

Introduction to the Ancient Near East

Semester	Fall 2022
Instructor	Dr. Joshua Jeffers Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations Email: jeffers@sas.upenn.edu Office Hours: Tuesday 1:30–3:00 or by appointment Office: Babylonian Section, Penn Museum (see Canvas for the most up-to-date information)
Requirements	None
Fulfills	General Requirement II: History and Tradition and Cross Cultural Analysis
Time and Place	Lectures: TR 3:30–4:30, MEYH B4 Recitation section: F 10:15–11:15, MEYH B4

Description

The great pyramids and mysterious mummies of Egypt, the fabled Tower of Babel, and the laws of the Babylonian king Hammurabi are some of the things that might come to mind when you think of the ancient Near East. Yet these are only a very few of the many fascinating — and at times perplexing — aspects of the civilizations that flourished there c. 3300–300 BCE. This is where writing first developed, where people thought that the gods wrote down what would happen in the future on the lungs and livers of sacrificed sheep, and where people knew how to determine the length of the hypotenuse a thousand years before the Greek Pythagoras was born. During this course, we will learn more about these other matters and discover their place in the cultures and civilizations of that area.

This is an interdisciplinary survey of the history, society and culture of the ancient Near East, in particular Egypt and Mesopotamia, utilizing extensive readings from ancient texts in translation (including the Epic of Gilgamesh, “one of the great masterpieces of world literature”), but also making use of archaeological and art historical materials. The goal of the course is to gain an appreciation of the various societies, to understand some of their great achievements, to become acquainted with some of the fascinating individuals of the time (such as Hatshepsut, “the woman pharaoh,” and Akhenaten, “the heretic king”), and to appreciate the rich heritage that they have left us.

Structure, Requirements and Assessment

This is a lecture course, but there will also be opportunities for discussion in the recitation period. We will be reading a variety of primary sources (e.g., myths, epics, religious literature, letters, and royal inscriptions) and these will be discussed primarily in the recitation period.

Readings from outside the course textbook, including translations of the ancient texts discussed in the recitation session, will normally be posted on Canvas (<http://canvas.upenn.edu>). Be sure to bring printouts to the recitation or have access to the pdfs of the files!

Grades will be calculated as follows:

● Two Quizzes	6%	Tues. Sept. 20 and Thurs. Nov. 3
● Museum assignment	4%	Due on Fri. Sept. 30
● Mid-term exam	20%	Tues. Oct. 4
● Essay	30%	Due on Thurs. Dec. 8*
● Final exam	30%	TBD
● Recitation participation and quizzes	10%	

* The essay can be handed in at any time before this date. If it is submitted by Thursday, Nov. 17, it will be graded and available to be picked up by Thursday, Dec. 8.

The two short (10 minutes) quizzes will both include a few short identifications/questions and the first quiz will also have a map question.

The museum assignment involves choosing an artifact/text from the Ancient Near East on display in the University Museum and writing a brief (2–3 pages, double-spaced) report on it, explaining why you chose it, why it is important and/or interesting, what it tells us about the civilization it comes from, what it was used for, and/or any connections/comparisons it might have to similar objects from other cultures (including possibly our own today). The report thus can be quite subjective in nature, but **MUST** indicate that the student has seriously thought about the object.

Instructions on writing the essay (8–10 pages) and a list of some possible essay topics will be posted on Canvas. Additionally, each student must do one of two things to have his or her topic approved. By Thursday, November 10 the student must either 1) meet with the instructor as he/she is in the process of selecting a topic for the essay or shortly after work has begun on it; or, 2) submit a brief written proposal (about ½–¾ of a page) on the topic with a short annotated bibliography.

At the beginning of seven recitations there will be a brief quiz on the reading for that day. If you have done the reading, you should have no problem with the quiz.

Course Textbook:

Stiebing, William H., Jr. *Ancient Near Eastern History and Culture*. 3rd ed. New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2018. This book provides a general introduction to the history (and to a lesser extent the culture) of the Ancient Near East. The lectures are designed to match the chapters in the book. Copies are available at the Penn Bookstore; one copy is on reserve at the Rosengarten Reserve desk in Van Pelt.

Additional readings will be posted on Canvas.

Note: Per University guidelines, masks are not required for in-person classroom attendance. However, any individual desiring to wear a mask is welcome to do so.

Class Schedule

Week 1

- Tues. Aug. 30 Introduction *Read:* Stiebing Introduction (and just skim chapter 1)
- Thurs. Sept. 1 Geography, People Groups, and Chronology
- Fri. Sept. 2 *Recitation: Reading Ancient Texts* *Reading:* See Canvas

Week 2

- Tues. Sept. 6 Mesopotamia: Dawn of Civilization *Read:* Stiebing chapter 2 (skim pp. 87–95 from ch. 4)
- Thurs. Sept. 8 Mesopotamia: The Sumerians and City States
- Fri. Sept. 9 *Recitation: ANE Destruction Stories* *Reading:* See Canvas

Week 3

- Tues. Sept. 13 Mesopotamia: The Akkadians *Read:* Stiebing chapter 3 (skim pp. 95–107 from ch. 4)
- Thurs. Sept. 15 Mesopotamia: Third Dynasty of Ur
- Fri. Sept. 16 *Recitation: The Middle East Galleries of the Penn Museum*
Note: Meet at the reception desk at the Kress entrance of the Penn Museum.

Week 4

- Tues. Sept. 20 In-class Quiz
Mesopotamia: The Assyrians and Shamshi-Adad *Read:* Stiebing chapter 6
- Thurs. Sept. 22 Mesopotamia: The Babylonians and Hammurabi
- Fri. Sept. 23 *Recitation: Letters from Mesopotamia and Egypt* *Reading:* See Canvas

Week 5

- Tues. Sept. 27 Egypt: Foundation of the Egyptian State *Read:* Stiebing chapter 5
- Thurs. Sept. 29 Egypt: Old Kingdom and the Pyramid Builders
- Fri. Sept. 30 *Recitation: Old Kingdom Autobiographies* *Reading:* See Canvas
- Fri. Sept. 30 ****Museum Assignments due****

Week 6

- Tues. Oct. 4 Mid-term Exam
- Thurs. Oct. 6 *No Class: Fall Break*
- Fri. Oct. 7 *No Recitation: Fall Break*

Week 7

- Tues. Oct. 11 Egypt: Middle Kingdom *Read:* Stiebing chapter 7 (just skim pp. 203–205)

Thurs. Oct. 13 Egypt: The Hyksos
Fri. Oct. 14 *Recitation: Travelers' Tales*

Week 8

Tues. Oct. 18 Egypt: New Kingdom and Hatshepsut *Read: Stiebing chapter 8*
Thurs. Oct. 20 Egypt: New Kingdom and Akhenaten
Fri. Oct. 21 *Recitation: The Egyptian Collection of the Penn Museum*
Note: Meet at the reception desk at the Kress entrance of the Penn Museum

Week 9

Tues. Oct. 25 Egypt: New Kingdom and the Great States
Thurs. Oct. 27 The Hittites and Mittanni *Read: Stiebing chapter 9*
Fri. Oct. 28 *Recitation: Battle of Qadesh and Ramses II* *Reading: See Canvas*

Week 10

Tues. Nov. 1 Mesopotamia: Middle Babylonian and Middle Assyrian Kingdoms
Thurs. Nov. 3 In-class Quiz
End of the Bronze Age
Fri. Nov. 4 *Recitation: ANE Creation Stories* *Reading: See Canvas*

Week 11

Tues. Nov. 8 Egypt: Third Intermediate and Saite Periods *Read: Stiebing chapter 10
and pp. 393–409 from ch. 13*
Thurs. Nov. 10 Israel and the Levant
Fri. Nov. 11 *Recitation: The Egyptian Netherworld* *Reading: See Canvas*

Week 12

Tues. Nov. 15 Mesopotamia: Neo-Assyrian Empire *Read: Stiebing ch. 11 (to 345)
and pp. 409–419 from ch. 13*
Thurs. Nov. 17 Mesopotamia: Neo-Assyrian Royal Art
Fri. Nov. 18 *Recitation: Royal Inscriptions* *Reading: See Canvas*

Week 13

Tues. Nov. 22 Mesopotamia: Late Neo-Assyrian Period and the Fall of Assyria
Wed. Nov. 23 *Recitation: The Epic of Gilgamesh* *Reading: See Canvas*
Note: Recitation is Wed. since Nov. 24–25 is Thanksgiving Break.

Week 14

Tues. Nov. 29 Mesopotamia: Neo-Babylonian Period and
Nebuchadnezzar II *Read: Stiebing rest of ch. 11,
pp. 419–422 from ch. 13, and
the pdf on Canvas*

Thurs. Dec. 1 Mesopotamia: Neo-Babylonian Period and Nabonidus
Fri. Dec. 2 *Recitation: The Cyrus Cylinder* *Reading: See Canvas*

Week 15

Tues. Dec. 6 Persians of the Achaemenid Period *Read: Stiebing chapter 12
and pp. 422–427 from ch. 13*
Thurs. Dec. 8 Rediscovery and Legacy *Read: Stiebing Afterword*
** Essay due**
Fri. Dec. 9 *No Recitation*

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Reading Days December 13–14

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Final exams: Dec. 15–22

Selected Recommended Bibliography for Essays and Additional Reading

- Baines, John, and Jaromir Malek. *Cultural Atlas of Ancient Egypt*. Rev. ed. New York and London: Facts on File, 2000.
- Bard, K.A., ed. *Encyclopedia of the Archaeology of Ancient Egypt*. London: Routledge, 1999.
- Bottéro, Jean. *Religion in Ancient Mesopotamia*. Translated by Teresa Lavender Fagan. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001.
- Bryce, Trevor. *The Kingdom of the Hittites*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998.
- Bryce, Trevor. *Life and Society in the Hittite World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- The Cambridge Ancient History*. 4+ vols. 3rd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970–.
- Coogan, Michael D., ed. *The Oxford History of the Biblical World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Freedman, David Noel, ed. *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*. 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992.
- Grimal, Nicholas. *A History of Ancient Egypt*. Translated by Ian Shaw. Oxford and Cambridge: Blackwell, 1992.
- Gurney, O.R. *The Hittites*. 2nd ed. Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1954.
- Hoerth, Alfred J., Gerald L. Mattingly, and Edwin M. Yamauchi, eds. *Peoples of the Old Testament World*. Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 1994.
- Joannès, Francis. *The Age of Empires: Mesopotamia in the First Millennium BC*. Translated by Antonia Nevill. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004.
- Klengel, Horst. *Syria 3000 to 300 B.C.: A Handbook of Political History*. Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1992.
- Kuhrt, Amélie. *The Ancient Near East, c. 3000–330 BC*. 2 vols. London and New York: Routledge, 1995.
- Leick, G., ed. *The Babylonian World*. London and New York: Routledge, 2007.
- Macqueen, J.G. *The Hittites and their Contemporaries in Asia Minor*. Rev. ed. London: Thames and Hudson, 1986.
- Meyers, Eric M., ed. *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Archaeology in the Near East*. 5 vols. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- Miller, J. Maxwell, and John H. Hayes. *A History of Ancient Israel and Judah*. London and Philadelphia, 1986.
- Nemet-Nejat, Karen Rhea. *Daily Life in Ancient Mesopotamia*. Westport, Connecticut, and London: Greenwood Press, 1998.
- Oppenheim, A. Leo. *Ancient Mesopotamia: Portrait of a Dead Civilization*. Rev. ed. completed by Erica Reiner. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977.
- Postgate, J.N. *Early Mesopotamia: Society and Economy at the Dawn of History*. London and New York: Routledge, 1992.
- Redford, Donald B., ed. *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*. 3 vols. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Roaf, Michael. *Cultural Atlas of Mesopotamia and the Ancient Near East*. New York and Oxford: Facts on File, 1990.
- Rogerson, John. *Atlas of the Bible*. New York: Facts on File, 1985.
- Sasson, Jack M., ed. *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*. 4 vols. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1995.

- Shafer, Byron E., ed. *Religion in Ancient Egypt: Gods, Myths, and Personal Practice*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1991.
- Shaw, Ian. *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Snell, Daniel C., ed. *A Companion to the Ancient Near East*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2005.
- Snell, Daniel C. *Life in the Ancient Near East, 3100–332 B.C.E.* 2nd ed. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997.
- Van De Mieroop, Marc. *A History of Ancient Egypt*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011
- Van De Mieroop, Marc. *A History of the Ancient Near East, ca. 3000–323 BC*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2007.
- Wiesehöfer, Josef. *Ancient Persia from 550 BC to 650 AD*. Translated by Azizeh Azodi. London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2001.
- Wilhem, Gernot. *The Hurrians*. Translated by Jennifer Barnes, with a chapter by Diana L. Stein. Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1989.
- Wiseman, D.J., ed. *Peoples of Old Testament Times*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973.

Recommended Collections of Translations of Ancient Texts

- Arnold, Bill T., and Bryan E. Beyer, eds. *Readings from the Ancient Near East: Primary Sources for Old Testament Study*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002.
- Beckman, Gary. *Hittite Diplomatic Texts*. 2nd ed. SBL Writings from the Ancient World 7. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999.
- Black, Jeremy, et al. *The Literature of Ancient Sumer*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.
- Chavalas, Mark W., ed. *The Ancient Near East: Historical Sources in Translation*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006.
- Dalley, Stephanie. *Myths From Mesopotamia: Creation, The Flood, Gilgamesh, and Others*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1989.
- Erman, Adolf. *The Ancient Egyptians: A Sourcebook of their Writings*. Translated by Aylward M. Blackwell. New Cork: Harper & Row, 1966.
- Foster, Benjamin, R. *Before the Muses: An Anthology of Akkadian Literature*. 2 vols. Bethesda: CDL Press, 1993.
- Glassner, Jean-Jacques. *Mesopotamian Chronicles*. SBL Writings from the Ancient World 19. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004.
- Hallo, William W., ed. *The Context of Scripture*. 3 vols. Leiden: Brill, 1997–2002.
- Lichtheim, Mariam. *Ancient Egyptian Literature*. 3 vols. Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1973–80.
- Moran, William L. *The Amarna Letters*. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992.
- Murnane, William J. *Texts from the Amarna Period in Egypt*. SBL Writings from the Ancient World 5. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995.
- Pritchard, James B., ed. *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*. 3rd ed. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969.
- Roth, Martha T. *Law Collections from Mesopotamia and Asia Minor*. SBL Writings from the Ancient World 6. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997.
- Simpson, William Kelly, ed. *The Literature of Ancient Egypt: An Anthology of Stories, Instructions, Stelae, Autobiographies, and Poetry*. 3rd ed. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003.