Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations

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Faculty of the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations

Professors John Darnell, Benjamin Foster, Eckart Frahm, Dimitri Gutas, Bentley Layton (Emeritus), Harvey Weiss

Lecturers Adel Allouche, Karen Foster, Kathryn Slanski

Senior Lectors Ayala Dvoretsky

Senior Lectors Sarab al-Ani, Muhammad Aziz, Jonas Elbousty, Etem Erol, Shiri Goren, Dina Roginsky, Farkhondeh Shayesteh

The major in Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations is a liberal arts major that gives students a sound competence in a Near Eastern language and a broad knowledge of the literatures, civilizations, history, and archaeology of the Near East. The major also provides essential preparation for graduate or professional work in which a knowledge of Near Eastern languages, history, and archaeology is required.

Depending on the student's interests, the major is built around study of one or more Near Eastern languages, leading to a concentration in the ancient Near East (Mesopotamia, Egypt, or Syria-Palestine), in Hebrew language and literature, or in Arabic and Islamic studies.

Requirements of the major Twelve term courses in the department, or their equivalent, are required for the major, including the senior essay course. No more than six course credits from other departments may be applied toward this requirement. The course work includes at least two years of study of a Near Eastern language and no fewer than three courses in the history and civilizations of the Near East, at least one of which must be in the ancient and one in the Islamic Near East. Students should develop coherent programs of study in one of three areas of concentration:

1. Ancient Near Eastern languages and civilizations, with emphasis on Mesopotamia, Egypt, or Syria-Palestine. Students interested in Mesopotamia take at least two years of Akkadian, as well as courses in the history and civilizations of the ancient Near East. Students interested in Egypt take at least two years of Egyptian, as well as courses in the history and civilizations of ancient Egypt. Students interested in Syria-Palestine take at least two years of biblical Hebrew, as well as courses in the history and civilizations of the ancient Near East.

2. Hebrew language and literature. Students take two years or more of Hebrew (ancient or modern, but in any case at least two years of one period of the language), and courses in Hebrew literature, the history and civilizations of the ancient Near East, and Near Eastern Judaism.

3. Arabic and Islamic studies. ARBC 120 is a prerequisite for this area and counts as one term course toward the twelve required. Students take at least two years of Arabic beyond the prerequisite, and courses selected from Arabic literature, Arab civilization, Islamic religion, Near Eastern history, and Persian or Turkish language. In their senior year, students take NELC 490, Introduction to Arabic and Islamic Studies. Majors in this area of concentration are strongly advised to begin their language training as early as possible, and certainly not later than the sophomore year. Students should consult Dimitri Gutas, 316 HGS, 432-2947.

Well-qualified students who have acquired the requisite background in undergraduate courses may, with the permission of the instructor, the director of undergraduate studies, and the director of graduate studies, be admitted to graduate courses where no suitable undergraduate courses exist. In addition, courses from such other departments and programs as Archaeological Studies, History, History of Art, Judaic Studies, Political Science, and Religious Studies, as well as college seminars, are routinely accepted for credit toward the major if they deal with Near Eastern topics.

All course schedules must be approved by the director of undergraduate studies.

Senior essay To derive full benefit from the major, students should acquire practical experience in using Near Eastern languages for research purposes. Therefore all students in the major undertake a senior essay that involves substantial use of materials in one or more Near Eastern languages. 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 director of undergraduate studies 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 extensive essay, the senior essay may be approved as a yearlong course after consultation with the adviser and the director of undergraduate studies. 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.

Languages currently offered by the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations include Akkadian, Arabic, Egyptian, Hebrew, 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.
REQUIREMENTS OF THE MAJOR

Prerequisites  
Arabic and Islamic studies — ARBC 120;  
All other areas — none

Number of courses  
12 term courses (incl prereq and senior essay)

Distribution of courses  
2 years of a Near Eastern lang; 3 courses in Near Eastern hist and civ, incl 1 in ancient and 1 in Islamic Near East; area of concentration as specified

Specific course required  
Arabic and Islamic studies — NELC 490

Senior requirement  
Senior essay using materials in 1 or more Near Eastern langs (in NELC 492 and/or 493 or in dept sem)

Near Eastern History and Civilizations

INTRODUCTORY AND SURVEY COURSES

* NELC 001b / ARCG 001b, Egypt and Northeast Africa: A Multidisciplinary Approach  
Staff  
Examination of approximately 10,000 years of Nile Valley cultural history, with an introduction to the historical and archaeological study of Egypt and Nubia. Consideration of the Nile Valley as the meeting place of the cultures and societies of northeast Africa. Various written and visual sources are used, including the collections of the Peabody Museum and the Yale Art Gallery. Enrollment limited to freshmen. Preregistration required; see under Freshman Seminar Program.

WR, HU

* NELC 026a / ARCG 031a / CLCV 059a / EVST 030a / HIST 020a, Rivers and Civilization  
Staff  
The appearance of the earliest cities along the Nile and Euphrates in the fourth millennium B.C. Settlements along the rivers, the origins of agriculture, the production and extraction of agricultural surpluses, and the generation of class structures and political hierarchies. How and why these processes occurred along the banks of these rivers; consequent societal collapses and their relation to abrupt climate changes. Enrollment limited to freshmen. Preregistration required; see under Freshman Seminar Program.  
HU, SO

NELC 102a / MMES 102a, Introduction to the Middle East  
Benjamin Foster

Introduction to the history and cultures of the Middle East from the rise of Islam to the present, including the Arab world, Iran, Turkey, and Israel. Emphasis on factors important for understanding the Middle East today.  
HU

ANCIENT, CLASSICAL, AND MEDIEVAL

NELC 107a / ARCG 238a / HSAR 238a, Buried Cities: Thera, Pompeii, and Herculaneum  
Karen Foster

Study of three ancient cities buried by volcanic eruptions—Thera in c. 1530 B.C. and Pompeii and Herculaneum in A.D. 79—with emphasis on their architecture, wall paintings, and small finds in cultural and historical context.  
HU

NELC 109a / ARCG 244a / RLST 245a, The Age of Akhenaton  
Staff

HU

NELC 116b, Myth and Ritual in the Ancient Near East  
Eckart Frahm

Introduction to ancient Near Eastern tales about gods and heroes. Topics include creation, the cosmic order, sacred marriage, divine battles, death, and the interaction between gods and humans. Focus on myths from Mesopotamia, with comparison to Egyptian, biblical, and classical traditions.  
HU

NELC 167b / WGSS 168b, Women in the Ancient World  
Karen Foster

Introduction to the roles of women in ancient Egyptian, Mesopotamian, and Aegean society, as reflected in painting, sculpture, decorative arts, and literature, as well as in the earliest women’s writings known.  
HU

NELC 230a / CLCV 113a / HUMS 434a, Mesopotamia’s Literary Legacy  
Kathryn Slanski

Major works of ancient Near Eastern literature; relationships with literary traditions in the Hebrew Bible and ancient Greece. Readings include myths, epics, wisdom literature, love poetry, and humorous stories.  
HU

NELC 320b / ANTH 320b / ARCG 320b / EVST 321b / MMES 320b, From Babylon to Bush  
Harvey Weiss

Analysis of Mesopotamian transformations from the earliest agriculture villages to the earliest cities, states, and civilization, to the earliest empires, as well as the region-wide collapses that punctuated these developments. Forces that drove these uniquely early Mesopotamian developments. Essential archaeological questions, including why each transformation happened, developed, and evolved. The end of the Ottoman empire and the British (1917) and American (1991, 2003) invasions.  
HU, SO

NELC 350a / HIST 350a / MMES 175a, Formation of the Islamic State, 610 –750  
Adel Allouch

The development of Islamic polity and society from the rise of Islam to the rise of the Abbasid dynasty. Religious and societal changes caused by the success of Muhammad’s mission; ramifications of the subsequent Arab expansion at the expense of the Byzantine and Sasanian empires. The origins of Islamic institutions; the historical development of the main religious sects and of Islamic legal thought; Western views of Islam.  
HU
* NELC 403b / HIST 384Jb / MMES 172b, The Middle East between Crusaders and Mongols Adel Allouche
The impact of the Crusades and the Mongol conquests on the Islamic Middle East. Political, social, and economic changes in the region from the eleventh century to the middle of the fourteenth. Emphasis on the rise of new dynasties as a result of changes in the ethnic mosaic of the Middle East. WR, HU

* NELC 404b / HIST 398Jb / MMES 173b, Mamluk Egypt Adel Allouche
A study of the Mamluks, manumitted slaves initially imported to Egypt for military service who established their own rule over Egypt and Syria (1250–1517). Focus on the structure and workings of the Mamluk state. Military, political, economic, and social factors that contributed to the grandeur and, later, the decline of the Mamluk period in Egypt and its conquest by the Ottoman Turks. WR, HU

MODERN

NELC 155a / JDST 323a / MMES 160a / SOCY 155a, State and Society in Israel Dina Roginsky
The interplay between the state and society in Israel. Current Israeli discourse on controversial issues such as civil rights in a Jewish-democratic state, Jewish-Arab relations, and right and left politics. Issues of orthodoxy, military service, globalization, and multiculturalism in Israel. Sociopolitical changes that have taken place in Israel since the establishment of the state in 1948 and that have led to the reshaping of Israeli Zionist ideology. HU

* NELC 157b / JDST 306b / MMES 157b, Israeli Narratives Shiri Goren
Close reading of major Israeli novels in translation with attention to how their themes and forms relate to the Israeli condition. Theories of war and peace, migration, nationalism, and gender. Authors include Yehoshua, Grossman, Matalon, Castel-Bloom, and Kashua. No knowledge of Hebrew required. HU, TR

* NELC 399a / EVST 399a, Agriculture: Origins, Evolution, Crises Harvey Weiss
Analysis of the societal and environmental drivers and effects of plant and animal domestication, the intensification of agroproduction, and the crises of agroproduction: land degradation, societal collapses, sociopolitical transformation, sustainability, and biodiversity. SO

Languages and Literatures of the Ancient Near East

AKKADIAN

Students wishing to study Akkadian should consult the director of undergraduate studies.

EGYPTIAN

EGYP 110a, Introduction to Classical Hieroglyphic Egyptian I Christina Geisen
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. Credit only on completion of EGYP 120. L1, RP

EGYP 117a, Elementary Biblical Coptic I Scott 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 127. L1, RP

EGYP 120b, Introduction to Classical Hieroglyphic Egyptian II Christina Geisen
Continuation of EGYP 110. Prerequisite: EGYP 110. L2, RP

EGYP 127b, Elementary Biblical Coptic II Daniel Bohac
Continued study of 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. Prerequisite: EGYP 117. L2, RP

* EGYP 131a, Intermediate Egyptian: 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 120. L3, RP

SYRIAC

Students wishing to study Syriac should consult the director of undergraduate studies.

Hebrew Language and Literature

HEBR 110a, Elementary Modern Hebrew I Ayala Dvoretzky
Introduction to the language of contemporary Israel, both spoken and written. Fundamentals of grammar; extensive practice in speaking, reading, and writing under the guidance of a native speaker. Credit only on completion of HEBR 120. L1, RP 1½ Course cr

HEBR 120b, Elementary Modern Hebrew II Shiri Goren
Continuation of HEBR 110. Introduction to the language of contemporary Israel, both spoken and written. Fundamentals of grammar; extensive practice in speaking, reading, and writing under the guidance of a native speaker. Prerequisite: HEBR 110 or equivalent. L2, RP 1½ Course cr
HEBR 130a, Intermediate Modern Hebrew I  
Dina Roginsky  
Review and continuation of grammatical study, leading to a deeper understanding of style and usage. Focus on selected readings and on writing, comprehension, and speaking skills. Prerequisite: HEBR 120 or equivalent.  

L3  

RP

HEBR 140b, Intermediate Modern Hebrew II  
Ayala Dvoretsky  
Continuation of HEBR 130. Review and continuation of grammatical study leading to a deeper comprehension of style and usage. Focus on selected readings and on writing, comprehension, and speaking skills. Prerequisite: HEBR 130 or equivalent.  

L4  

RP

HEBR 156a / JDST 405a / MMES 216a, Dynamics of Israeli Culture  
Shiri Goren  
Controversies in Israeli society as revealed in novels, films, poetry, newspaper articles, Web sites, art, advertisements, and television shows. Themes include migration and the construction of the Sabra character; ethnicity and race; the emergence of the Mizrahi voice; women in Israeli society; private and collective memory; the minority discourse of the Druze and Russian Jews; and Israeli masculinity and queer culture. Conducted in Hebrew. Papers may be written in English or Hebrew. Prerequisite: HEBR 140 or permission of instructor.  

L5  

HU  

RP

HEBR 159a / JDST 409a / MMES 159a, Conversational Hebrew: Israeli Media  
Shiri Goren  
An advanced Hebrew course for students interested in practicing and enhancing conversational skills. Focus on listening comprehension and on various forms of discussion, including practical situations, online interactions, and content analysis. Prerequisite: HEBR 140 or permission of instructor.  

L5

Arabic and Islamic Studies

ARABIC

ARBC 110a, Elementary Modern Standard Arabic I  
Staff  
Development of a basic knowledge of Modern Standard Arabic. Emphasis on grammatical analysis, vocabulary acquisition, and the growth of skills in speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Credit only on completion of ARBC 120.  

L1  

RP  

1½ Course cr

ARBC 120b, Elementary Modern Standard Arabic II  
Staff  
Continuation of ARBC 110. Prerequisite: ARBC 110 or requisite score on a placement test.  

L2  

RP  

1½ Course cr

* ARBC 130a, Intermediate Modern Standard Arabic I  
Sarab Al Ani  
Intensive review of grammar; readings from contemporary and classical Arab authors with emphasis on serial reading of unwoveled Arabic texts, prose composition, and formal conversation. Prerequisite: ARBC 120 or requisite score on a placement test.  

L3  

RP  

1½ Course cr

ARBC 136a, Intermediate Classical Arabic I  
Michael Rapoport  
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. Prerequisite: ARBC 120 or permission of instructor. May be taken concurrently with ARBC 130 or 150.  

L3  

RP

ARBC 140b, Intermediate Modern Standard Arabic II  
Sarab Al Ani  
Continuation of ARBC 130. Prerequisite: ARBC 130 or requisite score on a placement test.  

L4  

RP  

1½ Course cr

ARBC 146b, Intermediate Classical Arabic II  
Michael Rapoport  
Continuation of ARBC 136. Prerequisite: ARBC 136 or permission of instructor. May be taken concurrently with ARBC 140 or 151.  

L4  

RP

* ARBC 150a, Advanced Modern Standard Arabic I  
Muhammad Aziz  
Further development of listening, writing, and speaking skills. For students who already have a substantial background in Modern Standard Arabic. Prerequisite: ARBC 140 or requisite score on a placement test.  

L5  

RP

* ARBC 151b, Advanced Modern Standard Arabic II  
Muhammad Aziz  
Continuation of ARBC 150. Prerequisite: ARBC 150 or requisite score on a placement test.  

L5  

RP

* ARBC 161b, Arabic Narrative Prose  
Muhammad Aziz  
Close reading of selected novels by Naguib Mahfouz. Attention to idiomatic expressions, structural patterns, and literary analysis. Prerequisite: ARBC 151 or requisite score on a placement test. May be repeated for credit.  

L5

* ARBC 162a / MMES 262a, Modern Arabic Political Thought  
Sarab Al Ani  
Works by influential Arab thinkers, leaders, and politicians who represent liberal nationalism, Arab nationalism, Islamism, and critiques of contemporary Arab society. Ways in which the authors use language both to portray their beliefs and to shape new social concepts in the Arab world. Prerequisite: ARBC 151 or equivalent, or with permission of the instructor.  

L5  

RP
* ARBC 471a or b, Directed Reading and Research  Staff
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 is required from both the director of undergraduate studies and a member of the department who agrees to serve as instructor. Student and instructor meet regularly throughout the term. The course culminates in either a piece of written work or a final examination.

PERSIAN

PERS 110a, Elementary Persian I  Farkhondeh Shayesteh
Introduction to modern Persian, with emphasis on all four language skills: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Credit only on completion of PERS 120.  L1  RP  1½ Course cr

PERS 120b, Elementary Persian II  Farkhondeh Shayesteh
Continuation of PERS 110, with emphasis on all four language skills: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Prerequisite: PERS 110 or permission of instructor.  L2  RP  1½ Course cr

PERS 130a, Intermediate Persian I  Farkhondeh Shayesteh
Continuation of PERS 120, with emphasis on expanding vocabulary and understanding more complex grammatical forms and syntax. Prerequisite: PERS 120 or permission of instructor.  L3  RP  1½ Course cr

* PERS 151b, 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.  L5

* PERS 471a or b, Directed Reading in Persian  Staff
Independent study of Persian texts at an advanced level.

TURKISH

TKSH 110a, Elementary Modern Turkish I  Etem Erol
Development of a basic knowledge of modern Turkish, with emphasis on grammatical analysis, vocabulary acquisition, and reading and writing skills. Credit only on completion of TKSH 120.  L1  RP  1½ Course cr

TKSH 120b, Elementary Modern Turkish II  Etem Erol
Continuation of TKSH 110. Prerequisite: TKSH 110 or permission of instructor.  L2  RP  1½ Course cr

TKSH 130a, Intermediate Turkish I  Etem Erol
Continued study of modern Turkish, with emphasis on advanced syntax, vocabulary acquisition, and the beginnings of free oral and written expression. Prerequisite: TKSH 120 or permission of instructor.  L3  RP

TKSH 140b, Intermediate Turkish II  Etem Erol
Continuation of TKSH 130. Prerequisite: TKSH 130.  L4  RP

TKSH 150a, Advanced Turkish I  Etem Erol
An advanced language course focused on improving students’ reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills in modern Turkish. Extensive study of vocabulary and idiomatic expressions. Readings from genres including academic articles, critical essays, literature, newspaper articles, and formal business writing. Screening of films, documentaries, and news broadcasts. Prerequisite: TKSH 140.  L5  RP

TKSH 151b, Advanced Turkish II  Etem Erol
Continuation of TKSH 150. Focus on primary materials from Turkish media, short stories, and Turkish films. Development of proficiency sufficient for conducting research and presenting findings and evaluations in Turkish. Prerequisite: TKSH 150.  L5  RP

* TKSH 471a or b, Directed Reading and Research in Turkish  Etem Erol
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 is required from both the director of undergraduate studies and a member of the department who agrees to serve as instructor. Student and instructor meet regularly throughout the term. The course culminates in either a piece of written work or a final examination.  RP

Courses for Majors

* NELC 471a or b, Directed Reading and Research  Christina Kraus
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 492a and NELC 493b, The Senior Essay  Christina Kraus
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, 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.

GRADUATE AND PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL COURSES OF INTEREST TO UNDERGRADUATES
Some Graduate School courses are open to qualified undergraduates with permission of the instructor and of the director of graduate studies. For course descriptions see the Online Course Information Web site (http://www.yale.edu/oci). (Also see “Courses in the Yale Graduate and Professional Schools” under “Special Arrangements” in the Academic Regulations.)