

NEAR EASTERN LANGUAGES AND CIVILIZATIONS (NELC)

* NELC 0040b, **Earliest Literature of the Ancient World** Benjamin Foster

Selections from ancient Near Eastern literature, such as myths and epics, stories, fables, letters, magic spells, and poetry, with emphasis on themes that resonate with a modern reader: memory, entertainment, success, love, heroism, violence, suffering, redemption, devotion, faith, sexuality, anxiety, humor, wonder, cynicism, and going to school. Enrollment limited to first-year students. HU

* NELC 0090a / HUMS 0245a, **Six Global Perspectives on Evil: Murder, Law, and True Crime in History** Staff

Harem conspiracies, kings' assassinations, self-defense killings, witch hunts, and serial murderers. The history of murder, violence, and criminal investigation is as old as humankind. Yet, crime is not always considered evil, nor is evil always associated with crime. In this course, we discuss how the way evil was perceived and crime was punished has changed throughout history. From mythical accounts of murders, to real records of trials of humans, animals, and even objects accused of homicide or witchcraft, we analyze how aspects of social status or gender played a role in shaping punishment across Eastern and Western civilizations. We compare codified-law civilizations to those in which custom, social pressure, and community ethics determined correct behavior. Four historical cold cases with accompanying evidence are presented for in-class debate, and... perhaps students may be able to help solve an old mystery! At the end of the semester, we recreate historical trials using the same crime, evidence, and participants, but following the law and procedures of each one of the historical settings covered in this course. Will the verdict and sentence be any different? Friday sessions alternate between writing workshops and field trips to Yale collections. Enrollment limited to first-year students. Students enroll concurrently with HUMS 0299, Six Global Perspectives Lab. WR, HU RP 1½ Course cr

* NELC 157b and NELC 1570b / JDST 3060b / MMES 1157b, **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 TR

* NELC 323b and NELC 3230b / CPLT 1960b / JDST 3812b / MMES 3312b, **Hebrew Poetry in Muslim Spain** Peter Cole

Introduction to the Golden Age of Hebrew poetry in Muslim Andalusia from the tenth century through the twelfth. Major figures of the period and the cultural and philosophical questions they confronted. The Judeo-Arabic social context in

which the poetry emerged; critical issues pertaining to the study and transmission of this literature. Readings from the works of several poets. Readings in translation. Additional readings in Hebrew available. HU

*** NELC 1040b / HSAR 3270b, Art and Visual Culture in Ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia** Kathryn Slanski

In this course we investigate and compare the stunning visual culture of both ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia. We look into the purpose and function of 'art' in these two ancient societies, the intended audiences and the stylistic development of many different kinds of art, from sculpture to two-dimensional representations. We are planning for visits to West Campus to look at actual objects from the Peabody collections, the Yale Babylonian Collection, and (Covid-19 restrictions permitting) we are planning a trip to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Additional aspects that are addressed in this course concern restoration and cultural heritage issues such as looting and repatriation of artifacts to their country of origin. HU

NELC 1200b / ANTH 1200b / HUMS 1210b, Unequal: Dynamics of Power and Social Hierarchy in Ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia Gojko Barjamovic

The course "Unequal" examines the historical roots of intolerance, slavery, and imperialism, emphasizing how our perceptions of history shape contemporary beliefs and policies. It challenges the notion that inequality is an inevitable outcome of societal complexity, positing that historical narratives often frame progress and freedom while obscuring themes of inequality. By investigating early human history, the course aims to unpack the concepts of identity, possession, value, freedom, and power, exploring their impact on modern society. Rather than focusing on specific literature or chronological period, "Unequal" centers around critical questions about human culture. The course employs innovative experimental lab assignments, allowing students to engage with the past creatively, such as cooking ancient recipes, brewing beer, and creating virtual museum exhibits. This interdisciplinary approach encourages a deeper understanding of the historical context that informs present-day issues, inviting students to rethink common narratives and assumptions about equality and progress. Ultimately, the course aims to foster critical thinking about the interplay between history and contemporary society. HU, SO o Course cr

NELC 1210a / HUMS 1400a, The Hero in the Ancient Near East Kathryn Slanski

This course is an introduction to of ancient Near Eastern civilization through the prism of its heroes, figures at the intersection of literature, religion, history, and art. While our principle focus is on heroes from ancient Mesopotamia and the Hebrew Bible, students will also have opportunities to compare contemporary heroes to the ANE hero, and to consider if the ANE hero has a modern legacy. WR, HU o Course cr

NELC 1250b, Ancient Mesopotamia: The First Half of History Eckart Frahm

An introduction to the history and culture of the peoples and societies of ancient Iraq, from 3500 BCE to 75 CE, with a focus on Sumer, Babylonia, and Assyria. Students explore the origins and development of core features of Mesopotamian civilization, many still with us, from writing, literature, law, science, and organized religion to urbanism, long-distance trade, and empire. Readings (in translation) include the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, the *Babylonian Epic of Creation*, liver omens from King Ashurbanipal's famous library, cuneiform letters and legal documents, as well as the world's earliest cookbooks, housed in the Yale Babylonian Collection. HU o Course cr

*** NELC 1280a / CPLT 2000a / HUMS 1280a, From Gilgamesh to Persepolis:**

Introduction to Near Eastern Literatures Kathryn Slanski

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 1290b / RLST 2510b, Magic and Ritual in Ancient Egypt and the Near East**

John Darnell

Introduction to ancient Egyptian magic and rituals with an overview on the use of magic and discussion of the different rituals and festivals attested in Ancient Egypt and the Near East. HU

*** NELC 1300b / CLCV 1381b / HUMS 434b, Mesopotamia's Literary Legacy** Kathryn

Slanski

This seminar explores myth, epic, love poetry, and wisdom literature from the ancient Near East, ca. 3000–323 BCE, within its own cultural context and in dialogue with literature from ancient Greece and the Hebrew Bible, conduits by which the literary legacy of the ancient Near East has left its mark on the Western tradition. HU

NELC 1330a, Beginnings of Business: A History of Early Trade Gojko Barjamovic

When did trade begin? When did business go global? How has the organization of commerce changed through time? What are our fundamental financial instruments and how and in what order where they developed? Are there fundamental rules behind the way in which humans conduct business? What roles have states and institutions historically played in facilitating or restricting trade? What sources and approaches are available to study trade in pre-modern times? Can business innovations from the past help us think about business in the present? To explore all these questions, this class draws upon data and case-studies drawn broadly from the ancient world but with focus on evidence from ancient Mesopotamia. With the benefit of a giant canvas of history we paint a detailed picture of how business developed through time. We look at examples where business was strictly regulated by state-controlled institutions as well as examples entrepreneurs would have to rely on informal enforcement mechanisms, such as kin-relationships and reputation in repeated interactions. We dive into the effects of shock on individuals and systems – from production shortages to pandemics. And we ask what happens when systems collapse, or value becomes immeasurable (as people have claimed for the 2008 crash). We study family-controlled business groups as an alternative to integrated and professionally managed corporations. And we observe how entrepreneurs adapted to face the financial challenges of states and dawning globalization. This course immerses students in the history of trade and draws on guests from widely different fields and disciplines to showcase the variety of approaches with which scholars address questions of business history. HU, SO

*** NELC 1690a / CLCV 2391a, Visible Language: The Origins of Writing in Mesopotamia and Ancient Egypt** Klaus Wagensohner

Exploration of writing in the ancient Near East and the profound effects this new method of communication had on human society. Focus on Egypt and Mesopotamia, where advanced writing systems first developed and were used for millennia, with consideration of Chinese, Mayan, and Indus Valley writing systems as well. Previously NELC 168. HU

NELC 2430a / ARCG 2345a, Archaeology of Ancient Egypt - The Age of the Pyramids Gregory Marouard

This lecture course introduces the archaeology of ancient Egypt, beginning with an overview of the environment, climate, and history of the discipline, as well as the new archaeological methods used in contemporary fieldwork in Egypt. The course then explores ancient Egypt's origins, starting with the Predynastic and Early Dynastic Periods (5300-2800 BCE) and continuing chronologically to the great pyramids of the Old Kingdom (2800-2055 BCE) and the Middle Kingdom (2055-1700 BCE). It covers the historical framework, the evolution of ancient Egyptian art and architecture, and material culture, and includes specific case studies of important archaeological sites and discoveries. This course is the first of two introductory lecture courses. However, it is not necessary to take both parts, and the order in which you take them does not matter. Discussion sections are included. HU o Course cr

*** NELC 2440b / ARCG 2242b, 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 *chaine-operatoire* 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 2620a / RLST 2120a, Death, Memorial, and Immortality in the Hebrew Bible and its World** Jacqueline Vayntrub

What does the Hebrew Bible have to say about human mortality, divine immortality, and the afterlife? Are these ideas more consistent with later Jewish and Christian notions of death and the afterlife, or are they closer to the views of their ancient Near Eastern neighbors? In this course we examine the development of biblical and

ancient Near Eastern concepts of death and life-after-death. We look at a variety of different types of texts that touch upon these themes, such as narrative, poetry, ritual, and law in biblical and other ancient Near Eastern texts. Topics include the depiction of human mortality and divine immortality in literature, dying as a social process, the development of the notion of an afterlife and the concept of the 'soul', and communication with the dead, how these texts have been received in the West, and how they have shaped inherited ideas of the immortality of the soul, human suffering, and divine justice. The aim of the course is to develop an awareness of the ancient historical and cultural context in which these texts were authored, and to deepen our understanding of modern views of mortality. HU

*** NELC 3210b / ANTH 4292b / ARCG 4292b, Imaging Ancient Worlds in Museum Collections** Klaus Wagensohnner and Agnete Lassen

What is Digitization of Cultural Heritage? What are its merits, challenges, and best practices? The course highlightst the documentation and interpretation of archaeological artifacts, in particular artifacts from Western Asia. The primary goal of the course is the use of new technologies in computer graphics, including 3D imaging, to support current research in archaeology and anthropology. The course does put particular emphasis on the best practices of digitizing artifacts in collections. The prime study subjects are the artifacts housed in the Yale Babylonian Collection (<https://babylonian-collection.yale.edu>). For some background information on the Collection see here. Students engage directly with the artifacts while practicing the various imaging techniques. HU o Course cr

*** NELC 3250a / CPLT 3880a / HUMS 2740a, The Education of Princes: Medieval Advice Literature of Rulership and Counsel** Shawkat Toorawa

In this course we read "mirrors for princes," a type of political writing by courtiers and advisors. The genre flourished in the courts of medieval Europe and the Islamic world. We learn about the ethical and moral considerations that guided (or were meant to guide) rulers in their conduct, in the formulation of their policies, and about theories of rule and rulership. The works we read are from several cultural, religious, and political traditions, and include: Christine de Pizan, *A Medieval Woman's Mirror of Honor*; Einhard, *Life of Charlemagne*; Erasmus, *Education of a Christian Prince*; Ibn al-Muqaffa', *Kalilah and Dimnah*, John of Salisbury, *Policraticus: Book of the Statesman*; Machiavelli, *The Prince*; Nizam al-Mulk, *The Book of Government*. All texts are in English translation. Instructor permission is required. HU

*** NELC 4530b / ARBC 4500b / LING 3270b, 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 1400 and permission of instructor.

*** NELC 4580a / RLST 4450a, Introduction to Arabic and Islamic Studies** Travis Zadeh

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. Previously NELC 490.

*** NELC 4710a, Directed Reading and Research** Shawkat Toorawa

For students who wish to pursue a topic or body of texts not available in the department's regular curriculum. Approval of the plan of study by both the director of undergraduate studies and a member of the department who agrees to serve as instructor is required. Student and instructor meet regularly throughout the term. The course culminates in either a piece of written work or a final examination.

*** NELC 4920a and NELC 4930b, The Senior Essay** Shiri Goren

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 4930) 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 HQ 604, 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.