

NEAR EASTERN LANGUAGES AND CIVILIZATIONS

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The major in Near Eastern Languages & Civilizations is an interdisciplinary liberal arts major with a long history at Yale. The Near East describes the very long civilizations of the region known today as the Middle East, including Northeast Africa. The program emphasizes analytic and reflective learning. Students acquire proficiency in languages and literatures, art and archaeology, and cultural and historical traditions as they study the Near East, whether of (ancient) Egypt and Mesopotamia; of late antiquity and Classical Islam; or of the contemporary moment, 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, which also open new ways of understanding the modern world. Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations majors go on to careers in government, foreign service, international finance, law, education, and even medicine and public health. The major also provides a strong foundation for graduate study and academic research.

Languages offered include: (modern) Arabic, Hebrew, Persian, and Turkish (including Ottoman Turkish); Classical Arabic and Classical Persian; and (ancient) Assyrian & Babylonian, Egyptian, Old Persian, Syriac, and Sumerian. Students with experience in any of the modern languages must take a placement test at the beginning of the fall term. See the department website for details.

All modern languages, as well as ancient Assyrian & Babylonian (Akkadian), and Egyptian, are offered in multi-year sequences and can be taken to fulfill the language requirement. The department also offers Advanced Language Certificates in Arabic, Hebrew, Turkish, as well as ancient Egyptian. Many majors undertake intensive language study abroad during the summer, and the language faculty advises students on recommended programs.

COURSE NUMBERING

Courses numbered NELC 001–099 are first-year seminars, with enrollments capped at 18. Courses in the NELC 100–199 range are introductory lecture courses, and NELC 200–299 are seminars with enrollment capped at 18. These courses have no prerequisites and are designed for students of any background or major to explore the Near East. Courses designated NELC 300–399 are more challenging courses and typically are seminars. Courses numbered NELC 400–499 are courses offered by visiting scholars or are related to the senior project.

REQUIREMENTS OF THE MAJOR

The major requires twelve term courses, including the senior requirement. Working with the director of undergraduate studies (DUS), students develop coherent programs of study in one of two concentrations.

Near Eastern Languages & Civilizations Concentration (depth) This concentration is for students who wish to focus *in depth* on a particular language and/or civilization, such as *ancient* Egypt or Mesopotamia; the *classical* Near East or medieval Islam; or *modern* Near Eastern culture through Arabic, Hebrew, Persian, or Turkish. Contextualized through study of literature, religion, art and archaeology, and history, this concentration provides students the opportunity to explore a Near Eastern civilization through in-depth study of one or two Near Eastern languages and written texts in their original languages.

Requirements to earn the depth concentration are 6 term courses in one or two Near Eastern languages; one NELC Foundations course; four NELC electives, chosen in consultation with the DUS (no more than two may be counted from other departments/programs); and the senior requirement (see below).

Near Eastern Languages, Civilizations, and Culture Concentration (breadth) This concentration is suitable for students who wish to study Near Eastern languages and civilizations *more broadly*. It provides flexibility to study the Near East in its historical and cultural breadth, and to explore its long-lived civilizations over time or comparatively. Students in this concentration take a range of classes and design their course of study according to their specific interests, such as Near Eastern literature, history, religion, art and archaeology (material culture), or philosophy and science; or the study of the Near East in the ancient, medieval, or modern eras.

Requirements to earn the breadth concentration are 4 term courses in NELC languages; two NELC Foundations courses; five NELC electives, including one on the ancient Near East, one on the medieval Near East, and one on the modern Middle East (no more than three may be counted from other departments/programs); and the senior essay (see below).

Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations majors are encouraged to take related courses in other departments and programs to complement their interests and round out their intellectual formation. These typically include courses in Anthropology, Archaeology, Classics, Comparative Literature, Islamic Studies, Judaic Studies, History, History of Art, History of Science, Medicine and Public Health, Philosophy, and Religious Studies. Above all, complementary courses should be chosen according to the interests of the student and in consultation with the DUS or faculty advisor. If courses outside the department include substantial Near Eastern content and are relevant to the student's overall program of study, they may be approved at the discretion of the DUS toward the electives requirement for the major.

Credit/D/Fail No more than one Near Eastern Languages and Literatures elective taken Cr/D/Fail can be counted toward the major.

SENIOR REQUIREMENT

The senior requirement is an opportunity for students to design and execute an independent research project, bringing to bear the intellectual curiosity as well as philological and analytic skills the student has honed during their time at Yale. It is also a chance to be mentored by a member of the faculty who serves as advisor to the project, which typically culminates in an essay of about 25-35 pages (one-semester project) or 45-55 pages (year-long project). Conversations about the senior project

should begin with the DUS in the fall of junior year, especially if the student plans to undertake summer research travel.

In rare occasions and *only* with advanced written agreement of the instructor and the DUS, a research paper for an upper-level seminar may be developed and expanded to satisfy the senior requirement. In such cases, the project must constitute work substantially beyond the requirements of the seminar paper.

Each year the DUS provides majors with resources, guidelines, and a timetable of deadlines for both the one- semester and year-long senior project. In addition, the DUS leads a bimonthly seminar for seniors to present work on their senior project and to exchange feedback with their peers in a supportive environment.

SUMMARY OF MAJOR REQUIREMENTS

Prerequisites None

Number of courses 12 term courses (including the senior req)

Distribution of courses *Near Eastern Languages & Civilizations concentration (depth)* – 6 term courses of up to 2 Near Eastern languages; 1 Foundations course; and 4 electives; *Near Eastern Languages, Civilizations, and Culture concentration (breadth)* – 4 term courses of 1 or more Near Eastern language courses; 2 Foundations courses; 5 NELC electives to include 1 ancient, 1 medieval, and 1 modern

Senior requirement NELC 492 and/or NELC 493

The major in Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations is for students interested in any languages and civilizations—Arabic, Egyptian, Iranian, Mesopotamian, or Turkish—of the Near East. Students acquire a solid foundation in languages and in critical analysis as they study the complex civilizations of this culturally diverse and politically significant region of the globe. Small classes, hands-on learning with primary sources, and considerable flexibility characterize students' experience in the major.

Interested first year students are encouraged to consult the director of undergraduate studies (DUS) as early as possible to clarify their interests and chart their course of study. Majors often obtain unique museum, archaeological, or linguistic experience at Yale or abroad, for which advance planning is crucial.

Particularly suitable for first year students are the department's first-year seminars and courses numbered NELC 100–299.

Examples of First-year seminars:

NELC 003, Egypt and Northeast Africa: A Multidisciplinary Approach

NELC 002, The Discovery of Egypt and the Age of Enlightenment

NELC 003, Medieval Travel and Exploration

NELC 004, Earliest Literature of the Ancient World

NELC 005, The Ancient Egyptian Empire of the New Kingdom

NELC 006, Six Pretty Good Journeys

NELC 007, Six Pretty Good Heroes

NELC 008, Politics and Literature in the Middle East

NELC 026, Origins of Civilization: Egypt and Mesopotamia

Examples of introductory lectures and seminars:

NELC 115, The Bible in its Near Eastern Setting

NELC 121, The Hero in the Ancient Near East

NELC 130, Mesopotamia's Literary Legacy

NELC 131, The Quran

NELC 132, The Islamic Near East, from Muhammad to the Mongols

NELC 155, State and Society in Israel

NELC 157, Israeli Narratives

NELC 201, The Arabian Nights, Then and Now

NELC 243, Archaeology of Ancient Egypt: An Introduction

NELC 256, Classics of the Arabic-Islamic World

Students considering any of the languages taught by the department are invited to contact the DUS or the program coordinator for the relevant language (see below for Arabic and Hebrew). Interested students are encouraged to begin language study as early as possible, especially if their plans include study abroad.

Placement examinations in Arabic, Hebrew, Persian, and Turkish are held before the start of the fall term. Interested students should check the NELC website and/or contact the language coordinators or the DUS for information. See also the Center for Language Study website for general information about language placement.

Beginning Arabic study at Yale

The beginning two-semester course sequence, ARBC 110 and ARBC 120, carries three course credits for the year. Students learn the fundamentals of grammar of modern standard Arabic, an official language of the United Nations, and develop skills in reading and listening comprehension and in writing.

Students interested in continued study of modern standard Arabic follow the beginning sequence with ARBC 130, ARBC 140 (Intermediate), and ARBC 150, ARBC 151 (Advanced). Students interested in studying classical Arabic follow the beginning sequence with ARBC 136 and 146.

Any student considering the NELC major with a focus on Arabic or any major with an Arabic language component should consult with the coordinator of the Arabic program (sarab.alani@yale.edu) or the DUS at the beginning of the fall semester. Students with prior knowledge of Arabic may be eligible for placement in advanced courses.

Beginning Hebrew study at Yale

The beginning two-semester course sequence, HEBR 110 and HEBR 120, carries three course credits for the year and is followed by HEBR 130, HEBR 140 (Intermediate) and an advanced course such as HEBR 160. Students considering the NELC major with a focus on Hebrew or any major with a Hebrew language component should consult

with the coordinator of the Hebrew program (shiri.goren@yale.edu) or the DUS at the beginning of the fall semester. Students with prior knowledge of modern or biblical Hebrew may be eligible for placement in advanced courses.

Other Near Eastern Languages

Beginning courses in Babylonian (Akkadian), Egyptian, Ottoman Turkish, Persian, and Turkish are open to first-year students. All beginning two-semester language sequences begin in the fall semester. Please contact the DUS with any questions.

CERTIFICATE OF ADVANCED LANGUAGE STUDY

The Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations offers a Certificate of Advanced Language Study in Ancient Egyptian, Arabic, Hebrew, and Turkish. A certificate adviser, typically the 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.

Students are encouraged to complete and submit the Declaration of Candidacy for a Certificate Form found on the University Registrar's website. Once completed, the form sends notification emails to the certificate adviser(s) and to the Yale University Registrar's Office so that the student's Degree Audit can be updated with the Certificate of Advanced Language Study.

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

REQUIREMENTS FOR THE ARABIC, HEBREW, AND TURKISH CERTIFICATES

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 prior 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 taught in English to count toward the certification requirements provided the course includes at minimum a weekly discussion section conducted entirely in the target language. The discussion section must enroll a minimum of three students and the course must be designated as LxC in the course description.

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 are responsible for taking the necessary steps to ensure that those courses appear on their transcripts.

REQUIREMENTS FOR THE ANCIENT EGYPTIAN CERTIFICATE

Students seeking to earn the certificate are required to take four courses beyond the L₃ level, 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 certificate adviser, an independent study language course, an advanced texts seminar, and/or a graduate seminar may count toward certification requirements. At the discretion of the certificate adviser, students may, with prior permission, substitute a maximum of two courses of credit-bearing academic study abroad.

FACULTY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF NEAR EASTERN LANGUAGES AND CIVILIZATIONS

Sarab Al Ani, Muhammad Aziz, John Darnell, Jonas Elbousty, Ozgen Felek, Benjamin Foster, Eckart Frahm, Shiri Goren, Agnete Lassen, Gregory Marouard, Jane Mikkelson, Nadine Moeller, Randa Muhammed, Dina Roginsky, Farkhondeh Shayesteh, Kathryn Slanski, Shawkat Toorawa, Kevin Van Bladel, Klaus Wagensohner, Harvey Weiss, Meryem Ezgi Yalcin, Orit Yeret.

[View All NELC Courses](#) [View Akkadian Courses](#) [View Arabic Courses](#) [View Egyptian Courses](#) [View Hebrew Courses](#) [View Persian Courses](#) [View Turkish Courses](#) [View Ottoman Courses](#)