

# 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. Enrollment limited to first-year students. Preregistration required; see under First-Year Seminar Program. HU

## \* NELC 007a / HUMS 021a, *Six Pretty Good Heroes* Kathryn Slanski

Focusing on the figure of the hero through different eras, cultures, and media, this course provides first-year students with a reading-and writing-intensive introduction to studying the humanities at Yale. The course is anchored around six transcultural models of the hero that similarly transcend boundaries of time and place: the warrior, the sage, the political leader, the proponent of justice, the poet/singer, and the unsung. Our sources range widely across genres, media, periods, and geographies: from the ancient Near Eastern, *Epic of Gilgamesh* (1500 BCE) to the Southeast Asian *Ramayana*, to the Icelandic-Ukrainian climate activism film, *Woman at War* (2018). As part of the Six Pretty Good suite, we explore Yale's special collections and art galleries to broaden our perspectives on hierarchies of value and to sharpen our skills of observation and working with evidence. Six Pretty Good Heroes is a 1.5 credit course, devoting sustained attention students' academic writing and is an excellent foundation for the next seven semesters at Yale. Required Friday sessions are reserved for writing labs and visits to Yale collections, as well as one-on-one and small-group meetings with the writing instruction staff. WR, HU o Course cr

## \* 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. HU, SO

**NELC 109b / ARCG 244b / RLST 245b, The Age of Akhenaton** Nadine Moeller and John Darnell

Study of the period of the Egyptian pharaoh Akhenaton (reigned 1353–1336 B.C.E.), often termed the Amarna Revolution, from historical, literary, religious, artistic, and archaeological perspectives. Consideration of the wider Egyptian, ancient Near Eastern, African, and Mediterranean contexts. Examination of the international diplomacy, solar theology, and artistic developments of the period. Reading of primary source material in translation. HU o Course cr

**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. HU

**NELC 121b / HUMS 140b, 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. HU o Course cr

**\* NELC 128a / HUMS 128a / LITR 200a, 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 132a / MMES 171a, 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 o Course cr

**NELC 135a / HUMS 167a / LITR 378a, Masterpieces of Arabic Literature** Shawkat Toorawa

The Arabic literary tradition spans from the 6th-century through to the modern day. In this course, we focus on the first thousand years (600–1600), and read works, and excerpts from works, regarded as masterpieces of Arabic literature. Our readings include the early poetry of the Arabian peninsula (Imru l-Qays, ‘Antarah), the *Qur’an*, celebrated prose writers, including al-Jahiz, al-Tanukhi, al-Hariri, and al-Tawhidi, and

famous poets, including al-Mutanabbi, al-Ma'arri, and Ibn Zaydun. All readings in translation. HU

**NELC 158a / CLCV 129a / HIST 159a / HUMS 129a / RLST 158a, Jesus to Muhammad: Ancient Christianity to the Rise of Islam** Stephen Davis

The history of Christianity and the development of Western culture from Jesus to the early Middle Ages. The creation of orthodoxy and heresy; Christian religious practice; philosophy and theology; politics and society; gender; Christian literature in its various forms, up to and including the early Islamic period. HU

**\* NELC 169a / CLCV 260a, Visible Language: The Origins of Writing in Mesopotamia and Ancient Egypt** Klaus Wagensooner

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 201a / ENGL 191a / HUMS 206a / LITR 318a / MMES 215a, 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. HU

**NELC 243a / ARCG 245a, Archaeology of Ancient Egypt: An Introduction** Gregory Marouard

This lecture is an introductory class that examines in detail the archaeology of ancient Egypt following the chronological order of Egyptian history and covering almost 4000 years, from the late Neolithic period to the end of the Greco-Roman period. The aim is not only to give a comprehensive overview of major sites and discoveries but also to use as much as possible information from recent excavations, discuss problems and priorities concerning this field, offer an introduction to new fieldwork methods and approaches used in Egypt as well as a short history of this discipline. none HU  
o Course cr

**\* NELC 330a / ARCG 363a / EVST 371a / NELC 189, Archaeologies of Empire** Harvey Weiss

Empire is rarely studied cross-culturally, although it is second only to hunting-and-gathering as the most successful, longest-lived, regional politico-economic organization. Despite major empire-specific research efforts, there remains, as well, little consensus as to empires' genesis and function. Here we attempt to define the features of empire, their genesis and their function, in ancient and modern times. Comparative study of origins, structures, efficiencies, and limitations of imperialism, ancient and modern, in the Old and New Worlds, from Akkad to "Indochine" and from Wari to Aztec. The contrast between ancient and modern empires examined from the perspectives of nineteenth- and twentieth-century archaeology and political economy. HU, SO

**\* NELC 364b / HIST 412Jb / HUMS 261b / RLST 264b, The Psalms, A Cultural History of Ancient Prayer** Stephen Davis

This course introduces students to the Book of Psalms and its significant cultural and religious impact in ancient Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The course is organized in three units. Unit 1 focuses on the text of the Psalms, with special attention to their

literary forms, editorial organization, and early ritual context in ancient Israel. Unit 2 focuses on the reception and use of the Psalms in late ancient Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, with special attention to matters of translation, interpretation, worship, prayer, and scriptural authority. Unit 3 focuses on material and sensory encounters with the Psalms from antiquity to the present day within these three religious traditions—case studies related to tactile and visual contact with the physical book, oral and aural engagement through song or chant, and embodied forms of writing, reciting, and enacting the Psalms in the context of ritual practice, including magical spells. The goal of the course is thus to trace the life and afterlife—to write the textual and extra-textual “biography,” as it were—of a major biblical book. HU

**\* NELC 373b / ARCG 473b / EVST 473b, 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

**\* NELC 443b, Classical Persian Epic** Jane Mikkelsen

This course acquaints students with some of the most famous epics of classical Persian literature. A remarkably capacious literary form, the Persian *masnavi* (long narrative poem) can be heroic, historical, religious, philosophical, didactic, popular. As we attend minutely to matters of grammar, form, prosody, and style, we also keep in view relevant literary, cultural, historical, and intellectual contexts. An essential objective of the course is to introduce students to some of the ways in which the premodern Persian tradition thinks about itself. To that end, primary readings are supplemented with short extracts from works by medieval and early modern theorists, critics, philosophers, and literary historians. Achieving a fine-grained view of the tradition from within illuminates our discussions as we consider the distinctiveness of the epic genre and its ability to foster creative conjunctions across myth and history, philosophy and allegory, religion and entertainment, oral and written literary cultures. Thinking critically about the scope, history, and exportability of terms like *masnavi*, *epic*, and *romance* leads us into broader conversations about how best to situate classical Persian literature within (or against) world literature—and what that might mean for comparative, entangled, and multifocal histories of the epic form. Prerequisite: Intermediate-level reading competency in Persian. HU

**\* NELC 444a, Classical Persian Lyric** Jane Mikkelsen

This course acquaints students with some of the most extraordinary lyric poets of classical Persian literature. We will read famous medieval figures and early modern luminaries. As we attend minutely to matters of grammar, form, prosody, and style, we will also keep in view relevant literary, cultural, historical, and intellectual contexts. An essential aim of the course is to introduce students to some of the ways in which the premodern Persian tradition thinks about itself. To that end, primary readings in poetry and literary prose are supplemented with short extracts from works by medieval and early modern critics, rhetoricians, theorists, and literary historians; these texts supply concepts and skills that are indispensable for reading, appreciating, and researching Persian literature. Achieving a fine-grained view of the tradition from within will illuminate our discussions as we consider the distinctiveness of the lyric form, probe various entanglements between literature, philosophy, and religion, and situate the

premodern Persian literary tradition against broader comparative horizons that stretch across the Islamicate world and beyond. Intermediate reading knowledge of Persian

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