

# NEAR EASTERN LANGUAGES AND CIVILIZATIONS (NELC)

\* NELC 002a, **The Discovery of Egypt and Europe's Age of Enlightenment** Nadine Moeller

European interest in Egypt extends back to the 17th century and was fueled simultaneously by the idea of the mysterious Orient as well as the Enlightenment drive to explain through science and reason the birth and rise of human civilization. While Egyptian exploration can be traced to as early as the Renaissance, it was during the Age of Enlightenment that European states sent research expeditions to explore the intriguing monuments and edifices along the Nile. This course explores the intellectual, political, and socio-economic background of Europe's discovery of Egypt during the Age of Enlightenment. We also investigate the early years of a new scientific discipline called Egyptology, and its influence on archaeology, another Enlightenment-born discipline aiming to explain humanity through scientific methods. The learning goals for students are (a) to practice analytic skills to 'excavate' the reasoning, pre-conceptions, and attitudes of the first explorers and scientists to travel to Egypt, and (b) to reflect, through written and classroom assignments, on the cultural and historical impact of 'Egyptomania' on fashion, art, and architecture, and the ensuing plunder of Egyptian cultural heritage to satisfy European demand. HU TR

\* 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 110a, **Writing Egyptology: Reflecting on Life and Death in Ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia, and the Bible** Mike Tritsch

Focusing on literature from ancient Egypt, this seminar explores timeless questions of the meaning of life and what happens after we die. Egypt, with its rich traditions to achieve fulfillment in the afterlife, evidenced even today by pyramids, temples, and tombs, provides a rich context before considering the Cuneiform and Hebrew cultures of Mesopotamia and the Mesopotamia. Through the genre of "pessimistic literature," unique to these cultures, the seminar investigates views on life and death, contextualizing them through the historical record. In a world replete with natural

disasters, war, violence, disease, and hunger, not to mention the very old existential threat of climate change, pessimistic literature from the ancient Near East ponders questions about the inevitability of human suffering, and whether there is, thereafter, a greater reward. WR, HU

**NELC 111a / CLCV 219a / HIST 311a, Egypt of the Pharaohs** Staff

Egypt was among the first centralized territorial states in the world, and, because Egyptian history offers us 4000 years of institutional development and change, the focus of this course is on the long-term development of the ancient Egyptian state, its institutions, and its culture. The course introduces students to the history and culture of ancient Egypt from the rise of the central state to the early Christian period. General historical trends, the relationship of Egyptian history to other contemporary ancient cultures, and the legacy of Egypt to the “West” are also considered. At the end of the course, students have an understanding of the material culture and the historical development of ancient Egypt, and an appreciation for the relationship of the ancient sources to the construction of ancient Egyptian history. HU o Course cr

**NELC 121b / HUMS 140b, The Hero in the Ancient Near East** Kathryn Slanski

Exploration of the interaction of religion, history, and literature in the ancient Near East through study of its heroes, including comparison with heroes, heroic narratives, and hero cults in the Bible and from classical Greece. WR, HU o Course cr

**NELC 125a, 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 128a / HUMS 128a / LITR 200a, 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 131a / HUMS 138a / LITR 428a / MMES 138a / RLST 165a, The Quran** Travis Zadeh

Introduction to the study of the Quran. Topics include: the literary, historical, and theological reception of the Quran; its collection and redaction; the scriptural milieu of late antiquity; education and religious authority; ritual performance and calligraphic expression; the diversity of Muslim exegesis. 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 TR

\* 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 320b / HIST 333b / RLST 420b, **Introduction to Syriac Christianity** Maria Doerfler

This seminar aims to introduce students to the literary, historical, and theological tradition of Syriac Christianity and the developing field of Syriac Christian studies. In this vein, students encounter a number of the tradition's key authors; learn to locate its development in the context of different imperial cultures and religious interlocutors, including Judaism and Islam; and explore topics at the vanguard of current scholarship, including distinctive approaches to asceticism, ritual, and historiography. In addition to weekly meetings, the seminar further requires attendance for three special sessions: a visit to the Beinecke Rare Books & Manuscripts Library and its considerable Syriac manuscript holdings; a visit to the Yale University Art Gallery and its collection of relevant artefacts and coins; and an introduction to the use of digital humanities in Syriac Studies through the Yale Digital Dura-Europos Archive (YDEA). Permission of Instructor is required. HU

\* **NELC 321b / ANTH 492b / ARCG 492b, Imaging Ancient Worlds in Museum Collections** Agnete Lassen and Klaus Wagensohner

What is Digitization of Cultural Heritage? What are its merits, challenges, and best practices? The course highlights 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 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 heterogeneous 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

**NELC 405b / PERS 155b, Middle Persian** Kevin van Bladel

This one-term course covers the grammar of Middle Persian, focusing on royal and private inscriptions and the Zoroastrian priestly book tradition. Permission of instructor is required.

\* **NELC 406a / PERS 156a, Manichaean Middle Persian & Parthian** Kevin van Bladel

Introduction to reading Middle Persian and Parthian, two different but closely related ancient Iranian languages, in the distinctive script employed by Manichaean scribes. Includes extensive study of the Manichaean religion through original texts and secondary readings. Permission of instructor required.

\* **NELC 441a, Introduction to Classical Persian** Jane Mikkelson

This course provides a concise and complete overview of classical Persian grammar. Designed for advanced undergraduates who intend to use classical Persian as a research language, and presuming no prior knowledge of Persian, the class borrows its method from a recent textbook by E.E. Armand and N. I#U. Chalisova in which classical Persian is taught from the very first unit through close engagement with premodern primary sources. The class also introduces students to major works of the

classical Persian canon and acquaints them with key resources (reference grammars, dictionaries, encyclopedias, bibliographies) that allows them to read and engage with classical Persian texts in their own research.

**\* NELC 442b, Classical Persian Prose** Jane Mikkelson

This course acquaints students with works of classical Persian prose drawn from a wide range of eras, geographies, and genres. We read selections from theory and philosophy (Ne#āmī #Arū#ī's *Four Discourses*, Ebn Sinā's *Book of Knowledge*), didactic literature (Sa#dī's *Golestān*, Rūmī's *Discourses*), history (Abū'l-Fa#l's *History of Akbar*), autobiography (Mīr Taqī Mīr's *Remembrances*), and examples of *enshā*# (letters and state documents). 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; 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 illuminates our discussions as we consider the highly flexible functions of premodern Persian prose. Our texts consistently blur hard divisions between history and propaganda; between ethics and aesthetics; between acts of imagination and acts of state. Ornate and rule-bound, yet with ample scope for experimentation and canniness and boldness of vision, Persian prose emerges as a complex, multiform tradition that is anything but prosaic. Prerequisite: Reading knowledge of Persian (at least 1 semester).

HU

**\* NELC 492a and NELC 493b, The Senior Essay** Kathryn Slanski

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, Rm 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.