

NEAR EASTERN LANGUAGES AND CIVILIZATIONS (NELC)

*** NELC 0090a / HUMS 0245a, Six Global Perspectives on Evil: Murder, Law, and True Crime in History** Victoria Almansa-Villatoro

Harem conspiracies, kings' assassinations, self-defense killings, witch hunts, and serial murderers. The history of murder, violence, and criminal investigation is as old as humankind. Yet, crime is not always considered evil, nor is evil always associated with crime. In this course, we discuss how the way evil was perceived and crime was punished has changed throughout history. From mythical accounts of murders, to real records of trials of humans, animals, and even objects accused of homicide or witchcraft, we analyze how aspects of social status or gender played a role in shaping punishment across Eastern and Western civilizations. We compare codified-law civilizations to those in which custom, social pressure, and community ethics determined correct behavior. Four historical cold cases with accompanying evidence are presented for in-class debate, and... perhaps students may be able to help solve an old mystery! At the end of the semester, we recreate historical trials using the same crime, evidence, and participants, but following the law and procedures of each one of the historical settings covered in this course. Will the verdict and sentence be any different? Friday sessions alternate between writing workshops and field trips to Yale collections. Enrollment limited to first-year students. Students enroll concurrently with HUMS 0299, Six Global Perspectives Lab. WR, HU RP

*** NELC 157b and NELC 1570b / JDST 3060b / MMES 1157b, 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 256b / CPLT 1780b / HUMS 2330b / MMES 2201b / NELC 2560, Classics of the Islamic World** Shawkat Toorawa

Islamic civilization has produced numerous works that would make it onto almost anyone's list of wondrous books. In this course, we read a selection of (or from) those books and study the literary and intellectual cultures that produced them in an attempt to deepen and nuance our understanding of Islamic civilization. Readings include the Qur'an, classical Arabic poetry, the *Shahnameh*, *Leyli ve Mejnun*, the *Conference of the Birds*, the *Hang Tuah Epic*, and much else besides. All readings in translation. Previously offered as Classics: The Arabic-Islamic World. HU

*** NELC 0260a / ARCG 0231a / EVST 0030a, 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. HU, SO

NELC 1020a / HIST 1681a / MMES 1102a / SOCY 1002a, Introduction to the Middle East Jonathan Wyrzten

Introduction to the history, politics, societies, and cultures of the Middle East. Topics and themes include geopolitics, environment, state formation, roles of Judaism/Christianity/Islam, empire&colonialism, nationalism, regional & global wars, Palestine-Israel conflict, US and other Great Power intervention. HU, SO o Course cr

*** NELC 1170a / HIST 2635a / HUMS 2035a / JDST 2512a, Antisemitism and its opponents in the Muslim world** Staff

Antisemitism, as well as opposition to it, has long been a part of social, political, and intellectual life in Muslim-majority societies. These societies have also long included significant Jewish minorities, especially before the foundation of the State of Israel in 1948. This course takes a historical approach, carefully examining antisemitisms of various types in various periods as well as opposition to them by Jews, Muslims, and others in the Islamic world. HU

NELC 1200b / ANTH 1200b / HUMS 1210b, Unequal: Dynamics of Power and Social Hierarchy in Ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia Gojko Barjamovic

The course "Unequal" examines the historical roots of intolerance, slavery, and imperialism, emphasizing how our perceptions of history shape contemporary beliefs and policies. It challenges the notion that inequality is an inevitable outcome of societal complexity, positing that historical narratives often frame progress and freedom while obscuring themes of inequality. By investigating early human history, the course aims to unpack the concepts of identity, possession, value, freedom, and power, exploring their impact on modern society. Rather than focusing on specific literature or chronological period, "Unequal" centers around critical questions about human culture. The course employs innovative experimental lab assignments, allowing students to engage with the past creatively, such as cooking ancient recipes, brewing beer, and creating virtual museum exhibits. This interdisciplinary approach encourages a deeper understanding of the historical context that informs present-day issues, inviting students to rethink common narratives and assumptions about equality and progress. Ultimately, the course aims to foster critical thinking about the interplay between history and contemporary society. HU, SO o Course cr

NELC 1210b / HUMS 1400b, 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. WR, HU o Course cr

* NELC 1280a / CPLT 2000a / HUMS 1280a, **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 1330a, Beginnings of Business: A History of Early Trade Gojko Barjamovic

When did trade begin? When did business go global? How has the organization of commerce changed through time? What are our fundamental financial instruments and how and in what order where they developed? Are there fundamental rules behind the way in which humans conduct business? What roles have states and institutions historically played in facilitating or restricting trade? What sources and approaches are available to study trade in pre-modern times? Can business innovations from the past help us think about business in the present? To explore all these questions, this class draws upon data and case-studies drawn broadly from the ancient world but with focus on evidence from ancient Mesopotamia. With the benefit of a giant canvas of history we paint a detailed picture of how business developed through time. We look at examples where business was strictly regulated by state-controlled institutions as well as examples entrepreneurs would have to rely on informal enforcement mechanisms, such as kin-relationships and reputation in repeated interactions. We dive into the effects of shock on individuals and systems – from production shortages to pandemics. And we ask what happens when systems collapse, or value becomes immeasurable (as people have claimed for the 2008 crash). We study family-controlled business groups as an alternative to integrated and professionally managed corporations. And we observe how entrepreneurs adapted to face the financial challenges of states and dawning globalization. This course immerses students in the history of trade and draws on guests from widely different fields and disciplines to showcase the variety of approaches with which scholars address questions of business history. HU, SO

* NELC 1690a / CLCV 2391a, **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 2940a / HSAR 4357a / MMS 2940a / OTTM 2940a, **Motifs, Patterns, and Painting Techniques in Traditional Turkish Arts** Ozgen Felek

This painting class focuses on classical motifs and patterns in traditional Turkish arts in an Ottoman context. While learning motifs and patterns, students will learn not only the manuscript culture, but also non-manuscript items produced in the Ottoman Empire. Students will practice drawing and painting stylized flowers (such as “panch”

and “khatayi”), animals, and abstract patterns used in Turkish manuscript paintings, miniatures, calligraphy, rugs, kilims, stonework, tiles and ceramics, pottery, metal and leather work, and architecture. Materials used in traditional Turkish arts will be studied in detail as well. Students also create their own compositions incorporating traditional Turkish artistic principles. In addition to developing painting skills through individualized attention and support in class, a scheduled visit to the Beinecke Library enhances applied learning by encouraging students to examine artistic aspects in Turkish manuscripts. HU

*** NELC 2950b / HELN 2240b / HIST 2240b / MMES 2240b, Late Ottoman History**
Charalampos Minasidis

This seminar explores the Ottoman Empire from the late 18th century until its dissolution in 1923. It examines the Late Ottoman period through a historical lens, focusing on the political, social, economic, and cultural transformations that shaped the empire from the failed reforms of Selim III and the Greek Revolution, to the Tanzimat reforms, the autocracy of Sultan Abdul Hamid II, and the regime of the Young Turks. The course analyzes the origins, impact, and legacy of these changes, reconstructing the contours of Ottoman statehood, society, and culture. It pays particular attention to the rise of competing imperialisms and nationalisms among the empire’s diverse populations, as well as the experiences of ethno-religious minorities. Special focus is given to the emergence of ethnonational majoritarianism and its radicalization, which culminated in genocide and the compulsory population exchange between Greece and Turkey. The seminar aims to familiarize students with the key chronology, events, and figures of the Late Ottoman Empire, while introducing them to current historiographical debates, conceptual frameworks, and methodological approaches.

WR, HU

*** NELC 3210b / ANTH 4292b / ARCG 4292b, Imaging Ancient Worlds in Museum Collections** Klaus Wagensohnner and Agnete Lassen

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 3220b / ARCG 3122b, Urbanism and Urban Society in Ancient Egypt** Nadine Moeller

The aim of this seminar is to challenge prevailing views on Egypt’s non-urban past and to investigate Egypt as an early urban society. The emergence of urban features are traced diachronically starting with the Predynastic period up to the disintegration of the powerful Middle Kingdom state into the New Kingdom with its powerful royal cities and up to the urban transformation of the Late Period and Graeco-Roman times. This seminar offers a synthesis of the archaeological data that sheds light on the different facets of urbanism in ancient Egypt and looks at theoretical concepts and models of urbanism more generally, and how they can be applied to ancient societies. Drawing

on evidence from recent excavations, the changing settlement patterns are explored by contrasting periods of strong political control against those of decentralization. On a microlevel, the characteristics of households and the layout of domestic architecture are addressed, which are key elements for understanding how society functioned and evolved over time. In addition, settlement patterns provide further insights into the formation of complex society and the role of the state in the urban development of ancient Egypt. Prerequisite: Some background knowledge of ancient Egyptian history is required. HU

* **NELC 3260a / CPLT 4150a / HUMS 1480a, The Quran and its Interpreters**
Shawkat Toorawa

We spend the first third of the course reading the Quran, studying its written compilation and redaction; its narrative structure; its rhetorical strategies; its major themes; its connections to and departures from other Scripture; translation and the problems associated with it. In the next two thirds we engage with the rich tradition of commentary, exegesis, and interpretation it has occasioned—legal, literary, theological, and visual, from classical readings and materials all the way up to the modern period and present day. We also look at the ways the Quran has been interpreted in different media, notably the visual arts. We pay special attention to certain surahs (chapters), including The Heifer (2, Baqarah), Joseph (12, Yusuf), The Cave (18, Kahf), Ya Sin (36), and several prominent short surahs. Topics include the Devil; Jesus and Mary; Moses and the Children of Israel; the nature of the Divine; the status of women and men; the impact of the Qur'an on political and religious thought; and its influence of the Qur'an on literature. HU

* **NELC 3300b / ARCG 3263b / EVST 3263b / 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 3730a / ARCG 4273a / EVST 3473a / NELC 373, Climate Change, Societal Collapse, and Resilience** Harvey Weiss

Why do civilizations collapse? Debates rage among anthropologists, archaeologists, and historians about societal collapse causality, the role of abrupt onset century-scale megadroughts, and adaptive resilience strategies. The seminar examines archaeological, historical, and paleoclimate data and arguments for (1) the synchronous collapses of Early Bronze Age 2200 BCE Mediterranean, West Asia, Egypt, Indus, China, (2) Late Bronze Age 1200 BCE Mediterranean, West Asia, Egypt collapses, (3) the abrupt fall of the Assyrian Empire 612 BCE, (4) Maya region disintegration ca. 800 CE, (5) Ancestral Pueblo 1300 CE abandonments, and (6) the Late Victorian Holocausts late 19th century India. To judge from the competing claims of social scientists and paleoclimatologists, we are not likely to resolve all arguments. We will, however, illuminate weaknesses,

strengths, and "data frontiers. Advancing the frontiers of knowledge about the past also elevates discussion and analysis of the present. We might ask, "How are we adapting to an abrupt anthropogenic climate change?" as productively as we ask, "Is the present the past?" In the context of the abrupt climate change and societal collapse frame that we have created, the last seminar meeting examines the Anthropocene and "The Mystery of Anthropocene Causality." HU, SO o Course cr

*** NELC 3990b / ARCG 4278b / EVST 3399b, Agriculture: Origins, Evolution, Crises**

Harvey Weiss

Seminar analysis of agriculture, from its revolutionary origins ten thousand years ago out of a million years of hunting and gathering, through selected periods of intensification, upheaval, and social transformation, to the post-industrial environmental and hyper-capitalization crises. When, where, and why did hunters and gatherers first practice agriculture? What were its societal effects? When, how, and why was agricultural surplus first produced? What were its transformative consequences? Are you surplus? What are the social and technological characteristics of intensive and extensive agricultural systems? Which agricultural system forces engendered western European capitalism? What environmental and social forces drive agricultural changes such as the invention and now global use of ammonium nitrate fertilizer? What will be the future relationship between agricultural innovation and social change? The seminar integrates modern formulations and critical recent appraisals within articles, book chapters, and five classic films for analytic weekly discussion. SO

*** NELC 4920a and NELC 4930b, The Senior Essay** Shiri Goren

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 4930) 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 HQ 604, 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.