal and century-scale abrupt climate change events. Challenges to anthropological and historical paradigms of cultural adaptation and resilience. Examination of archaeological and historical records and high-resolution sets of paleoclimate proxies.  HU, SO

* NELC 490a / MMES 490a / RLST 445a, Introduction to Arabic and Islamic Studies  Frank Griffel
Comprehensive survey of subjects treated in Arabic and Islamic studies, with representative readings from each. Methods and techniques of scholarship in the field; emphasis on acquiring familiarity with bibliographical and other research tools. Enrollment limited to senior majors in Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, except by permission of instructor.  HU

* NELC 492a and NELC 493b, The Senior Essay  Staff
Preparation of a research paper of at least thirty pages (sixty pages for a two-term essay) under the supervision of a departmental faculty member, in accordance with the following schedule: (1) by the end of the second week of classes of the fall term, students meet with advisers to discuss the topic, approach, sources, and bibliography of the essay. Note: students planning to write the essay in the second term (NELC 493) should also meet with their prospective advisers by this deadline; (2) by the end of the fourth week of classes a prospectus with outline, including an annotated bibliography of materials in one or more Near Eastern languages and of secondary sources, is signed by the adviser and submitted to the director of undergraduate studies. The prospectus should indicate the formal title, scope, and focus of the essay, as well as the proposed research method, including detailed indications of the nature and extent of materials in a Near Eastern language that will be used; (3) at the end of the tenth week of classes (end of February for yearlong essays),
a rough draft of the complete essay is submitted to the adviser; (4) two copies of the finished paper must be submitted to the director of undergraduate studies, Rm 314 HGS, by 4 p.m. on the last day of reading period. Failure to comply with the deadline will be penalized by a lower grade. Senior essays will be graded by departmental faculty unless, for exceptional reasons, different arrangements for an outside reader are made in advance with the director of undergraduate studies and the departmental adviser.