NEAR EASTERN LANGUAGES AND CIVILIZATIONS (NELC)

* NELC 128a / HUMS 128a, From Gilgamesh to Persepolis: Introduction to Near Eastern Literatures  Samuel Hodgkin
This 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-nama: 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. Permission from the instructor required.  WR, HU

* NELC 157b / JDST 306b / MMES 157b, Israeli Narratives  Shiri Goren
This course looks at contemporary representations of social, political, and domestic space in Israel through cultural production such as literature, visual work, and art. It focuses on close reading of major Israeli works in translation with attention to how their themes and forms relate to the Israeli condition. Reading and viewing include: Amos Oz’s major novel A Tale of Love and Darkness, Anne Frank: The Graphic Diary, Maya Arad’s novella “The Hebrew Teacher,” TV show Arab Labor and writing by Yehudah Amichai, Etgar Keret, and Sayed Kashua, among others. We discuss topics and theories of personal and collective identity formation, war and peace, ethnicity and race, migration, nationalism, and gender. No knowledge of Hebrew required.  WR, HU

* NELC 244a / ARCG 242a, Ancient Egyptian Materials and Techniques: Their Histories and Socio-Economic Implications  Gregory Marouard
This seminar investigates in detail ancient Egyptian materials, techniques, and industries through the scope of archaeology, history, and socioeconomical, textual as well as iconographic data. When possible ethnoarchaeological and experimental approaches of the antique chaîne-opératoire are discussed in order to illustrate skills and professions that have now completely disappeared. This class is organized according to various themes within a diachronical approach, from the 4th millennium BC to the Roman Period. Copper and precious metals, construction stones, hard stones and gems, glass and faience production, imported wood or ivory, we explore multiple categories of materials, where and how they were collected or exchanged, the way these products were transported, transformed, refined or assembled and the complex organization of the work involved and administration that was required in order to satisfy the tastes of Egyptian elites or their desires to worship their gods. Some other vernacular savoir-faire linked to the everyday life and the death is explored, through food production and mummification practices. The aim of this seminar is not only to give an overview of the history of techniques for this early civilization but, beyond how things were made, to acquire a more critical view of ancient Egyptian culture through the material culture
and as well the strong economic and sociologic implications linked to their objects and constructions—rather than the usual focus on its temples and tombs. HU

* NELC 324a / ARCG 000 / ARCG 354a / EVST 354a, The Ancient State: Genesis and Crisis from Mesopotamia to Mexico  Harvey Weiss

Ancient states were societies with surplus agricultural production, classes, specialization of labor, political hierarchies, monumental public architecture and, frequently, irrigation, cities, and writing. Pristine state societies, the earliest civilizations, arose independently from simple egalitarian hunting and gathering societies in six areas of the world. How and why these earliest states arose are among the great questions of post-Enlightenment social science. This course explains (1) why this is a problem, to this day, (2) the dynamic environmental forces that drove early state formation, and (3) the unresolved fundamental questions of ancient state genesis and crisis, –law-like regularities or a chance coincidence of heterogenous forces? Previously HIST 204J. HU, SO

* NELC 373a / 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  o Course cr