NEAR EASTERN LANGUAGES AND CIVILIZATIONS

Director of undergraduate studies: Kathryn Slanski (kathryn.slanski@yale.edu); nelc.yale.edu

The major in Near Eastern Languages & Civilizations is an interdisciplinary liberal arts major. Students acquire language proficiency and skills in critical analysis in order to study the long-lived and rich civilizations of the Near East, ranging from ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt, to the medieval Near East and classical Islam, to modern cultures represented by modern Arabic, Hebrew, Persian, and Turkish.

The Near East is studied for its own intrinsic literary, historic, and artistic interest, as well as its cultural and historical legacies, while also providing new ways of understanding developments and challenges in the modern world. Majors go on to careers in government, foreign service, law, medicine, education, and academic research. The major also provides an excellent basis for graduate study.

REQUIREMENTS OF THE MAJOR

The Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations major has two concentrations from which students may choose. In the Language and Civilization concentration, students focus in depth on a particular language, civilization, period, or region. In the Languages, Civilization, and Culture concentration, students focus on Near Eastern languages and civilizations more broadly and comparatively.

Twelve term courses in the department, or their equivalent, are required for the major, including the senior essay. There are no prerequisites. Students develop coherent programs of study in one of two concentrations:

Concentration: Language and Civilization (depth) offers students a rigorous and intellectually coherent foundation in line with their own specific interests. Through in-depth study of Near Eastern languages and texts in their original languages, richly contextualized through study of literature, religion, visual arts, archaeology, and political and social history, students focus on the ancient Near East, the classical Near East, medieval Islam, or modern Hebrew language and culture. Requirements include: six term courses of one or two Near Eastern languages; one NELC Foundations course; four electives, chosen in consultation with the director of undergraduate studies (DUS) and assigned faculty adviser; and the senior essay.

Concentration: Languages, Civilization, and Culture (breadth) provides students the opportunity to study the Near East in its historical and cultural breadth, and to explore its rich and long-lived civilizations and cultures. This flexible program allows students to take a range of classes and to design their course of study in line with their interests. Areas of interest include languages, literature, history, religion, art and archaeology, and philosophy. Requirements include: four term courses of one or more languages; two NELC Foundations courses; and five electives, including one on the ancient Near East, one on the medieval Near East, and one on the modern Middle East, chosen in consultation with the DUS and assigned faculty adviser; and the senior essay.

All students are also encouraged to take related courses in other departments and programs, such as Anthropology, Archaeology, Classics, History, History of Art, History of Science, Medicine and Public Health, Judaic Studies, Comparative Literature, Philosophy, and Religious Studies. Such courses, including Residential College Seminars, will routinely be accepted for credit toward the major if they deal with Near Eastern topics, at the discretion of the assigned faculty adviser and the DUS.

SENIOR REQUIREMENT

The senior essay is a research paper of at least thirty pages prepared under the supervision of a departmental faculty member. It may be written under the rubric of NELC 492 and/or 493, or as an extended seminar paper in a departmental seminar course, in which case the instructor serves as the essay adviser. The topic and a prospectus signed by an adviser are to be submitted to the DUS by the end of the fourth week of classes in either term of the senior year. The particular subject matter and theoretical approach of the essay are decided by the student after consultation with the faculty adviser.

In cases in which students demonstrably need more time for an extended research paper, the senior essay may be approved as a yearlong course after consultation with the adviser and the DUS. Only those students who have advanced language skills and whose project is considered to be of exceptional promise are eligible. The requirements for the two-term essay are the same as for the one-term essay, except that the essay should be at least sixty pages.

ADVISING

All course schedules must be discussed with the assigned faculty adviser and approved by the DUS.

Languages currently offered by the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations include Akkadian, Arabic, Armenian, Egyptian, Hebrew, Ottoman Turkish, Persian, Syriac, and Turkish. Students who take a foreign language during a term, year, or summer abroad must complete a departmental placement examination after they return to Yale; there are no exceptions to this requirement.

Well-qualified students who have acquired the requisite background in undergraduate courses may, with the permission of the instructor, the DUS, and the director of graduate studies, be admitted to graduate courses where no suitable undergraduate courses exist.

REQUIREMENTS OF THE MAJOR

Prerequisites None

Number of courses 12 term courses (incl senior essay)
Distribution of courses  
Language and Civilization concentration (depth) – 6 term courses of up to 2 Near Eastern language courses; 1 Foundations course; and 4 electives, with DUS consultation; Languages, Civilization, and Culture concentration (breadth) – 4 term courses of 1 or more Near Eastern language courses; 2 Foundations courses; 5 electives to include 1 ancient, 1 medieval, and 1 modern course, with DUS consultation

Senior requirement  Senior essay in NELC 492 and/or 493 or in dept seminar

The major in Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations is for students interested in the Near East in any period. Students acquire a solid linguistic, historical, and cultural background to study the area. Small classes and considerable flexibility characterize the major, which includes two concentrations:

Concentration: Language and Civilization (depth) Through the in-depth study of Near Eastern languages and primary texts, richly contextualized through study of literature, religion, visual arts, archaeology, and political and social history, students focus on the ancient Near East, the classical Near East, medieval Islam, or modern Hebrew language and culture.

Concentration: Languages, Civilization, and Culture (breadth) This flexible program allows students to take a range of classes and to design their course of study in line with their interests (such as languages, literature, history, religion, art and archaeology, and philosophy), while acquiring familiarity with the ancient, medieval, and modern Near East.

Interested first-year students are urged to consult the director of undergraduate studies (DUS) or an instructor in their prospective area as early as possible in the fall, either to clarify their interests or to plan the best course of study for their needs and abilities. Majors often obtain special museum, excavation, or linguistic experience at Yale or abroad.

Particularly suitable for first-year students are First-Year Seminars and Foundations courses:

- NELC 001, Egypt and Northeast Africa: A Multidisciplinary Approach
- NELC 003, Medieval Travel and Exploration
- NELC 101, Origins of Western Civilization: The Near East from Alexander to Muhammad
- NELC 119, Ancient Empires
- NELC 128, From Gilgamesh to Persepolis: Introduction to Near Eastern Literatures

More advanced courses may require knowledge of a Near Eastern language. Students considering a major with a concentration in any of the languages taught by the department are encouraged to begin language study as early as possible, especially if they plan to study abroad.

Placement examinations in Arabic and Hebrew are held before the start of the fall term. Placement examinations are also available in Persian and Turkish; interested students should consult the DUS. See also the Center for Language Study website for placement examinations information.

Religious Studies and Judaic Studies offer courses in Hebrew literature and in Judaism; Religious Studies, History, and Political Science offer courses dealing with the premodern and modern Near East. Related courses in other departments can count toward the major in Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations.

ARABIC
The beginning course sequence, ARBC 110 and ARBC 120, carries three course credits for the year and teaches Arabic grammar as a foundation for further study of Modern Standard Arabic, the language of educated people in all Arab countries and an official language of the United Nations. The course concentrates on reading, listening, and writing.

Students interested in modern Arabic follow ARBC 120 with ARBC 130, ARBC 140, ARBC 150, and ARBC 151. Students interested in classical Arabic follow ARBC 120 with ARBC 136 and ARBC 146.

Students contemplating a major with a concentration in Arabic or a second major with an Arabic component should consult with faculty members as early as possible in the fall.

HEBREW
The beginning course sequence, HEBR 110 and HEBR 120 is followed by HEBR 130, HEBR 140, and an advanced course such as HEBR 160. Students who already know modern or biblical Hebrew may take advanced courses. Some of these will be listed in Yale Course Search and others in the Graduate School online bulletin. For information about graduate courses, consult the DUSes in Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations and in Judaic Studies in the fall.

OTHER NEAR EASTERN LANGUAGES
Beginning courses in Akkadian, Armenian, Egyptian, Ottoman Turkish, Persian, and Turkish are open to first-year students; consult the DUS in the fall. Near Eastern language courses are very demanding, so a high level of commitment is presumed.
CERTIFICATE OF ADVANCED LANGUAGE STUDY

The Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations offers a Certificate of Advanced Language Study in Arabic, Hebrew, and Turkish. A certificate adviser, typically the director of undergraduate studies (DUS), advises students on the certification process and certifies to the University Registrar’s Office that students have completed the stated requirements before the end of eight terms of study. The Certificate of Advanced Language Study, once certified, is listed on the student’s transcript.

REQUIREMENTS

Students seeking to earn the certificate are required to take four courses beyond the L4 level in their chosen language, at least two of which must be Yale courses designated as L5. All courses must be taken for a letter grade, and students must achieve a grade of B or above. With the approval of the adviser, one advanced non-L5 Yale course, conducted in the target language, such as an independent study course, a graduate seminar, or an advanced seminar may count toward certification requirements.

The certificate adviser may allow one “language across the curriculum” (LxC) course, which ordinarily is an advanced seminar with an additional weekly discussion section in the target language, to count toward the certification requirements. The certificate adviser may also approve the substitution of up to two credits earned during study abroad and taught in the target language to count toward the certificate requirements. If the adviser approves courses taken outside of Yale for inclusion in the certificate requirements, students must take the necessary steps to ensure that those courses appear on their transcripts.

Hebrew specific requirements The two required L5 courses must be modern Hebrew courses that include a speaking component.

Credit/D/Fail No courses taken Credit/D/Fail may be counted toward the requirements of the certificate.

FACULTY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF NEAR EASTERN LANGUAGES AND CIVILIZATIONS

Professors John Darnell, Benjamin Foster, Eckart Frahm, Dimitri Gutas (Emeritus), Bentley Layton (Emeritus), Shawkat Toorawa, Kevin Van Bladel, Harvey Weiss

Senior Lectors and Senior Lecturers Sarab Al Ani, Muhammad Aziz, Jonas Elbousty, Shiri Goren, Dina Roginsky, Farkhondeh Shayesteh, Kathryn Slanski

Lectors and Lecturers Julien Cooper, Ozgen Felek, Christina Geisen, Agnete Lassen, Selim Tiryakiol, Klaus Wagensonner, Orit Yeret

View All NELC Courses View Akkadian Courses View Arabic Courses View Armenian Courses View Egyptian Courses View Hebrew Courses View Persian Courses View Turkish Courses View Ottoman Courses