

MIDDLE EASTERN LANGUAGES & CULTURES (MELC)

MELC 0001 Introduction to the Ancient Middle East

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 Middle East. Yet these are only a very few of the many fascinating – and at time 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 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 Middle 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 of the time, to understand some of their great achievements, to become acquainted with some of the fascinating individuals of the time (such as Hatshepsut, "the women pharaoh," and Akhenaten, "the heretic king"), and to appreciate the rich heritage that they have left us.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: ANCH 0100, HIST 0730, NELC 0001

1 Course Unit

MELC 0002 Introduction to the Middle East

This is the second half of the Near East sequence. This course surveys Islamic civilization from circa 600 (the rise of Islam) to the start of the modern era and concentrates on political, social, and cultural trends. Although the emphasis will be on Middle Eastern societies, we will occasionally consider developments in other parts of the world, such as sub-Saharan Africa, Central Asia, and Spain, where Islamic civilization was or has been influential. Our goal is to understand the shared features that have distinguished Islamic civilization as well as the varieties of experience that have endowed it with so much diversity.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: HIST 0830, NELC 0002

1 Course Unit

MELC 0003 Origin and Culture of Cities

The UN estimates that 2.9 of the world's 6.1 billion people live in cities and that this percentage is rapidly increasing in many parts of the world. This course examines urban life and urban problems by providing anthropological perspectives on this distinctive form of human association and land use. First we will examine the "origin" of cities, focusing on several of the places where cities first developed, including Mesopotamia and the Valley of Mexico. We will then investigate the internal structure of non-industrial cities by looking at case studies from around the world and from connections between the cities of the past and the city in which we live and work today.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: ANTH 0103, NELC 0003, URBS 0003

1 Course Unit

MELC 0004 Myths and Religions of the Ancient World

This course will survey the religions of the ancient Middle East, situating each in its historical and socio-cultural context and focusing on the key issues of concern to humanity: creation, birth, the place of humans in the order of the universe, death, and destruction. The course will cover not only the better-known cultures from the area, such as Egypt and Mesopotamia, but also some lesser-known traditions, such as those of the Hittites, or of the ancient Mediterranean town of Ugarit. Religion will not be viewed merely as a separate, sealed-off element of the ancient societies, but rather as an element in various cultural contexts, for example, the relationship between religion and magic and the role of religion in politics will be recurring topics in the survey. Background readings for the lectures will be drawn not only from the modern scholarly literature, but also from the words of the ancients themselves in the form of their myths, rituals, and liturgies.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: ANCH 1203, NELC 0004, RELS 0004

1 Course Unit

MELC 0012 Visible Language: History of Writing Systems

This will cover the history of the invention of writing with a focus on Cuneiform, Egyptian Hieroglyphs, Mayan Glyphs, Chinese, the Alphabet, and their subsequent history down to their digital descendants. Writing will be analyzed as a technology with major social and cognitive effects.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: NELC 0012

1 Course Unit

MELC 0014 Jerusalem: Holy City

This course will survey the cultural history of Jerusalem over three millennia with a special focus on its configuration as contested, sacred space in multiple traditions (including Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and others). The course will address how Jerusalem acquired its "holy" status on both a micro-level (via sacred spaces within the city) and macro-level (as a target for pilgrimage in competition with other cities in the region). These aspects of the city will be analyzed both as they are depicted in texts and as they are attested in the art and architecture found in Jerusalem and in similar cities in the broader Mediterranean/Middle East. The course will examine how sacred space and sacred urbanism are produced through interactions with texts, artifacts, and built environments.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: JWST 0014, NELC 0014, RELS 0250

Mutually Exclusive: MELC 6414

1 Course Unit

MELC 0050 Ancient Civilizations of the World

This course explores the archaeology (material culture) of early complex societies or civilizations in Egypt, Mesopotamia, and the Aegean. According to the traditional paradigm, civilization first emerged during the fourth millennium BCE in Egypt and Mesopotamia. In the Mediterranean, state-level societies first appeared in Crete and mainland Greece in the early second millennium BCE. This course investigates how and why these civilizations developed, as well as their appearance and structure in the early historic (or literate) phases of their existence. A comparative perspective will illustrate what these early civilizations have in common and the ways in which they are unique. This course will consist largely of lectures which will outline classic archaeological and anthropological theories on state formation, before turning to examine the available archaeological (and textual) data on emerging complexity in Egypt, Mesopotamia, and the Aegean. This course does not presuppose any knowledge of archaeology or ancient languages; the instructor will provide any background necessary. Because this is a course on material culture, some of the class periods will be spent at the Penn Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology. These will consist of a guided tour of a relevant gallery, as well as a hands-on object-based lab with archaeological materials selected by the instructor.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: ANTH 0105, NELC 0050, URBS 0050

1 Course Unit

MELC 0060 Art of Mesopotamia

Visual expression was first developed in Mesopotamia in the same environment as the invention of writing. This lecture class will introduce the arts of the major periods of Mesopotamian History ending with the "cinematic" effects achieved by the Assyrian artists on the walls of the royal palaces. The strong connection between verbal and visual expression will be traced over the three millennia course of Mesopotamian civilization from the earliest periods through the imperial art of the Assyrians and Babylonians of the first millennium BCE. The class and the assignments will regularly engage with objects in the collections and on display in the galleries of the Penn Museum.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: ARTH 2240, NELC 0060

Mutually Exclusive: ARTH 6240

1 Course Unit

MELC 0100 Archaeology & The Bible

In this introductory course, students will learn how archaeology illuminates the material and social world behind the texts of the Hebrew Bible and contributes to debates about the history and culture of these societies. We will study the sites, artifacts, and art of the lands of Israel, Judah, Phoenicia, Philistia, Ammon, Moab, and Edom during the period framing the rise and fall of these kingdoms, ca. 1200 to 330 BCE. We will see how biblical archaeology arose in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, how the complex relationship between archaeology and the biblical text has evolved to the present day, and how new discoveries continue to challenge preconceptions about this period. We will learn a broad range of methods in both current archaeology and biblical studies and how they can be used to answer questions about ancient societies, their practices and beliefs, and the material and textual remains they left behind.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: ANTH 0111, JWST 0111, NELC 0100

1 Course Unit

MELC 0102 Reading Ancient Mesopotamia

An introduction to the literature of Ancient Mesopotamia. The literature of ancient Mesopotamia flourished thousands of years ago in a culture all of its own, yet the survival of hundreds of thousands of written records challenges us to read it and make sense of it without simply approximating it to the realm of our own understanding. How can we learn to do this? Situating our understanding of how we read and how we understand culture within an interdisciplinary range of literary-critical and analytic approaches, we will approach this question by immersing ourselves in the myths tales and mentalities that made Mesopotamian literature meaningful. To give us a measure of our progress we will bracket the semester by reading Gilgamesh which is never less than a great story, but which will take on new layers of meaning as the semester develops and we learn to read the text in more and more Mesopotamian ways. As we journey through these mysterious realms we will reflect not only Mesopotamia and its immortal literature but on what it means to read and understand any cultures other than our own.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: NELC 0102

1 Course Unit

MELC 0110 Ancient Iraq

The land and peoples of Iraq have a long and rich history stemming from the birth of writing in its earliest cities. Beginning with the landscapes and environments, we discover the most important elements of Iraq's ancient civilizations. The course includes several visits to the Penn Museum to view the galleries and engage with tablets and other artifacts first hand.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: NELC 0110

1 Course Unit

MELC 0150 Ancient Iraq: Mesopotamian Culture and Its Legacy

Course topics may vary semester to semester but will focus on different aspects of the culture in ancient Iraq, and the effect on Iraq and the world.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: NELC 0150

1 Course Unit

MELC 0200 Land of the Pharaohs

This course provides an introduction to the society, culture and history of ancient Egypt. The objective of the course is to provide an understanding of the characteristics of the civilization of ancient Egypt and how that ancient society succeeded as one of the most successful and long-lived civilizations in world history.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: NELC 0200

1 Course Unit

MELC 0205 Literary Legacy of Ancient Egypt

This course surveys the literature of Ancient Egypt from the Old Kingdom through the Greco-Roman period, focusing upon theme, structure, and style, as well as historical and social context. A wide range of literary genres are treated, including epics; tales, such as the "world's oldest fairy tale;" poetry, including love poems, songs, and hymns; religious texts, including the "Cannibal Hymn"; magical spells; biographies; didactic literature; drama; royal and other monumental inscriptions; and letters, including personal letters, model letters, and letters to the dead. Issues such as literacy, oral tradition, and the question poetry vs. prose are also discussed. No prior knowledge of Egyptian is required.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: NELC 0205

1 Course Unit

MELC 0210 Art and Architecture in Ancient Egypt

This course will be an introduction to the art, architecture and minor arts that were produced during the three thousand years of ancient Egyptian history. This material will be presented in its cultural and historical contexts through illustrated lectures and will include visits to the collection of the University Museum.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: ANCH 1305, ARTH 2180, NELC 0210

1 Course Unit

MELC 0215 The Religion of Ancient Egypt

Weekly lectures (some of which will be illustrated) and a field trip to the University Museum's Egyptian Section. The multifaceted approach to the subject matter covers such topics as funerary literature and religion, cults, magic religious art and architecture, and the religion of daily life.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: NELC 0215, RELS 0215

Mutually Exclusive: MELC 6125

1 Course Unit

MELC 0220 Women in Ancient Egypt

This class will examine the many roles played by women in ancient Egypt. From goddesses and queens, to wives and mothers, women were a visible presence in ancient Egypt. We will study the lives of famous ancient Egyptian women such as Hatshepsut, Nefertiti and Cleopatra. More independent than many of their contemporaries in neighboring areas, Egyptian women enjoyed greater freedoms in matters of economy and law. By examining the evidence left to us in the literature (including literary texts and non-literary texts such as legal documents, administrative texts and letters), the art, and the archaeological record, we will come away with a better understanding of the position of women in this ancient culture.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: NELC 0220

Mutually Exclusive: MELC 6120

1 Course Unit

MELC 0225 The World of Cleopatra

The figure of Cleopatra is familiar from modern stories, legends, and film. Was this famous woman a brazen seductress or a brilliant political mind? How many of these presentations are historically accurate? This class will examine the Ptolemaic period in Egypt (305-30 BCE), the time period during which Cleopatra lived, in an attempt to separate myth from reality. The Ptolemaic period is filled with political and personal intrigue. It was also a time of dynamic multiculturalism. Arguably one of the most violent and fascinating eras in ancient Egyptian history, the Ptolemaic period is largely unknown and often misunderstood. This course will examine the history, art, religion and literature of Egypt's Ptolemaic period which culminated in the reign of Cleopatra VII.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: NELC 0225

Mutually Exclusive: MELC 6110

1 Course Unit

MELC 0300 Introduction to the Bible

An introduction to the major themes and ideas of the Hebrew Bible (the Old Testament), with attention to the contributions of archaeology and modern Biblical scholarship, including Biblical criticism and the response to it in Judaism and Christianity. All readings are in English.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: JWST 0303, NELC 0300, RELS 0301

1 Course Unit

MELC 0301 Elementary Biblical Hebrew I

This course is an introduction to Biblical Hebrew. It assumes no prior knowledge, but students who can begin to acquire a reading knowledge of the Hebrew alphabet before class starts will find it extremely helpful. The course is the 1st of a 4-semester sequence whose purpose is to prepare students to take courses in Bible that demand a familiarity with the original language of the text.

Fall

Also Offered As: JWST 0170, NELC 0301

Mutually Exclusive: MELC 5211

1 Course Unit

MELC 0302 Elementary Biblical Hebrew II

A continued introduction to the grammar of Biblical Hebrew, focusing on the verbal system, with an emphasis on developing language skills in handling Biblical texts. A suitable entry point for students who have had some Modern Hebrew.

Spring

Also Offered As: JWST 0270, NELC 0302

Mutually Exclusive: MELC 5212

1 Course Unit

MELC 0303 Intermediate Biblical Hebrew I

This course will focus on using the grammar and vocabulary learned at the introductory level to enable students to read Biblical texts independently and take advanced Bible exegesis courses. We will also work on getting comfortable with the standard dictionaries, concordances, and grammars used by scholars of the Bible. We will concentrate on prose this semester, closely reading Ruth, Jonah, and other prose selections. We will begin to translate from English into Biblical Hebrew, and there will also be a unit on the punctuation marks used in the Bible. This is a suitable entry point for students who already have strong Hebrew skills.

Fall

Also Offered As: JWST 0370, NELC 0303

Mutually Exclusive: MELC 5213

1 Course Unit

MELC 0304 Intermediate Biblical Hebrew II

This course is a continuation of the fall semester's Intermediate Biblical Hebrew I. No one will be admitted into the course who has not taken the fall semester. It will continue to focus on using the grammar and vocabulary learned at the introductory level to enable students to read biblical texts independently and take advanced Bible exegesis courses. We will concentrate this semester on various selections of Biblical poetry, including Exodus 15 and Job 28. We will also continue to translate English prose into Biblical Hebrew.

Spring

Also Offered As: JWST 0470, NELC 0304

Mutually Exclusive: MELC 5214

1 Course Unit

MELC 0305 Great Books of Judaism

Since the early medieval period, Jews have been known as "the People of the Book". Yet the books they produced and consumed changed drastically over time and place, spanning a variety of known genres and inventing new ones. These works, in turn, shaped the texts, ideas, and lives of Jews and others for millennia, spawned vast commentary traditions, and inspired new works. This course engages prominent Jewish texts, such as the Hebrew Bible, Rabbinic Literature, the works of major medieval philosophers, pre-modern intellectuals, and modern authors, situating them in their literary, cultural, and social contexts, and examining their later reception.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: JWST 0305, NELC 0305, RELS 0305

Mutually Exclusive: MELC 5210

1 Course Unit

MELC 0311 Divinity, Polytheism and Monotheism in the Hebrew Bible and Ancient Israel - Judah

This course treats monotheism as a particular historical development of the texts in the Hebrew Bible (that is, the Jewish Tanakh/Christian Old Testament), and thus analyzes the idea of "one God only" as the product of a complex set of historical conditions. It will take extensive time to examine the early history of the Hebrew Bible's familiar God, Yhwh, in inscriptional, biblical, and archaeological evidence, showing that he was once at home in the polytheistic environment of the ancient Near East (Southwest Asia). By embracing these longstanding entanglements, this course will explore the means by which Hebrew scribes came to define this deity not only as the most important god among many, but as the only all-powerful deity to exist in the entire cosmos. A variety of topics will be covered, addressing a number of questions raised by the evidence at hand: what is the evidence for Yhwh outside of the Bible? How do historians define his emergence in history? Did he really have a wife named Asherah? What did he look like and where did he live? What circumstances caused Judean writers to consider him the only all-powerful deity the universe? And finally, how did the subsequent Jewish imagination re-inscribe the older polytheistic world in light of monotheizing changes? While knowledge of the Bible, its languages, and its history may seem like a desired feature for the prospective student, there are no prerequisites. This course will be able to introduce the material to those at a beginner's level.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: NELC 0311

1 Course Unit

MELC 0315 Jewish Literature in the Middle Ages in Translation

Course explores the cultural history of Jews in the lands of Islam from the time of Mohammed through the late 17th century (end of Ottoman expansion into Europe) –in Iraq, the Middle East, al-Andalus and the Ottoman Empire. Primary source documents (in English translation) illuminate minority-majority relations, internal Jewish tensions (e.g., Qaraism), and developments in scriptural exegesis, rabbinic law, philosophy, poetry, polemics, mysticism and liturgy.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: COML 0315, JWST 0315, NELC 0315, RELS 0315

1 Course Unit

MELC 0318 Abrahamic Faiths & Cultures: Create Community Course

The aim of this course is to design a Middle School curriculum on "Abrahamic Faiths and Cultures" that will subsequently be taught in local public schools. First two hours will be devoted to study and discussion of primary and secondary sources grouped in thematic units. These will explore Jewish, Christian and Islamic teachings on topics including God, worship, religious calendar, life cycle events, attitudes toward religious others; internal historical developments. During the last seminar hour, we will learn from West Philadelphia clergy members, Middle School Social Studies teachers and principals about what they regard as necessary, and incorporate their insights. During the last hour, West Philadelphia clergy members, Middle School Social Studies teachers and principals will share with us what they believe is needed to enable the course to succeed. Class participants will attend prayer services on fieldtrips to a range of West Philadelphia houses of worship. In future semesters, some class participants may teach the resulting curriculum in selected neighborhood schools.

Fall

Also Offered As: NELC 0318, RELS 0318, URBS 0318

1 Course Unit

MELC 0320 Modern Hebrew Literature and Film in Translation

This course is designed to introduce students to the rich art of Modern Hebrew and Israeli literature and film. Poetry, short stories, and novel excerpts are taught in translation. The course studies Israeli cinema alongside literature, examining the various facets of this culture that is made of national aspirations and individual passions. The class is meant for all: no previous knowledge of history or the language is required. The topic changes each time the course is offered. Topics include: giants of Israeli literature; the image of the city; childhood; the marginalized voices of Israel; the Holocaust from an Israeli perspective; and fantasy, dreams & madness.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: CIMS 0320, COML 0320, JWST 0320, NELC 0320

1 Course Unit

MELC 0325 Jewish Mysticism

Survey of expressions of Jewish mysticism from Hebrew Scripture through the 21st century. Topics include rabbinic concerns about mystical speculation, the ascent through the celestial chambers - heikhalot-, the Book of Creation, the relationship of Jewish philosophy and mysticism, techniques of letter permutation, schematization of the Divine Body, the prominence of gender and sexuality in kabalistic thought, the relationship of kabbalah to the practice of the commandments, Zohar, Lurianic kabbalah, Hasidism, New-Age Jewish spirituality and the resurgence of Jewish mysticism in the 20th century. All readings will be in English translation.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: JWST 0325, NELC 0325, RELS 0325

1 Course Unit

MELC 0330 Themes Jewish Tradition

Course topics will vary; they have included The Binding of Isaac, Responses to Catastrophes in Jewish History, Holy Men & Women (Ben-Amos); Rewriting the Bible (Dohrmann); Performing Judaism (Fishman); Jewish Political Thought (Fishman); Jewish Esotericism (Lorberbaum) Democratic culture assumes the democracy of knowledge - the accessibility of knowledge and its transparency. Should this always be the case? What of harmful knowledge? When are secrets necessary? In traditional Jewish thought, approaching the divine has often assumed an aura of danger. Theological knowledge was thought of as restricted. This seminar will explore the "open" and "closed" in theological knowledge, as presented in central texts of the rabbinic tradition: the Mishnah, Maimonides and the Kabbalah. Primary sources will be available in both Hebrew and English.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: JWST 0330, NELC 0330, RELS 0335

Mutually Exclusive: MELC 6305

1 Course Unit

MELC 0335 Jewish Humor

In modern American popular culture Jewish humor is considered by Jews and non-Jews as a recognizable and distinct form of humor. Focusing upon folk-humor, in this course we will examine the history of this perception, and study different manifestation of Jewish humor as a particular case study of ethnic in general. Specific topics for analysis will be: humor in the Hebrew Bible, Jewish humor in Europe and in America, JAP and JAM jokes, Jewish tricksters and pranksters, Jewish humor in the Holocaust and Jewish humor in Israel. The term paper will be collecting project of Jewish jokes.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: COML 0335, JWST 0335, NELC 0335

1 Course Unit

MELC 0350 Jews and Judaism in Antiquity

A broad introduction to the history of Jewish civilization from its Biblical beginnings to the Middle Ages, with the main focus on the formative period of classical rabbinic Judaism and on the symbiotic relationship between Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

Spring

Also Offered As: HIST 1600, JWST 1600, NELC 0350, RELS 1600

1 Course Unit

MELC 0355 Medieval and Early Modern Jewry

Exploration of intellectual, social, and cultural developments in Jewish civilization from the rise of Islam in the seventh century to the assault on established conceptions of faith and religious authority in 17th century Europe, that is, from the age of Mohammed to that of Spinoza. Particular attention will be paid to the interaction of Jewish culture with those of Christianity and Islam.

Fall

Also Offered As: HIST 1610, JWST 1610, NELC 0355, RELS 1610

1 Course Unit

MELC 0360 Jews in the Modern World

This course offers an intensive survey of the major currents in Jewish culture and society from the late middle ages to the present. Focusing upon the different societies in which Jews have lived, the course explores Jewish responses to the political, socio-economic, and cultural challenges of modernity. Topics to be covered include the political emancipation of Jews, the creation of new religious movements within Judaism, Jewish socialism, antisemitism, Zionism, the Holocaust, and the emergence of new Jewish communities in Israel and the United States. No prior background in Jewish history is expected.

Spring

Also Offered As: HIST 1710, JWST 1710, NELC 0360, RELS 1710

1 Course Unit

MELC 0365 How to Read the Bible

The aim of this course is to explore what the Bible means, and why it means such different things to different people. Why do people find different kinds of meaning in the Bible. Who is right in the struggle over its meaning, and how does one go about deciphering that meaning in the first place? Focusing on the book of Genesis, this seminar seeks to help students answer these questions by introducing some of the many ways in which the Bible has been read over the ages. exploring its meaning as understood by ancient Jews and Christians, modern secular scholars, contemporary fiction writers, feminist activists, philosophers and other kinds of interpreter.

Also Offered As: JWST 1130, NELC 0365, RELS 1130

1 Course Unit

MELC 0375 Women in Jewish Literature

"Jewish woman, who knows your life? In darkness you have come, in darkness do you go." J. L. Gordon (1890). This course will bring into the light the long tradition of women as readers, writers, and subjects in Jewish literature. All texts will be in translation from Yiddish and Hebrew, or in English. Through a variety of genres -- devotional literature, memoir, fiction, and poetry -- we will study women's roles and selves, the relations of women and men, and the interaction between Jewish texts and women's lives. The legacy of women in Yiddish devotional literature will serve as background for our reading of modern Jewish fiction and poetry from the past century. The course is divided into five segments. The first presents a case study of the Matriarchs Rachel and Leah, as they are portrayed in the Hebrew Bible, in rabbinic commentary, in pre-modern prayers, and in modern poems. We then examine a modern novel that recasts the story of Dinah, Leah's daughter. Next we turn to the seventeenth century Glikl of Hamel, the first Jewish woman memoirist. The third segment focuses on devotional literature for and by women. In the fourth segment, we read modern women poets in Yiddish, Hebrew, and English. The course concludes with a fifth segment on fiction written by women in Yiddish, Hebrew, and English.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: GRMN 1100, GSWS 1100, JWST 1100, NELC 0375

1 Course Unit

MELC 0400 Getting Crusaded

What did it feel like to get crusaded? In this course, we will examine the roughly two-century period from the call of the First Crusade in 1095 to the final expulsion of Latin Crusaders from the Middle East in 1291. Our examination will be primarily from the perspective of the invaded, rather than the invaders, as is usually done. How did the Muslims, Jews, and Eastern Christians of the medieval Middle East respond to the presence of Frankish invaders from Europe?

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: NELC 0400

1 Course Unit

MELC 0450 Warriors, Concubines & Converts: the Ottoman Empire in the Middle East & Europe

For almost six hundred years, the Ottomans ruled most of the Balkans and the Middle East. From their bases in Anatolia, Ottoman armies advanced into the Balkans, Syria, Egypt, and Iraq, constantly challenging the borders of neighboring European and Islamic empires. By the end of the seventeenth century, Constantinople, Jerusalem, Cairo, Baghdad, Sarajevo, Budapest, and nearly Vienna came under Ottoman rule. As the empire expanded into Europe and the Middle East, the balance of imperial power shifted from warriors to converts, concubines, and intellectuals. This course examines the expansion of the Ottoman sultanate from a local principality into a sprawling empire with a sophisticated bureaucracy; it also investigates the social, cultural, and intellectual developments that accompanied the long arc of the empire's rise and fall. By the end of the course, students will be able to identify and discuss major currents of change in the Ottoman Empire and the Middle East. The student will have a better understanding of the roles of power, ideology, diplomacy, and gender in the construction of empire and a refined appreciation for diverse techniques of historical analysis.

Fall

Also Offered As: HIST 0310, NELC 0450

1 Course Unit

MELC 0460 First-Year Seminar: Of Horses, Bows and Fermented Milk: The Silk Roads in 10 Objects

The empires of the Turkic and Turkish peoples have stretched across much of Eurasia since before the Common Era until the twentieth century. We first hear of them in Chinese chroniclers' tales of a powerful people in the wilderness. Greek historians, Byzantine writers, and Arab polymaths write about the empires of the steppes. Centuries later, the heirs of the heroes of these empires move south and west, establishing empires and tribal confederations beyond the steppe, in Central Asia, Anatolia, and the Middle East. The Turkic empires seem to appear in the periphery of many civilizations, challenging, and, one could say, enriching their borders. But looking at a map, is really more than a half of Eurasia a periphery? If we flip the map, could we say these historians were writing from the margins of the Turkish empires? This course introduces the student to the history of empire by following the various histories of Turkic and Turkish people through 15 objects. It discusses the questions of periphery, borders, and the divide between agrarian, pastoral, and nomadic societies. The student will learn to derive historical questions and hypothesis through the intensive study of material culture, literature, and historical writing tracing the long and diverse history of the bow, the saddle, dumplings, and fermented milk (among others) across Eurasia.

Fall or Spring

Also Offered As: HIST 0061, NELC 0460

1 Course Unit

MELC 0500 Introduction to the Qur'an

The goal of this course is to provide students with a general introduction to the holy scripture of the religion of Islam, the Qur'an. In particular, students will become familiar with various aspects of Qur'anic content and style, the significance of the Qur'an in Islamic tradition and religious practice, scholarly debates about the history of its text, and contemporary interpretations of it. Through close readings of a wide range of passages and short research assignments, students will gain first-hand knowledge of the Qur'an's treatment of prophecy, law, the Biblical tradition, and many other topics. No previous background in Islamic studies or Arabic language is required for this course.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: NELC 0500, RELS 0504

1 Course Unit

MELC 0510 Muhammad and Society

This course examines the ways in which the biography of Muhammad, Islam's Prophet, has been constructed and re-constructed, revered and reviled, from the time of his death in the 7th century until today in a number of different environments. We begin with the earliest sources on the life of the Prophet, and then focus on how the biography of Muhammad became a site of contestation for authority and authenticity throughout Islamic history. Lastly, we will investigate the modern, polemical depictions of the Prophet and their resulting controversies.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: NELC 0510

1 Course Unit

MELC 0550 Introduction to Islam

This course is an introduction to Islam as a religion as it exists in societies of the past as well as the present. It explores the many ways in which Muslims have interpreted and put into practice the prophetic message of Muhammad through historical and social analyses of varying theological, philosophical, legal, political, mystical and literary writings, as well as through visual art and music. The aim of the course is to develop a framework for explaining the sources and symbols through which specific experiences and understandings have been signified as Islamic, both by Muslims and by other peoples with whom they have come into contact, with particular emphasis given to issues of gender, religious violence and changes in beliefs and behaviors which have special relevance for contemporary society.

Fall or Spring

Also Offered As: NELC 0550, RELS 1430, SAST 1430

1 Course Unit

MELC 0600 The Middle East through Many Lenses

This first-year seminar introduces the contemporary Middle East by drawing upon cutting-edge studies written from a variety of disciplinary perspectives. These include history, political science, and anthropology, as well as studies of mass media, sexuality, religion, urban life, and the environment. We will spend the first few weeks of the semester surveying major trends in modern Middle Eastern history. We will spend subsequent weeks intensively discussing assigned readings along with documentary films that we will watch in class. The semester will leave students with both a foundation in Middle Eastern studies and a sense of current directions in the field.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: NELC 0600

1 Course Unit

MELC 0605 Penn/Philadelphia/and the Middle East

This seminar explores the historic engagement of the University of Pennsylvania and its faculty, students, and graduates in the Near and Middle East. It does so while drawing on archives, rare books and manuscripts, and artifacts that are now preserved in the University Archives, the Penn Museum, and the Penn Libraries. Together we will consider how, beginning in the late nineteenth century, Penn scholars engaged in archaeological expeditions to celebrated sites like Ur (in what is now Iraq) and Memphis (in Egypt) and how some of these efforts influenced the late Ottoman Empire's policies towards antiquities and museums. We will examine how Penn's curriculum changed over time to accommodate Semitics, including the study of languages and biblical traditions, in light of or in spite of historic tensions at the university between secular and religious learning. We will assess how Penn responded to changing American popular attitudes and U.S. foreign policy concerns relative to the Middle East, including during the Cold War and post-2001 (post-9/11) eras. Finally, we will trace the stories or biographies of some individual objects in Penn collections in order to appreciate the university's roles in collecting, preserving, analyzing, and disseminating knowledge about the region's deep cultural heritage. Ultimately, by investigating and writing.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: NELC 0605

1 Course Unit

MELC 0610 Modern Middle Eastern Literature in Translation

The Middle East boasts a rich tapestry of cultures that have developed a vibrant body of modern literature that is often overlooked in media coverage of the region. While each of the modern literary traditions that will be surveyed in this introductory course—Arabic, Hebrew, Persian and Turkish—will be analyzed with an appreciation of the cultural context unique to each body of literature, this course will also attempt to bridge these diverse traditions by analyzing common themes—such as modernity, social values, the individual and national identity—as reflected in the genres of poetry, the novel and the short story. This course is in seminar format to encourage lively discussion and is team-taught by four professors whose expertise in modern Middle Eastern literature serves to create a deeper understanding and aesthetic appreciation of each literary tradition. In addition to honing students' literary analysis skills, the course will enable students to become more adept at discussing the social and political forces that are reflected in Middle Eastern literature, explore important themes and actively engage in reading new Middle Eastern works on their own in translation. All readings are in English.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: NELC 0610

1 Course Unit

MELC 0615 Modern Arabic Literature

This course is a study of modern Arabic literary forms in the context of the major political and social changes which shaped Arab history in the first half of the twentieth century. The aim of the course is to introduce students to key samples of modern Arabic literature which trace major social and political developments in Arab society. Each time the class will be offered with a focus on one of the literary genres which emerged or flourished in the twentieth century: the free verse poem, the prose-poem, drama, the novel, and the short story. We will study each of these emergent genres against the socio-political backdrop which informed it. All readings will be in English translations. The class will also draw attention to the politics of translation as a reading and representational lens.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: COML 0615, NELC 0615

1 Course Unit

MELC 0620 Food in the Islamic Middle East: History, Memory, Identity

In the tenth century, a scholar named Ibn Sayyar al-Warraḡ produced an Arabic manuscript called *Kitab al-Tabikh* (The Book of Cooking). This volume, which compiled and discussed the recipes of eighth- and ninth-century Islamic rulers (caliphs) and their courts in Iraq, represents the oldest known surviving cookbook of the Arab-Islamic world. Many more such cookbooks followed; in their day they represented an important literary genre among cultured elites. As one food historian recently noted, there are more cookbooks in Arabic from before 1400 than in the rest of the world's languages put together. Ibn Sayyar's cookbook can help us to think about the historical and cultural dynamics of food. In this class, we will focus on the Middle East across the sweep of the Islamic era, into the modern period, and until the present day, although many of the readings will consider the study of food in other places (including the contemporary United States) for comparative insights. The class will use the historical study of food and foodways as a lens for examining subjects that relate to a wide array of fields and interests. These subjects include economics, agricultural and environmental studies, anthropology, literature, religion, and public health. With regard to the modern era, the course will pay close attention to the consequences of food for shaping memories and identities including religious, ethnic, national, and gender-based identities particularly among people who have dispersed or otherwise migrated. It will also focus considerably on the politics of food, that is, on the place of food in power relations. Among the questions we will debate are these: How does food reflect, shape, or inform history? By approaching the study of Middle Eastern cultures through food, what new or different things can we see? What is the field of food studies, and what can it offer to scholars? What is food writing as a literary form, and what methodological and conceptual challenges face those who undertake it?

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: NELC 0620

1 Course Unit

MELC 0625 Israel in the Middle East

This introductory level course will offer an in-depth look at Israeli history and society, and how it relates to the Middle East through varying lenses. We will consider such topics as the rise of Jewish, Palestinian, and Arab nationalisms in the context of changing imperial control over Palestine/Israel (from Ottoman to British), and the emergence of the Middle East in its current borders; Conflict and conflict-resolution in Israel, Palestine, and the Middle East; Israel's Palestinian minority, Jewish immigrants to Israel from the Middle East, food and music culture in Israel, and their connection to the Middle East; or the place of the Middle East in Israeli literature and film. We will use cutting edge research from several disciplines, as well as literature, film, audio, and photographic evidence. Students will leave the class with a firm grasp of Israeli history and society, and will be widely familiar with the different narratives, viewpoints, and complexities concerning Israel and its position in the Middle East. Prior knowledge of Israeli or Middle Eastern history is not required.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: JWST 0625, NELC 0625

1 Course Unit

MELC 0650 History of the Middle East Since 1800

A survey of the modern Middle East with special emphasis on the experiences of ordinary men and women as articulated in biographies, novels, and regional case studies. Issues covered include the collapse of empires and the rise of a new state system following WWI, and the roots and consequences of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the Iranian revolution and the U.S.-Iraq War. Themes include: the colonial encounter with Europe and the emergence of nationalist movements, the relationship between state and society, economic development and international relations, and religion and cultural identity.

Fall

Also Offered As: HIST 0360, NELC 0650

1 Course Unit

MELC 0675 Arab/Israeli Conflict in Literature and Film

This course will explore the origins, the history and, most importantly, the literary and cinematic art of the struggle that has endured for a century over the region that some call the Holy Land, some call Eretz Israel and others call Palestine. We will also consider religious motivations and interpretations that have inspired many involved in this conflict as well as the political consequences of world wars that contributed so greatly to the reconfiguration of the Middle East after the fall of the Ottoman Empire, and after the revelations of the Holocaust in Western Europe. While we will rely on a textbook for historical grounding, the most significant material we will use to learn this history will be films, novels, and short stories. Can the arts lead us to a different understanding of the lives lived through what seems like unending crisis?

Fall or Spring

Also Offered As: CIMS 1360, HIST 1360, NELC 0675

1 Course Unit

MELC 0680 Civilizations at Odds? The United States and the Middle East

America has often been depicted in the Middle East either as a benevolent superpower or an ill-meaning enemy – in other words, foe or friend, Satan or saint. In America, too, stereotypes of the Middle East abound as home to the uber-wealthy, tyrants, and fanatics. This course will explore the relationship between the United States and the Middle East by moving beyond such facile depictions. We will read works of history and political analysis to shape our understanding of this relationship and to explore cross-cultural perspectives. Our goal is to understand why a century of interaction has sometimes done little to bring peace and greater understanding between these two intertwined communities. By reading a range of historical accounts, we will consider the origins of this cultural and diplomatic encounter. The readings will shed light on the extent of America's involvement in the Middle East in the twentieth century. We will consider the impact of oil diplomacy on U.S.-Middle East relations, as well as the role of ideology and culture, in an effort to comprehend the antagonism that exists on a state-to-state level in some contexts. Most importantly, we will grapple with the ways in which international politics disrupts the lives of citizens trapped in the throes of political turmoil.

Fall or Spring

Also Offered As: HIST 1788, NELC 0680

1 Course Unit

MELC 0690 From Oil Fields to Soccer Fields: The Middle East in the 20th Century

How did the Middle East become modern? Life changed in spectacular ways for the people of the Middle East in the span of a century. Oil – once considered a scarce natural commodity – was discovered in many countries and exported in substantial quantities that altered the economic landscape of the world. Movie theaters, sewage systems, and public housing projects changed the urban backdrop of Middle Eastern cities and towns. Soccer, swimming, and volleyball became some of the new-fangled sports embraced by Middle Eastern communities. This course will traverse these fascinating and fraught cultural transformations of the Middle East in the twentieth century. Although inclusive of the military battles and conflicts that have affected the region, this class will move beyond the clichés of war to show the range of issues and ideas with which intellectuals and communities grappled. The cultural politics and economic value of oil as well as the formation of a vibrant cultural life will be among the topics covered. By considering illustrative moments that shed light on the political history of the period, this course will develop a nuanced framework to approach the history of the U.S. involvement in the region, the Iran-Iraq war, the Arab/Israeli conflict, and the current crises in the Persian Gulf. Students are required to participate in every lecture and/or recitation, as on Thursdays, part of the class time will be devoted to discussing select documents provided by the instructor. Please keep in mind that lectures do not duplicate readings, but rather supplement them. We will also watch video clips during some lectures. In addition, students are expected to complete each week's readings before class. Course requirements include satisfactory performance on a Powerpoint presentation related to the weekly readings, 2 short factual quizzes, and 7-page paper. The paper can be on a topic of contemporary interest that is placed in the proper historical context.

Also Offered As: HIST 1388, NELC 0690

1 Course Unit

MELC 0700 Iranian Cinema: Gender, Politics and Religion

This seminar explores Iranian culture, society, history and politics through the medium of film. We will examine a variety of cinematic works that represent the social, political, economic and cultural circumstances of contemporary Iran, as well as the diaspora. Along the way, we will discuss issues pertaining to gender, religion, nationalism, ethnicity, and the role of cinema in Iranian society and beyond. Discussions topics will also include the place of the Iranian diaspora in cinema, as well as the transnational production, distribution, and consumption of Iranian cinema. Films will include those by internationally acclaimed filmmakers, such as Rakhshan Bani-Etemad, Asghar Farhadi, Bahman Ghobadi, Abbas Kiarostami, Mohsen Makhmalbaf, Dariush Mehrjui, Tahmineh Milani, Jafar Panahi, Marjane Satrapi and others. All films will be subtitled in English. No prior knowledge is required.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: CIMS 0700, COML 0700, GSWS 0700, NELC 0700

1 Course Unit

MELC 0900 Pastoral Nomadism in the Past and Present

Pastoral nomadism is a "third way" of human subsistence separate from farming and foraging. It is a sustainable human adaptation to grassland and arid environments practiced through particular technologies and domesticated animals. This course begins by examining the human ecology and social organization that emerge from mobile ways of life, drawing on modern, ethnographic, and archaeological examples of pastoral nomadic groups in the Middle East and Central Asia. Academic readings and ethnographic films will form the basis of discussions about several larger themes, including: the origins of pastoral nomadism and horse riding; the development of dairy-based foods and human adaptations allowing the digestion of lactose; the historical relationship between mobile groups of pastoralists and territorial states; popular perceptions of nomads in various forms of historical and modern media; and the influence of ideas about nomads on modern senses of heritage and nationalism in the Middle East and Central Asia.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: ANTH 1900, NELC 0900

1 Course Unit

MELC 0905 Water in the Middle East Throughout History

Water scarcity is one of most important problems facing much of the Middle East and North Africa today. These are arid regions, but human and natural systems have interacted to determine relative water scarcity and abundance at different times and places. This course examines the distribution of water resources throughout the Middle East and the archaeology and anthropology of water exploitation and management over the last 9000 years, looking at continuities and changes through time. Students will learn to make basic digital maps representing Middle Eastern hydro-geography and arguments about modern and historic water resources in the region. The class will cooperatively play an "irrigation management game" designed to familiarize personnel involved in the operation of irrigation schemes with the logistical and social issues involved in water management. We will engage with a variety of media, including academic readings, popular journalism, films, satellite imagery, and digital maps, in our quest to explore whether or not the past can inform present efforts to better manage modern water resources. The course is structured in units focused on each of the major hydro-environmental zones of the Middle East: the river valleys of Mesopotamia, Egypt, and the Levant, the internal basins of western Central Asia and the Levant, the deserts of Arabia and North Africa, highland zones in Yemen and Iran, and coastal marsh areas along the Persian Gulf. We will examine irrigation systems, water supply systems, and ways of life surrounding water sources known from ethnographic studies, history, and archaeological excavations. These data will allow us to engage with debates in Middle Eastern anthropology, including those concerning the relationship between water and political power, the environment in which the world's earliest cities arose, and the relevance of "lessons of the past" for present and potential future water crises and "water wars." In our final weeks, we will discuss archaeology and historical anthropology's contribution to conceptions of water "sustainability" and examine attempts to revive traditional/ancient technologies and attitudes about water.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: ANTH 0905, NELC 0905

1 Course Unit

MELC 0992 Transfer Credit: Introductory

Course credit for introductory courses taken in an approved program.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: NELC 0992

1 Course Unit

MELC 1000 Iraq: Ancient Cities and Empires

Iraq: Ancient Cities and Empires is a chronological survey of the ancient civilization that existed in the drainage basin of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers from the early settled village farming communities of the 7th millennium BCE to the middle of the 1st millennium BCE, when Nebuchadnezzar II ruled Babylon and much of the Middle East. Though organized period by period, NELC 241 explores various social, political, economic, and ideological topics, exposing students to various strands of evidence, including settlement survey data, excavated architectural remains, artifacts, and documentary sources, as well as an eclectic mix of theoretical perspectives. The course aims to provide students with a strong foundation for the further study of the ancient and pre-modern Middle East.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: ANTH 1020, NELC 1000, URBS 1020

1 Course Unit

MELC 1001 The Arabian Nights

The Arabian Nights (more accurately known as The Thousand and One Nights) is a collection of stories that circulated in the medieval Islamic world and would later become a canonical classic of world literature thanks to various stages of addition, translation, and creative retelling. It is a heady agglomeration of tales written with a distinctive frame story and form about characters and deeds that have been considered in turn memorable, hilarious, disgusting, arousing, thrilling, repugnant, and inspirational by various audiences since its beginning—and possibly even before it ever existed. In this course, we will read almost the entirety of the 14th century collection of tales that constitute the earliest existing version of The Thousand and One Nights and analyze it both in relation to the medieval genres and historical contexts that shaped it and through contemporary theoretical frameworks. The Thousand and One Nights is a fluid and changing collection, so it is not our goal to focus on some clearly-defined "original". We will instead discuss this collections' origins, famous later additions such as the stories of Aladdin and Sindbad, and the role that its reception and translation in Europe played in making it a key text of world literature. We will also study some of its many later adaptations in film, poetry, and narrative. By analyzing key components of the text such as the frame story, fantasy, romance, and representations of race and gender, and by considering the aesthetics and politics of literary engagement with The Thousand and One Nights in modern contexts, we will come to appreciate the stories' many travels across time and genres and develop our own ideas on what The Thousand and One Nights can teach us about the enduring power of storytelling. This course is taught in English, including all readings.

Fall or Spring

Also Offered As: NELC 1001

1 Course Unit

MELC 1010 History and Society of Early Mesopotamia

The fourth millennium BCE saw the rise of cities and the birth of writing in ancient Mesopotamia (modern Iraq). This class traces the history of Mesopotamia from about 3000 BCE to about 1600 BCE (the end of the Old Babylonian Period), examining political history and changes in social organization as well as developments in religion, literature and art.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: NELC 1010

1 Course Unit

MELC 1100 History of Ancient Egypt

Review and discussion of the principal aspects of ancient Egyptian history, 3000-500 BC.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: NELC 1100

1 Course Unit

MELC 1200 The Bible in Translation

This course introduces students to one specific Book of the Hebrew Bible. "The Bible in Translation" involves an in-depth reading of a biblical source against the background of contemporary scholarship. Depending on the book under discussion, this may also involve a contextual reading with other biblical books and the textual sources of the ancient Near East. Although no prerequisites are required, this class is a perfect follow-up course to "Intro to the Bible."

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: JWST 1200, NELC 1200, RELS 1200

1 Course Unit

MELC 1210 Magic in the Bible

The Bible prohibits magic and divination on several occasions. At the same time, however, modern commentators have repeatedly argued that many of the cultic regulations in the Bible could qualify as magical. Likewise, certain characters in the Bible, as for instance, Jacob, Josef, Moses, Elijah and Elisha carry out activities which may also fall under the rubric of magic. How can we reconcile the biblical prohibitions against magic with the scholarly view that certain regulations and narratives of the Bible seem to condone and even prescribe magical practices? In this course we will explore the manner in which the Bible differentiates between magic and religion. Various definitions of magic will be discussed and applied to the biblical text. In this context, we will take into account the cultural and historical diversity of the world described in the Bible. After having established that the understanding of magic and its relation to religion depends on the setting and genre of the biblical text, we will evaluate how biblical regulations concerning magic were received and implemented. This will be done by examining both extra-biblical writings and archaeological artifacts that correlate with the composition and canonization of the Bible. The critical interpretation and contextualization of amulets, spells and incantations in

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: NELC 1210

1 Course Unit

MELC 1300 Jewish Folklore

The Jews are among the few nations and ethnic groups whose oral tradition occurs in literary and religious texts dating back more than two thousand years. This tradition changed and diversified over the years in terms of the migrations of Jews into different countries and the historical, social, and cultural changes that these countries underwent. The course attempts to capture the historical and ethnic diversity of Jewish Folklore in a variety of oral literary forms.

Spring

Also Offered As: COML 1301, JWST 1300, NELC 1300

1 Course Unit

MELC 1310 Introduction to Modern Hebrew Literature

The objective of this course is to develop an artistic appreciation for literature through in-depth class discussions and text analysis. Readings are comprised of Israeli poetry and short stories. Students examine how literary language expresses psychological and cultural realms. The course covers topics such as: the short story reinvented, literature and identity, and others. This course is conducted in Hebrew and all readings are in Hebrew. Grading is based primarily on participation and students' literary understanding.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: COML 1311, JWST 1310, NELC 1310

Prerequisite: HEBR 0400

1 Course Unit

MELC 1325 Jews and Christians

The first few centuries of the Common Era witnessed one of the most important developments in religious history: the formation of both Judaism and Christianity. According to the traditional understanding of the formation of these groups, Judaism was an ancient religion, extending from the time of the Bible, and Christianity was a small upstart that "parted ways" from Judaism and eventually emerged as a major world religion all on its own. After their parting, according to this understanding, Judaism and Christianity were almost exclusively hostile to one another. In recent years, however, the traditional understanding has been challenged and largely dismantled. It is now clear that both groups continued to define and redefine themselves in dialogue and/or competition with the other; that Judaism itself is formed alongside Christianity in this period; that lines between the groups remained blurry for centuries; that the discourse of an early and total "parting" was created in large part by elite men describing and creating the "parting" they hoped for; that Jews and Christians interacted in ways that were not hostile but in fact productive and positive. In this course, we will study the ways that Judaism and Christianity continued to overlap throughout antiquity, as well as the many discourses that were applied to draw lines between these overlapping groups and to cause them to "part". While the content of the course will focus on Judaism and Christianity, the implications of our investigation apply to the definition, evolution, growth, and other issues that attend groups and their formation in both antiquity and the present. The course will address larger questions related to how history and rhetoric are fashioned, how identities are shaped in conversation with each other, how orthodoxies are formed and challenged, and more.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: NELC 1325

1 Course Unit

MELC 1330 Jews and Violence in Antiquity

The Passover Haggadah encodes a prominent narrative in Jewish memory, that "in each generation, they stand against us to destroy us, but the Holy One, blessed be He, rescues us from their hand." This narrative, influential in shaping international policies toward Jews and other minority groups, and in informing modern Jewish identities, consolidates all episodes of violence against Jews into a singular, enduring pattern, irrespective of period, place, cause, or those responsible. Yet in so doing, the various complex contexts and scenarios of violence against Jews are sidelined, failing to capture the different stories and experiences of particular Jews with violence. What's more, framing Jews as perennially persecuted, such narratives often neglect fascinating accounts of violence by and among Jews in antiquity. This course explores the complex relationship between ancient Jewish communities and the phenomenon of violence in the context of their historical, cultural, and religious milieux. Students will delve into key aspects of ancient Jewish history, examining narratives, responses, and interpretations of violence from various perspectives. The course asks: What conditions generated violence against Jews? When and why were Jews violent? What role did different factors – politics, religion, economy, ideology, social fissures, literature and more – play in provoking moments of violence? To what degree was violence top down versus bottom up, official versus unauthorized, widespread versus local? How did Jews respond to moments of violence?

Spring

Also Offered As: JWST 1330

1 Course Unit

MELC 1400 The Making of Scripture

The Bible as we know it is the product of a lengthy process of development, elaboration, contest, and debate. Rather than a foregone conclusion, the process by which the texts and traditions within the bible, and the status ascribed to them, was turbulent and uncertain. This course examines that process, examining the Bible, traditions and communities from the Second Temple Period - such as the Dead Sea Scrolls and Community - that rewrote, reconsidered, revised, or rejected now well-recognized figures and stories, and constructed distinct ideas of what was considered scripture and how it should be approached. Even as the bible began to resemble the corpus as we now know it, interpretive strategies rendered it entirely different, such as Hellenistic Allegorizers, working from the platonic tradition, rabbinic readers who had an entirely different set of hermeneutics, early Christians, who offered different strategies for reading the "Old" and "New" Testaments alongside one another (and employing categories like "Old" and "New," themselves constituting a new attitude and relationship to and between these texts), and lastly early Muslim readers, who embraced many of the stories in the Bible, altered others, and debated the status of these corpuses under Islam.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: JWST 1400, NELC 1400, RELS 1400

1 Course Unit

MELC 1600 North Africa: History, Culture, Society

This interdisciplinary seminar aims to introduce students to the countries of North Africa, with a focus on the Maghreb and Libya (1830-present). It does so while examining the region's close economic and cultural connections to sub-Saharan Africa, Europe, and the Middle East. Readings will include histories, political analyses, anthropological studies, and novels, and will cover a wide range of topics such as colonial and postcolonial experiences, developments in Islamic thought and practice, and labor migration. This class is intended for juniors, seniors, and graduate students.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: AFRC 1600, HIST 0835, NELC 1600

1 Course Unit

MELC 1605 Muslims, Christians, and Jews in the Middle East: Historical Perspectives

A reading- and discussion-intensive seminar that addresses several recurring questions with regard to the Middle East and North Africa. How have Islam, Judaism, and Christianity influenced each other in these regions historically? How have Jews, Christians, and Muslims fared as religious minorities? To what extent have communal relations been characterized by harmony and cooperation, or by strife and discord, and how have these relations changed in different contexts over time? To what extent and under what circumstances have members of these communities converted, intermarried, formed business alliances, and adopted or developed similar customs? How has the emergence of the modern nation-state system affected communal relations as well as the legal or social status of religious minorities in particular countries? How important has religion been as one variable in social identity (along with sect, ethnicity, class, gender, etc.), and to what extent has religious identity figured into regional conflicts and wars? The focus of the class will be on the modern period (c. 1800-present) although we will read about some relevant trends in the early and middle Islamic periods as well. Students will also pursue individually tailored research to produce final papers. Prior background in Islamic studies and Middle Eastern history is required. Middle Eastern history is required. This class is intended for juniors, seniors, and graduate students.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: HIST 0836, JWST 1605, NELC 1605, RELS 1605

1 Course Unit

MELC 1610 Nationalism and Communal Identity in the Middle East

This seminar views the phenomenon of nationalism as it affected the modern Middle East in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Together we will consider the diverse components of nationalism, including religion, language, territorial loyalty, and ethnicity, and test the thesis that nations are "imagined communities" built on "invented traditions." At the same time, we will examine other forms of communal identity that transcend national borders or flourish on more localized scales. This class approaches nationalism and communal identity as complex products of cultural, political, and social forces, and places Middle Eastern experiences within a global context. Students must take a survey of modern Middle Eastern history or politics before enrolling in this class. This class is intended for juniors, seniors, and graduate students.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: NELC 1610

Mutually Exclusive: MELC 6610

Prerequisite: NELC 0002

1 Course Unit

MELC 1615 Migration and the Middle East

This reading-and discussion-intensive seminar examines the phenomenon of migration into, out of, within, and across the Middle East and North Africa. We will focus on the period from the late nineteenth century to the present, and will emphasize the cultural (rather than economic) consequences of migration. Along the way we will trace connections between the Middle East and other regions-- notably the Americas, sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, the Caucasus, and Western Europe. Readings are interdisciplinary and include works of history, anthropology, sociology, medical research, literature, political science, geography, and human rights advocacy. As students develop final projects on topics of their choice, we will spend time throughout the semester discussing tactics for research and writing.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: ASAM 2010, NELC 1615, SAST 1615

1 Course Unit

MELC 1620 Middle Eastern Jews in Israel

This undergraduate seminar offers an in-depth look at the history of Middle Eastern and North African Jews, focusing in particular on their place in Israeli society and culture. It will begin with a historical background on the Jewish communities in Ottoman Palestine, and in the larger Ottoman Empire, Iran, and Morocco. We will then proceed to consider the engagement of these Jewish communities with Zionism, and with other conflicting forces, such as European colonialism, Arab nationalism, and Cosmopolitanism. We will learn about Jewish immigration from the region to Palestine/Israel in the period between 1880 to 1948, and about their exodus/expulsion post-1948. We will then explore in depth their settlement in Israel: governmental policies towards Jewish immigrants from the Islamic World, especially between the 1950s and the 1970s; their integration in Israeli society; identity politics in Israel (or: the "invention" of "Mizrahim"); Mizrahi political action; Mizrahi music, film, literature, and food culture; and Mizrahi attitudes towards Arabs, both within and outside Israel. Students will leave the class with a firm grasp of the social and cultural history of Middle Eastern Jews in Israel, and the issues facing third-generation Mizrahim in Israel today. Students will also be introduced to basic methods of inquiry in history, sociology, anthropology, and cultural studies. Students will engage with a mix of scholarly research, readings in original documents, film, literature, music, and some material and visual artifacts.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: NELC 1620

1 Course Unit

MELC 1650 1947-49: British Empire and the Partitions of South Asia and Palestine

The partitions of South Asia and Palestine marked the end of the British Empire in those regions. British colonial rule in India ended in 1947 with the emergence of not one, but two nation states, India and Pakistan. Decolonization was marked by mass migration and ethnic cleansing along their borders. An estimated million people died in the violence in less than a year, and 12.5 million people migrated from their homes. The British Empire also gave up its claims to Palestine in 1947, exhausted by the two nationalisms of Zionists and Palestinians. This partition set up the declaration of the state of Israel, and the War for Palestine. By 1949, almost a million Palestinians found themselves displaced over many borders, some also within the borders of Israel. This comparative course is organized around three themes - the prehistories of these cataclysmic events, the role of Empire in catalyzing them, and the afterlives of these events that continue to haunt us into the present, seventy-five years later. It explores the political history - and the collapse of politics - that led to violence on a scale that was without precedent in the history of the Indian subcontinent. It examines the political, social and cultural events that led to decades of war and exile, and shaped the lives of generations of Palestinians, Israelis and the wider Middle East. Primary sources will help to explore the perspectives of ordinary people whose lives were turned upside down in both places.

Also Offered As: HIST 1770, NELC 1650, SAST 1770

1 Course Unit

MELC 1700 Introduction to Persian Poetic Tradition

This course introduces some of the major genres and themes of the millennium-old Persian poetic tradition from ancient to modern Iran. Epic and romance, love and mysticism, wine and drunkenness, wisdom and madness, body and mind, sin and temptation are some of the key themes that will be explored through a close reading of poems in this course. The course suits undergraduate students of all disciplines, as it requires no prior knowledge of or familiarity with the Persian language or the canon of Persian literature. All teaching materials are available in English translation. Students are expected to attend seminars and take part in discussions

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: NELC 1700

1 Course Unit

MELC 1900 Digital Exploration of the Past: Archives, Databases, Maps, and Museums

This course exposes students to digital methods for investigating past environments and societies, including digitization of analog records, the construction and querying of databases, and the creation of digital maps. The ultimate goal of the course will be to carry out a final project that benefits the Penn Museum and the public. In fall 2018, our exploration of digital methods will center around the archaeological site of Ur (Tell el-Muqayyar), located in southern Iraq. Ur was one of the earliest cities in the world, and, thanks to campaigns partly funded by Penn in the 1920s and 1930s, is one of the best-excavated sites in southern Mesopotamia. Here at Penn, we have unparalleled access to archival documentation and artifacts from the site. We will draw upon this access to contribute to an on-going digital humanities project in the Penn Museum (the public "Ur Online" database). In the process, students will re-assess data that has the potential to change anthropological ideas about issues such as the environmental setting of the earliest cities and archaeological ideas about demographic and urban structure within the city of Ur itself. There are no prerequisites, but students must bring an interest in Mesopotamian archaeology and/or the origins of urbanism and be motivated to carry out individual and group research guided by the instructor & classmates.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: NELC 1900

1 Course Unit

MELC 1905 GIS for the Digital Humanities and Social Sciences

This course introduces students to theory and methodology of the geospatial humanities and social sciences, understood broadly as the application of Geographical Information Systems (GIS) and spatial analysis techniques to the study of social and cultural patterns in the past and present. By engaging with spatial theory, spatial analysis case studies, and technical methodologies, students will develop an understanding of the questions driving, and tools available for, humanistic and social science research projects that explore change over space and time. We will use ESRI's ArcGIS software to visualize, analyze, and integrate historical, anthropological, and environmental data. Techniques will be introduced through the discussion of case studies and through demonstration of software skills. During supervised laboratory sessions, the various techniques and analyses covered will be applied to sample data and also to data from a region/topic chosen by the student.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: ANTH 1905, NELC 1905

Mutually Exclusive: MELC 6900

1 Course Unit

MELC 1910 The Religious Other

Course explores attitudes toward monotheists of other faiths, and claims made about these "religious Others" in real and imagined encounters between Jews, Christians and Muslims from antiquity to the present. Strategies of "othering" will be analyzed through an exploration of claims about the Other's body, habits and beliefs, as found in works of scripture, law, theology, polemics, art, literature and reportage. Attention will be paid to myths about the other, inter-group violence, converts, cases of cross-cultural influence, notions of toleration, and perceptions of Others in contemporary life. Primary sources will be provided in English.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: JWST 1910, NELC 1910

1 Course Unit

MELC 1915 Myth in Society

In this course we will explore the mythologies of selected peoples in the Ancient Near East, Africa, Asia, and Native North and South America and examine how the gods function in the life and belief of each society. The study of mythological texts will be accompanied, as much as possible, by illustrative slides that will show the images of these deities in art and ritual.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: COML 1915, NELC 1915

1 Course Unit

MELC 1960 Narrative Across Cultures

The purpose of this course is to present a variety of narrative genres and to discuss and illustrate the modes whereby they can be analyzed. We will be looking at shorter types of narrative: short stories, novellas, and fables, and also some extracts from longer works such as autobiographies. While some works will come from the Anglo-American tradition, a larger number will be selected from European and non-Western cultural traditions and from earlier time-periods. The course will thus offer ample opportunity for the exploration of the translation of cultural values in a comparative perspective.

Fall or Spring

Also Offered As: COML 1025, ENGL 0039, NELC 1960, SAST 1124, THAR 1025

1 Course Unit

MELC 1970 Filming the Middle East

This course will take us through the history of the modern Middle East as told by the region's many film-makers. We will explore how cinema developed and grew throughout countries like Egypt, Iran, Syria, Turkey, Lebanon, Israel and Palestine. Unusually for a typical course on the Middle East, we will also pay close attention to North Africa's film industry, with a deep exploration of the cinema of Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco. Sudanese films will be an important part of our study as well. What does it mean to have a national cinema? Many of these countries' film industries grew under European occupation and colonialism. With independence, were more markets available to Middle Eastern films? Where did directors and screenwriters train? Who were the intended audiences for these films? We will watch canonical films from the region, many of which focus on or reflect the political turmoil and aftermath of wars. But we will also examine the lightness of comedies, which were usually much more popular with Middle Eastern audiences, and which reveal every bit as much about the region's histories. And we will watch and discuss a phenomenon not found in Western cinema - the Ramadan soap operas and historical reenactments that are unique to the Middle East.

Also Offered As: CIMS 1359, HIST 1359, NELC 1970

1 Course Unit

MELC 2040 Ancient Iranian Empires

Iran - as a landmass and a political entity - was central to the ancient world in a variety of ways. Ancient Iranian Empires were of central importance to - and centrally located in - the ancient world. It was the successor kingdom to the Assyrians and Babylonians; the power against which Greece and Rome defined themselves; and the crucible in which various communities and models of rule developed. This course offers a survey of the history of the ancient Persianate world, focusing in particular on the political and imperial entities that rose to power, the cultural, political, mercantile, and other contacts they shared with their neighbors to the East and West, and the communities and religious groups that arose and flourished within their lands. Ancient Iranian empires rivaled the Greek and Roman Empires to their West, and the central and eastern Asian Empires to their east, and the ongoing history of diplomacy, cultural contact, and war between these regions was formative to each and to the ancient world as a whole. Iran was home to and similarly formative for a variety of religions, including Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity, Manichaeism, and Islam, and a central question Ancient Iranian political powers sought to address was how to negotiate and address the variety of populations under their control. The course will conclude by studying how, rather than a simplistic story of decline, the strategies, policies, institutions, and memory of the Iranian Empires continued to shape early Islam, medieval imagination, and modern political regimes.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: ANCH 1103, NELC 2040, RELS 2040

1 Course Unit

MELC 2050 Art of Ancient Iran

This lecture course offers a survey of ancient Iranian art and culture from the painted pottery cultures of the Neolithic era to the monuments of the Persian Empire.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: ARTH 2220, NELC 2050

1 Course Unit

MELC 2055 The Early Bronze Age

This lecture course offers a survey of ancient Iranian art and culture from the painted pottery cultures of the Neolithic era to the monuments of the Persian Empire. Particular emphasis is placed on the Early Bronze Age.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: ARTH 2221, NELC 2055

1 Course Unit

MELC 2100 Archaeology of the Lands of the Bible: 1200-330BCE

Did the walls of Jericho really come tumbling down? How did the kings, queens, and prophets of ancient Israel and Judah live? In this introductory course, students will learn how archaeology illuminates the material and social world behind the texts of the Hebrew Bible and contributes to debates about the history and culture of these societies. We will study the sites, artifacts, and art of the lands of Israel, Judah, Phoenicia, Philistia, Ammon, Moab, and Edom during the period framing the rise and fall of these kingdoms, ca. 1200 to 330 BCE. We will see how biblical archaeology arose in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, how the complex relationship between archaeology and the biblical text has evolved to the present day, and how new discoveries continue to challenge preconceptions about this period. In addition, students will get a behind-the-scenes look at the development of a new gallery for the biblical archaeology collections at the Penn Museum and get further insight into how material objects can tell the story of the fascinating cultures of this region.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: NELC 2100

1 Course Unit

MELC 2102 Imagining Ancient Egypt: A History of Popular Fascination from Antiquity to the Present

Thousands of years after the pyramids were built and the last hieroglyphs were written, ancient Egypt remains a source of mystery and intense interest. Why are we so fascinated with ancient Egypt, and what does that fascination reveal about us? This course explores the reception history of ancient Egypt: how people in various periods and areas of the world have thought about ancient Egypt, what it has meant to them, why they were interested in it, and how they brought the ancient Egyptian past into the present. We will focus not on ancient Egypt itself, but on the history of perceptions of, ideas about, and interactions with ancient Egyptian culture. Our investigation will include how Egyptians of later periods thought about their ancient past, as well as European and American representations (and appropriations) of ancient Egypt. A major focus of the course will be the impact of political and cultural relations between Egypt and the West on perceptions and uses of ancient Egyptian culture. This interdisciplinary course will combine multiple areas of history –intellectual, cultural, and political–and multiple types of sources, including historical writing, literature, film, and opera. Beginning with ancient Greek and Roman visitors to Egypt, we will investigate changing modes of understanding, constructing, and representing ancient Egypt, from the medieval sultans of Egypt to Mozart to W. E. B. DuBois to protesters in Egypt's 2011 revolution. Over the course of the semester, we will explore questions such as: - What does it mean to think of Egypt as African vs. Middle Eastern vs. Mediterranean? Is Egypt Western, Eastern, both, or neither? - To whom does ancient Egyptian heritage belong? How do colonialism and conceptions of race and ethnicity factor into this question? - How do the past and the present shape each other? What is the impact of modern politics and culture on perceptions of the past? What role does the past play in the formation of modern political, social, and cultural identities? - How can we learn about modern problems and concerns from representations of the past?

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: CLST 3710, NELC 2102

Mutually Exclusive: CLST 5710, MELC 5101

1 Course Unit

MELC 2140 Tutankhamun's Tomb: Its Treasures and Significance

This course examines the short life of the young boy king and what the discovery of his tomb and its contents mean in terms of Egypt's long history and accomplishments.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: AFRC 2140, NELC 2140

Mutually Exclusive: MELC 6140

1 Course Unit

MELC 2354 The Body in Middle Eastern History

The body has long been the focus of social and scientific inquiry, as well as the foundation of religious, philosophical, and artistic thought. This seminar examines premodern and modern notions of the body in the Middle East as they intersect with colonialism, nationalism, religion, labor, law, military, gender, race, medicine, and art. Students use the notion of the body as a "useful" historical category to investigate the broader social, cultural, and political transformations occurring in the Ottoman Empire and Qajar Iran, followed by post-empire and colonial modern Middle Eastern contexts. The course addresses diverse views and theories as manifested in the constructions and practices over the body by using literary texts, primary sources, medical recipes, religious orders, and even public monuments to unearth the role of the body in the making of Middle Eastern history.

Also Offered As: GSWS 2354, HIST 2354, NELC 2354

1 Course Unit

MELC 2400 Faces of Love: Gender, Sexuality and the Erotic in Persian Literature

Beloved, Lover and Love are three concepts that dominate the semantic field of eroticism in Persian literature and mysticism. The interrelation among these concepts makes it almost impossible to treat any one of the concepts separately. Moreover, there exists various faces and shades of love in the works of classical and modern Persian literature that challenges the conventional heteronormative assumptions about the sexual and romantic relationships between the lover and the beloved. A sharp contrast exists between the treatment of homosexuality and 'queerness' in Islamic law, on the one hand and its reflection in Persian literature, particularly poetry (the chief vehicle of Persian literary expression), on the other. This course introduces and explores different faces of love, eroticism and homoeroticism in the Persian literary tradition from the dawn of dawn of the Persian poetry in the ninth century all through to the twenty-first century. It offers a comprehensive study of representations and productions of heteronormativity, sexual orientation and gender roles with particular reference to the notion of love, lover and beloved in Persian literature.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: COML 2400, GSWS 2402, NELC 2400

Mutually Exclusive: MELC 6310

1 Course Unit

MELC 2510 Introduction to Islamic Law

This course will introduce students to classical Islamic law, the all-embracing sacred law of Islam. Among the world's various legal systems, Islamic law may be the most widely misunderstood and even misrepresented; certainly, misconceptions about it abound. Islamic law is, however, the amazing product of a rich, fascinating and diverse cultural and intellectual tradition. Most of the readings in this course will be taken from primary sources in translation. Areas covered will include criminal law, family law, law in the Quran, gender and sexuality, the modern application of Islamic law, Islamic government and other selected topics.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: NELC 2510

1 Course Unit

MELC 2566 Israel and Iran: Historical Ties, Contemporary Challenges

Israel and Iran have longstanding ties and connections that predate the contemporary feuds in which they are currently engaged. Iranian Jews rank as some of the oldest communities of the Middle East, and their history dovetails with the ancient Iranian past. This course will explore the historical roots of Jewish communities in Iran, with a focus on the post-18th century period, and will end with conversations that contributed to the diplomatic impasses faced by both countries since the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Films, novels, memoirs, and other historical accounts will be incorporated alongside secondary works to give students an opportunity to consider the complexities of this relationship.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: HIST 2352, NELC 2566

1 Course Unit

MELC 2567 Sex and Power in the Middle East: Unveiling Women's Lives

How did Middle Eastern women and men really live? What impact did tradition have on practices of veiling, seclusion, and politics? How did attitudes toward intimacy and sexuality change over time? This course strives to answer these questions by offering a comparative perspective on people's lives in the modern Middle East (Southwest Asia) and North Africa. We begin in the 19th century and move quickly to the twentieth century when social policies and politics shaped gender relations. We will consider the birth and popularity of fashion industries, beauty contests, journalism, the visual arts, television, and challenges to norms of sexuality. Part of the class will also engage with traditionalist rejection of such new social and cultural trends. From Iran to Algeria, women and men grappled with culture wars that centered on gender, sexuality, and power. To make the learning process interactive, we will watch video clips, documentaries, and interviews as we delve into this ongoing tug-of-war.

Fall or Spring

Also Offered As: GSWS 2353, HIST 2353, NELC 2567, SOCI 2947

1 Course Unit

MELC 2705 Media and Culture in Contemporary Iran

This course offers a comprehensive introduction to the culture and media of modern Iran, with a critical perspective on issues such as identity formation, ethnicity, race, and nation-building. It focuses on how these issues relate to various aspects of modern Iranian culture – such as religion, gender, sexuality, war, and migration – through the lens of media, cinema, and literature.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: CIMS 2705, GSWS 2705, NELC 2705, RELS 2180

1 Course Unit

MELC 2900 Who Owns the Past? Archaeology and Politics in the Middle East

This course explores the role of cultural heritage and archaeological discoveries in the politics of the Middle East from the nineteenth century to the recent aftermath of the Arab Spring. We will explore how modern Middle East populations relate to their pasts and how archaeology and cultural heritage have been employed to support particular political and social agendas, including colonialism, nationalism, imperialism, and the construction of ethnic-religious identities. Although it was first introduced to the Middle East as a colonial enterprise by European powers, archaeology became a pivotal tool for local populations of the Middle East to construct new histories and identities during the post-World War I period of intensive nation-building after the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire. To understand this process, we will first look at the nineteenth-century establishment of archaeology by institutions like the Penn Museum. Then we will move on to individual case studies in Turkey, Iraq, Egypt, Israel/Palestine, Iran, and the republics of former Soviet Transcaucasia to look at the role of archaeology and cultural heritage in the formation of these countries as modern nation-states with a shared identity among citizens. We will conclude with an examination of the recent impact of the Islamic State on material heritage in Syria and Iraq, the changing attitudes of Middle Eastern countries toward foreign museums, and the role of UNESCO in defining Middle Eastern sites of world heritage. The course will also include field trips to the Penn Museum.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: ANTH 1925, NELC 2900

1 Course Unit

MELC 2910 The University, the Museum, and the Middle East

This seminar explores how two kinds of institutions - the research university and the museum - developed in the United States as American scholars and philanthropists and the U.S. government engaged with the wider world. We will take the involvement of the University of Pennsylvania and the Penn Museum in the Middle East as a test case for this history, while focusing on the period from the late nineteenth century to the present. We will approach questions in transnational intellectual, cultural, and political history through the lens of Penn's Middle Eastern engagements. For example, how did the university and its museum contribute to the construction of the Middle East as a zone of U.S. diplomatic intervention? How have American scholarly traditions shaped academic fields of inquiry including "Semitics" (a term used a century ago to suggest the study of biblical languages and traditions), "Oriental Studies" (a now-passe and politically loaded term suggesting connections to American traditions of Orientalist thought), "Islamic Studies", and "Egyptology"? How did Penn's archaeological expeditions to celebrated sites like Ur in the late nineteenth century influence the late Ottoman Empire's policies towards antiquities and museums? How did Penn's broader expeditions in the twentieth century, to Egypt, Iran, and elsewhere, shape nationalist imaginations in the United States and in Middle Eastern countries, while also informing international antiquities policies? Finally, how have institutions like Penn and the Penn Museum responded to changing American popular attitudes and U.S. foreign policy concerns relative to the Middle East, during the Cold War and post-2001 ("post-9/11") eras, and most recently, amid civil strife in Syria and Iraq? This seminar offers students an opportunity to consult Penn's phenomenal collections of Middle East-related materials as they pursue end-of-semester research. These collections include artifacts (museum objects), archival records (such as documents, drawings, and photographs), and rare books and manuscripts from the Penn Museum and Penn Libraries.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: NELC 2910

1 Course Unit

MELC 2920 World Heritage in Global Conflict

Heritage is always political. Such a statement might refer to the everyday politics of local stakeholder interests on one end of the spectrum, or the volatile politics of destruction and erasure of heritage during conflict, on the other. If heritage is always political then one might expect that the workings of World Heritage might be especially fraught given the international dimension. In particular, the intergovernmental system of UNESCO World Heritage must navigate the inherent tension between state sovereignty and nationalist interests and the wider concerns of a universal regime. The World Heritage List has almost 1200 properties has many such contentious examples, including sites in Iraq, Mali, Syria, Crimea, Palestine, Armenia and Cambodia. As an organization UNESCO was born of war with an explicit mission to end global conflict and help the world rebuild materially and morally yet has found its own history increasingly entwined with that of international politics and violence.

Fall or Spring

Also Offered As: ANTH 2840, CLST 3319, NELC 2920

1 Course Unit

MELC 2950 Living World in Archaeological Science

By focusing on the scientific analysis of archaeological remains, this course will explore life and death in the past. It takes place in the Center for the Analysis of Archaeological Materials (CAAM) and is team taught in three modules: human skeletal analysis, analysis of animal remains, and analysis of plant remains. Each module will combine laboratory and classroom exercises to give students hands-on experience with archaeological materials. We will examine how organic materials provide key information about past environments, human behavior, and cultural change through discussions of topics such as health and disease, inequality, and food.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: ANTH 2267, CLST 3303, NELC 2950

Mutually Exclusive: ANTH 5267

1 Course Unit

MELC 2960 Material World in Archaeological Science

By focusing on the scientific analysis of inorganic archaeological materials, this course will explore processes of creation in the past. Class will take place in the Center for the Analysis of Archaeological Materials (CAAM) and will be team taught in three modules: analysis of lithics, analysis of ceramics and analysis of metals. Each module will combine laboratory and classroom exercises to give students hands-on experience with archaeological materials. We will examine how the transformation of materials into objects provides key information about past human behaviors and the socio-economic contexts of production, distribution, exchange and use. Discussion topics will include invention and adoption of new technologies, change and innovation, use of fire, and craft specialization.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: ANTH 2221, ARTH 0221, CLST 3302, NELC 2960

Mutually Exclusive: ANTH 5221

1 Course Unit

MELC 3060 The Hellenistic and Roman Near East

In this course we will study the history of the Hellenistic and Roman period from a Near Eastern perspective. From the conquests of Alexander the Great to the end of Roman rule in late antiquity, this region was the scene of conflicts, but also of peaceful and fruitful interactions between Greeks, Romans, Egyptians, Jews, Syrians, Arabs and many other societies. What was the impact of Greek and Roman rule and how did the peoples of the region react to these fundamental changes? On the other hand, how did they influence the culture and worldview of their conquerors? We will use historical texts, documents and archaeological evidence to discuss these political, cultural and religious encounters that made the Near East to a key region of Greco-Roman history. All texts will be discussed in translation. No prerequisites, although it would be useful to have some background in Hellenistic and/or Roman history.

Also Offered As: ANCH 3103, CLST 3103, NELC 3060

1 Course Unit

MELC 3070 Origins of Art / Origins of Writing

Each of the earliest systems of writing had intimate and enduring ties to pictorial traditions. This seminar addresses the fundamental relationship between texts and visual imagery in the Mesopotamian, Egyptian, Chinese, and Maya traditions. The class will take a comparative approach to examine the parallel development of scripts and images, extending from their earliest beginnings to their on-going lives as mature systems. As the individual scripts became more capable of representing speech, the subject matter, composition, and function of images changed, and one goal of this class is to identify these processes. Emphasis will be put on seeing text and image as collaborative and interactive constructions, in which parts of a single message can be encoded and presented in different ways. The class will make extensive use of the collections and the curatorial expertise of the Penn Museum.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: ANTH 2330, ARTH 3230, NELC 3070

1 Course Unit

MELC 3260 Eastern Christianities

The history of Christianity is often told from the perspective of its spread westward from Israel to Rome. Yet, in the first millennium, there were more Christians living in the East, in places as far away as Persia, Yemen, India, China, and Mongolia, than in the West. Spread across the Asian continent, these Christians were actively involved in local and imperial politics, composed theological literature, and were deeply embedded in the cultural fabric of their host societies. This course traces the spread of Christianity eastward, paying particular attention to its regional developments, its negotiations with local political powers, and its contact with other religions, including Buddhism, Manichaeism, and Islam. Readings will cover a broad range of sources, including selections from classical Syriac literature, Manichaean texts, Mesopotamian magic bowls, the so-called "Jesus Sutras," and the Quran. All readings will be provided in English, and no background is presumed.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: NELC 3260, RELS 2350, SAST 2350

1 Course Unit

MELC 3300 Jewish Magic

The Hebrew Bible legislates against magic and witchcraft. But Jewish literature is replete with demons, witches, spells and incantations. This course will examine the phenomenon of Jewish magic in the longue duree. We will explore a wide array of sources describing ancient Jewish magical practices, and attempt to reconstruct the various aspects of ancient Jewish magic. We will start with demonology and exorcism in biblical and Second Temple literature. Then we will examine rabbinic attitudes towards magic and sorcery and rabbinic magical recipes. We then turn to material artifacts: late antique Jewish amulets and magic bowls. Finally we will survey the large corpus of magical texts from the Cairo Geniza and Hebrew manuscripts of magic from the middle ages. During the course we will consider broader questions such as the relationships between magic and religion, the identity of the Jewish magicians and their clients, relationship between Jewish and contemporary non-Jewish magic, and the role of women in magical practice.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: JWST 3300, NELC 3300

1 Course Unit

MELC 3400 Age of Caliphs, 600-1100

There are few moments of human history that were as creative as the seventh, eighth and ninth centuries in the Near East. Nor are there many such moments in history that pose as many questions to the historian. How do we know what we think we know about early and 'classical' Islamic history? In what ways is pre-modern Islamic history distinctive? How do we understand the role of religion in pre-modern societies? In this course, we will examine the social and political history of the Islamic Near East (with a few exotic pit-stops) in its formative centuries, from the rise of Islam to the coming of the Saljuq Turks. Special topics include: the rise of Islam; the early Islamic conquests; the expansion and disintegration of the imperial caliphate under the Umayyads and 'Abbasids; religious authority in early Islam; 'Abbasid successor states; Shi'ism; provincial cultures.

Fall

Also Offered As: NELC 3400

Prerequisite: MELC 0002

1 Course Unit

MELC 3410 Age of Sultans 1100-1500

In this course, we will examine the social and political history of the Islamic Middle East in its medieval centuries, from the coming of the Saljuq Turks to the rise of the Ottoman and Safavid Empires. Special topics include: the Eleventh-Century Transformation; Crusades and Jihads, the Mamluk Institution; Knowledge and Power; The Mongol Invasions; Timur and His Legacy; Gunpowder Empires. This course requires basic prior knowledge of Islam and the Middle East, such as prior enrollment in MELC 0002 or equivalent. Note that undergraduates must register for the course as MELC 3410; graduate students must register for the course as MELC 6410. Undergraduates are not permitted to register under the graduate number.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: NELC 3410

Mutually Exclusive: MELC 6410

Prerequisite: MELC 0002

1 Course Unit

MELC 3550 Africa and the Mid-East

This seminar will explore the historical relationship between these two regions from the early modern age to the present. We will examine the history of trade, particularly the slave trade, and its cultural and political legacy. We will compare the experiences of European imperialism—how the scramble for Africa dovetailed with the last decades of the Ottoman Empire—with an eye to how this shaped nationalist movements in both regions. The course will also explore the decades of independence with a special eye towards pan-Africanism and pan-Arabism. We will also study the ramifications of the Arab-Israeli conflict on the relationship between African and Middle-Eastern countries, from Uganda to Ethiopia, from OPEC to Darfur. The course will pay close attention to migrations through the regions, whether forced or economic or religious. Whenever possible we will explore, through film and literature, how people in Africa and the Middle East see their connections, and their differences.

Fall or Spring

Also Offered As: AFRC 3351, HIST 3351, NELC 3550

1 Course Unit

MELC 3560 Gunpowder, Art and Diplomacy: Islamic Empires in the Early Modern World

In the sixteenth century, the political landscape of the Middle East, Central Asia, and India changed with the expansion and consolidation of new Islamic empires. Gunpowder had transformed the modes of warfare. Diplomacy followed new rules and forms of legitimation. The widespread use of Persian, Arabic and Turkish languages across the region allowed for an interconnected world of scholars, merchants, and diplomats. And each imperial court, those of the Ottomans, the Safavids, and the Mughals, found innovative and original forms of expression in art and literature. The expansion of these Islamic empires, each of them military giants and behemoths of bureaucracy, marked a new phase in world history. The course is divided in four sections. The first section introduces the student to major debates about the so-called gunpowder empires of the Islamic world as well as to comparative approaches to study them. The second section focuses on the transformations of modes of warfare and military organization. The third section considers the cultural history and artistic production of the imperial courts of the Ottomans, the Mughals, and the Safavids. The fourth and final section investigates the social histories of these empires, their subjects, and the configuration of a world both connected and divided by commerce, expansion, and diplomacy.

Spring

Also Offered As: HIST 1300, NELC 3560

1 Course Unit

MELC 3600 Urban Life in the Middle East and North Africa

With rapid urbanization, most people in the Middle East and North Africa are living now in cities and towns, rather than in rural areas. This seminar introduces the complex realities of living in the major cities of the region, in terms of globalization, social class, politics, gender and sexuality, culture, religion, communal identities, communal networks, and more. Through intensive engagement with the various readings and films, both documentaries and feature films, we will explore how those realities and processes shape the urban space, or express themselves in it. In addition, we will explore the basic premises of such disciplines as anthropology, cultural studies, history, or sociology, and learn how they can help us research and understand the realities of urban life in the modern and contemporary Middle East and North Africa. We will use Cairo, Egypt, as our main case study, while looking at a range of other cities, such as Istanbul, Turkey, and Marrakesh, Morocco, for further insights.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: NELC 3600

1 Course Unit

MELC 3610 Egypt in Four Revolutions

This seminar offers an in-depth look at the political and social history of revolution and protest in modern Egypt. We will examine four such seminal events, through different lenses: The Urabi Revolution (1879-1882), The 1919 Revolution, The 1952 Revolution, and The 2011 Revolution. We will discuss their political, social, and economic causes and effects; popular participation and the use of public space; the roles of the army, women, youth, and social organizations in those events; their ideological and international aspects; their colonial and post-colonial contexts; and more. We will use cutting edge research from several disciplines, as well as literature, film, music, photography, and social media as sources. Students will leave the class with a firm grasp of the social and political history of modern Egypt, as well as of current scholarly discussions about the nature of revolution and protest.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: NELC 3610

1 Course Unit

MELC 3900 Women Making History: The Penn Museum and the Centennial 2020

The year 2020 marks the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which declared that the right of citizens to vote "shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex". To mark this centennial – to both celebrate it and critically assess its impact on American society – we will investigate the history of women at the Penn Museum as archaeologists, ethnographers, epigraphers, philanthropists, and more. At the same time, we will examine material in the Penn Museum that women collected, donated, or studied. Our goal will be to produce original research that may contribute to future exhibits and publications as well as to broader public forums. Sponsored by the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, our seminar will focus heavily on western Asia, southeastern Europe, and North Africa – all zones that scholars have variously associated with the Near East or Middle East, and where the Penn Museum has been active since its foundation in 1887. To situate the Penn Museum and its collections within a global and comparative frame, we will also study select women who made major scholarly contributions to other parts of the world such as the Americas and Oceania. Among the figures we will study are Sarah Yorke Stevenson (Egypt), Katharine Woolley (Mesopotamia/Iraq), Harriet Boyd Hawes (Ottoman Crete and Greece), Florence Shotridge (Alaska), Zelia Nuttall (Mexico and Russia), and Tatiana Proskouriakoff (Guatemala). We will venture into many different kinds of history. In regional terms, our scope will be transnational and international: we will cover the United States and the Middle East in the wider world. In thematic and methodological terms, we will approach our subject through biography, oral history, and microhistory; material history and museum studies; cultural and intellectual history; women's and gender studies; and the history of academic disciplines, especially archaeology and anthropology. Some background in Middle Eastern history; or Anthropology; or Women's History; or Museum Studies recommended.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: NELC 3900

1 Course Unit

MELC 3950 Intro to Digital Archaeology

Students in this course will be exposed to the broad spectrum of digital approaches in archaeology with an emphasis on fieldwork, through a survey of current literature and applied learning opportunities that focus on African American mortuary landscapes of greater Philadelphia. As an Academically Based Community Service (ABCS) course, we will work with stakeholders from cemetery companies, historic preservation advocacy groups, and members of the African Methodist Episcopal Church to collect data from three field sites. We will then use these data to reconstruct the original plans, untangle site taphonomy, and assess our results for each site. Our results will be examined within the broader constellation of threatened and lost African American burial grounds and our interpretations will be shared with community stakeholders using digital storytelling techniques. This course can count toward the minor in Digital Humanities, minor in Archaeological Science and the Graduate Certificate in Archaeological Science.

Also Offered As: ANTH 3307, CLST 3307, NELC 3950

Mutually Exclusive: CLST 5620

1 Course Unit

MELC 3992 Transfer Credit: Non-Major

Course credit for non-majors for courses taken in an approved program.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: NELC 3992

1 Course Unit

MELC 4055 Narrative in Ancient Art

Cultures of the ancient Middle East and Mediterranean world were fascinated to make images and things tell stories and engage with time. Sometimes that implied a text - and sometimes, not. With case studies from the deep past, this interdisciplinary advanced undergraduate lecture course explores the capacity of visual language to narrate.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: ARTH 4260, CLST 3412, NELC 4055

1 Course Unit

MELC 4105 History of Egypt-New Kingdom

Covers principal aspects of ancient Egyptian culture (environment, urbanism, religion, technology, etc.) with special focus on archaeological data; includes study of University Museum artifacts.

Spring

Also Offered As: NELC 4105

Mutually Exclusive: MELC 5104

1 Course Unit

MELC 4110 The Archaeology of Nubia

The course will examine the archaeology of Ancient Nubia from Pre-history through the Bronze and Iron Ages, ca. 5000 BCE to 300 AD. The course will focus on the various Nubian cultures of the Middle Nile, and social and cultural development, along with a detailed examination of the major archaeological sites and central issues of Nubian archaeology.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: NELC 4110

1 Course Unit

MELC 4300 Seminar in Modern Hebrew Literature

This course introduces students to selections from the best literary works written in Hebrew over the last hundred years in a relaxed seminar environment. The goal of the course is to develop skills in critical reading of literature in general, and to examine how Hebrew authors grapple with crucial questions of human existence and national identity. Topics include: Hebrew classics and their modern "descendants," autobiography in poetry and fiction, the conflict between literary generations, and others. Because the content of this course changes from year to year, students may take it for credit more than once. This course is conducted in Hebrew and all readings are in Hebrew. Grading is based primarily on participation and students' literary understanding.

Spring

Also Offered As: COML 4300, JWST 4300, NELC 4300

Mutually Exclusive: MELC 5410

Prerequisite: HEBR 1000

1 Course Unit

MELC 4305 Spirit and Law

While accepting "the yoke of the commandments", Jewish thinkers from antiquity onward have perennially sought to make the teachings of revelation more meaningful in their own lives. Additional impetus for this quest has come from overtly polemical challenges to the law, such as those leveled by Paul, medieval Aristotelians, Spinoza and Kant. This course explores both the critiques of Jewish Law, and Jewish reflections on the Law's meaning and purpose, by examining a range of primary sources within their intellectual and historical contexts. Texts (in English translation) include selections from Midrash, Talmud, medieval Jewish philosophy and biblical exegesis, kabbalah, Hasidic homilies, Jewish responses to the Enlightenment, and contemporary attempts to re-value and invent Jewish rituals.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: JWST 4305, NELC 4305, RELS 4305

1 Course Unit

MELC 4315 Jewish Literature in the Middle Ages in Translation

Course explores the cultural history of Jews in the lands of Islam from the time of Mohammed through the late 17th century (end of Ottoman expansion into Europe) --in Iraq, the Middle East, al-Andalus and the Ottoman Empire. Primary source documents (in English translation) illuminate minority-majority relations, internal Jewish tensions (e.g., Qaraism), and developments in scriptural exegesis, rabbinic law, philosophy, poetry, polemics, mysticism and liturgy. Graduate students have additional readings and meetings.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: NELC 4315

1 Course Unit

MELC 4320 Prose Narrative

Historical, literary, comparative, and ethnographic methods contribute to study of prose narratives which were told in oral societies in antiquity and in modern times and were documented in literary societies for different purposes. Oral storytellers, both professional and amateurs, performed them in private and public spaces. Their recording from antiquity to modern times became an integral element of modern life in general and in education and arts in particular. The storytellers, their performances in oral and literary cultures, their genres, and their symbolic meanings are the subjects of the course, together with the analytical methods that help mapping their distribution worldwide.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: NELC 4320

1 Course Unit

MELC 4500 Arabic Literature and Literary Theory

This course will explore different critical approaches to the interpretation and analysis of Arabic literature from pre-Islamic poetry to the modern novel and prose-poem. The course will draw on western and Arabic literary criticism to explore the role of critical theory not only in understanding and contextualizing literature but also in forming literary genres and attitudes. Among these approaches are: Meta-poetry and inter-Arts theory, Genre theory, Myth and Archetype, Poetics and Rhetoric, and Performance theory. This course is taught in translation.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: COML 4500, NELC 4500

1 Course Unit

MELC 4505 Islamic Intellectual Tradition

This comprehensive survey of the traditions of rational thought in classical Islamic culture is distinguished by its attempt to contextualize and localize the history of what is best described as philosophy in Islam, including not only the Islamic products of the Hellenistic mode of thought but also religious and linguistic sciences whose methodology is philosophical. The course examines the influence of these different disciplines upon each other, and the process of the Islamic "aspecting" of the Greek intellectual legacy. The readings thus include not only the works of Hellenized philosophers (falasifa) of Islam, but also those of theologians (mutakallimun), legists (fiqh scholars), and grammarians (nahw/lugha scholars). No prerequisites. Additional advanced-level assignments can be given for graduate credit.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: NELC 4505

Mutually Exclusive: MELC 5505

1 Course Unit

MELC 4550 Islamic Art and Architecture

This advanced undergraduate lecture introduces the major architectural monuments and trends, as well as to the best-known objects of the Islamic world. Istanbul, Samarkand, Isfahan, Cairo and Delhi as major centers of art production in the fourteenth to seventeenth centuries. Attention is paid to such themes as the continuity of late antique themes; architecture as symbol of community and power; the importance of textiles; primacy of writing; urban and architectural achievement; and key monuments of painting and metalwork.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: ARTH 4350, NELC 4550

1 Course Unit

MELC 4950 Mining Archaeology

In ancient times, materials such as stone and metals were used to produce artifacts including pigments, jewelry, tools, and weapons. This course is designed to introduce students to research on the early exploitation of mineral resources. Which techniques were used to access and process raw materials in antiquity? Which archaeological methods can be used to investigate these features and artifacts? The course will provide worldwide examples through time, ranging from Stone Age flint mining, Iron Age rock salt mining to Medieval silver mining. Ethnographic studies and hands-on activities will contribute to our understanding of mining in archaeology, and artifacts from the Museum's collections will undergo scientific analysis in the Center for the Analysis of Archaeological Materials.

Spring

Also Offered As: ANTH 3219, CLST 3314, NELC 4950

Mutually Exclusive: ANTH 5219

1 Course Unit

MELC 4955 The Past Preserved: Conservation In Archaeology

This course explores the scientific conservation of cultural materials from archaeological contexts. It is intended to familiarize students with the basics of artifact conservation but is not intended to train them as conservators. The course will cover how various materials interact with their deposit environments; general techniques for on-site conservation triage and retrieval of delicate materials; what factors need to be considered in planning for artifact conservation; and related topics. Students should expect to gain a thorough understanding of the role of conservation in archaeology and how the two fields interact.

Also Offered As: ANTH 3235, ARTH 0143, CLST 3315, NELC 4955

Mutually Exclusive: ANTH 5235

1 Course Unit

MELC 4992 Transfer Credit: Major

Course credit for MELC majors for courses taken in an approved program.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: NELC 4992

1 Course Unit

MELC 4995 Senior Conference

Directed study for seniors.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: NELC 4995

1 Course Unit

MELC 4999 Independent Study

Supervised reading and research with Near Eastern or Middle Eastern content for undergraduates

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: NELC 4999

1 Course Unit

MELC 5010 History and Society of Early Mesopotamia

The fourth millennium BCE saw the rise of cities and the birth of writing in ancient Mesopotamia (modern Iraq). This class traces the history of Mesopotamia from about 3000 BCE to about 1600 BCE (the end of the Old Babylonian Period), examining political history and changes in social organization as well as developments in religion, literature and art.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: NELC 5010

1 Course Unit

MELC 5020 Mesopotamia 2200-1600 BCE

This seminar style class will focus on two canonical periods of Mesopotamian history from 2100-1600 BCE. It is structured to examine fundamental institutions of kingship, religion, economy, law and literature. Practices well established in Sumer by the end of the third millennium evolved during the first half of the second millennium BCE when Amorite speaking peoples assume central roles in Mesopotamian institutions. The class will be structured around case studies engaging key monuments of art, architecture and literature. It will be team-taught by Prof. Pittman, focusing on material remains and visual arts and by Prof. Steve Tinney who brings expertise to the rich cuneiform textual traditions.

Also Offered As: AAMW 5020, ANTH 5024, ARTH 5240, NELC 5020

1 Course Unit

MELC 5050 Ancient Iranian Art Seminar

This seminar will focus on the environmental, archaeological and textual record for settlement in the Persian/Arabian Gulf region from the Neolithic to the pre-Islamic Late Antique. Emphasis will be on the settlement history and material culture. Special attention will be paid to the close interaction of the local communities on the Arabian side of the Gulf with those on the Iranian/Indus valley side. The patterns of sea faring trade and interaction from Mesopotamia, Iran, Indus Valley and beyond will be considered. It is possible that this class will take a site trip to the UAE during the spring break, if the logistics can be arranged.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: AAMW 5220, ARTH 5220, NELC 5050

1 Course Unit

MELC 5054 Courtly Life in Mesopotamia, Persia, and the Mediterranean

Who could approach and speak with the Sumerian Queen? What rules governed a banquet with the Persian king? What was the most elegant way to drink wine? Where were the women in the Assyrian court? With hundreds of people crammed into a palace, was hygiene important? How were court guests treated? What games were played at court? Is the stereotypical image of the "Oriental" court characterized by lust, backstairs intrigue, flatteries, and secrets sustainable in the light of new evidence and theoretical approaches? The court at the same time is considered as a large amorphous body in a physical location or an institution, or a group of people, or even to particular events. This seminar style course considers Middle Eastern courts from the Sumerians through the Assyrian and Persian empires articulating shared and diverse features. Textual, visual, material and archaeological sources are considered through sociological and anthropological theories and core concepts such as groups, individuals, ultrasociality, proxemics, sociopetal, sociofrugal and purity to name a few. Comparisons with later courts in the Middle East are welcome.

Also Offered As: AAMW 5241, ARTH 5241, NELC 5054

1 Course Unit

MELC 5100 Seminar on Egyptian Archaeology and History

Specific topics will vary from year to year.

Fall

Also Offered As: NELC 5100

1 Course Unit

MELC 5101 Imagining Ancient Egypt: A History of Popular Fascination from Antiquity to the Present

Thousands of years after the pyramids were built and the last hieroglyphs were written, ancient Egypt remains a source of mystery and intense interest. Why are we so fascinated with ancient Egypt, and what does that fascination reveal about us? This course explores the reception history of ancient Egypt: how people in various periods and areas of the world have thought about ancient Egypt, what it has meant to them, why they were interested in it, and how they brought the ancient Egyptian past into the present. We will focus not on ancient Egypt itself, but on the history of perceptions of, ideas about, and interactions with ancient Egyptian culture. Our investigation will include how Egyptians of later periods thought about their ancient past, as well as European and American representations (and appropriations) of ancient Egypt. A major focus of the course will be the impact of political and cultural relations between Egypt and the West on perceptions and uses of ancient Egyptian culture. This interdisciplinary course will combine multiple areas of history –intellectual, cultural, and political—and multiple types of sources, including historical writing, literature, film, and opera. Beginning with ancient Greek and Roman visitors to Egypt, we will investigate changing modes of understanding, constructing, and representing ancient Egypt, from the medieval sultans of Egypt to Mozart to W. E. B. DuBois to protesters in Egypt's 2011 revolution. Over the course of the semester, we will explore questions such as: - What does it mean to think of Egypt as African vs. Middle Eastern vs. Mediterranean? Is Egypt Western, Eastern, both, or neither? - To whom does ancient Egyptian heritage belong? How do colonialism and conceptions of race and ethnicity factor into this question? - How do the past and the present shape each other? What is the impact of modern politics and culture on perceptions of the past? What role does the past play in the formation of modern political, social, and cultural identities? - How can we learn about modern problems and concerns from representations of the past?

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: CLST 5710, NELC 5101

Mutually Exclusive: MELC 2102

1 Course Unit

MELC 5104 History of Egypt-New Kingdom

Covers principal aspects of ancient Egyptian culture (environment, urbanism, religion, technology, etc.) with special focus on archaeological data; includes study of University Museum artifacts.

Spring

Also Offered As: NELC 5104

Mutually Exclusive: MELC 4105

1 Course Unit

MELC 5105 Literary Legacy of Ancient Egypt

This course surveys the literature of Ancient Egypt from the Old Kingdom through the Graeco-Roman period, focusing upon theme, structure, and style, as well as historical and social context. A wide range of literary genres are treated, including epics; tales, such as the "world's oldest fairy tale;" poetry, including love poems, songs, and hymns; religious texts, including the "Cannibal Hymn"; magical spells; biographies; didactic literature; drama; royal and other monumental inscriptions; and letters, including personal letters, model letters, and letters to the dead. Issues such as literacy, oral tradition, and the question poetry vs. prose are also discussed. No prior knowledge of Egyptian is required.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: NELC 5105

1 Course Unit

MELC 5200 The Bible in Translation

This course introduces undergraduates and graduate students to one specific Book of the Hebrew Bible. "The Bible in Translation" involves an in-depth reading of a biblical source against the background of contemporary scholarship. Depending on the book under discussion, this may also involve a contextual reading with other biblical books and the textual sources of the ancient Near East.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: NELC 5200

1 Course Unit

MELC 5210 Great Books of Judaism

The Babylonian Talmud, known simply as the Bavli, is the foundational legal and ethical document of rabbinic Judaism. It is one of the best read works of world literature, and it is the most widely disseminated and revered rabbinic work. It not only contains legal discussions and rulings but rather it also presents the worldview of the rabbis. This course will analyze and contextualize the perspectives of the Talmud towards the important phases of life. We will examine in-depth several Talmudic passages relating to the various stages of the human lifecycle: birth and naming of the child; circumcision; bar/bat mitzva and adulthood; earning a livelihood and choosing a career; marriage and divorce; procreation and raising children; death, burial, mourning and the belief in the resurrection of the dead among others. We will evaluate these teachings in light of other traditions and in their broader late antiquity and contemporary contexts. All texts will be read in their English translation but originals will also be provided.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: NELC 5210

Mutually Exclusive: MELC 0305

1 Course Unit

MELC 5211 Elementary Biblical Hebrew I

This course is an introduction to Biblical Hebrew. It assumes no prior knowledge, but students who can begin to acquire a reading knowledge of the Hebrew alphabet before class starts will find it extremely helpful. The course is the 1st of a 4-semester sequence whose purpose is to prepare students to take courses in Bible that demand a familiarity with the original language of the text.

Fall

Mutually Exclusive: MELC 0301

1 Course Unit

MELC 5212 Elementary Biblical Hebrew II

A continued introduction to the grammar of Biblical Hebrew, focusing on the verbal system, with an emphasis on developing language skills in handling Biblical texts. A suitable entry point for students who have had some Modern Hebrew. Prerequisite: If course requirement not met, permission of instructor required.

Spring

Also Offered As: NELC 5212

Mutually Exclusive: MELC 0302

1 Course Unit

MELC 5213 Intermediate Biblical Hebrew I

This course will focus on using the grammar and vocabulary learned at the introductory level to enable students to read Biblical texts independently and take advanced Bible exegesis courses. We will also work on getting comfortable with the standard dictionaries, concordances, and grammars used by scholars of the Bible. We will concentrate on prose this semester, closely reading Ruth, Jonah, and other prose selections. We will begin to translate from English into Biblical Hebrew, and there will also be a unit on the punctuation marks used in the Bible. This is a suitable entry point for students who already have strong Hebrew skills.

Fall

Also Offered As: NELC 5213

Mutually Exclusive: MELC 0303

1 Course Unit

MELC 5214 Intermediate Biblical Hebrew II

This course is a continuation of the fall semester's Intermediate Biblical Hebrew I. No one will be admitted into the course who has not taken the fall semester. It will continue to focus on using the grammar and vocabulary learned at the introductory level to enable students to read biblical texts independently and take advanced Bible exegesis courses. We will concentrate this semester on various selections of Biblical poetry, including Exodus 15 and Job 28. We will also continue to translate English prose into Biblical Hebrew.

Spring

Also Offered As: NELC 5214

Mutually Exclusive: MELC 0304

1 Course Unit

MELC 5300 Seminar in Rabbinic Literature

Most of the foundational writings of rabbinic Judaism corpora of Midrash, Mishna, and the two Talmuds were in existence by the end of the sixth century CE. Yet, for several centuries thereafter, there is little evidence attesting to the lived nature of rabbinic culture and society. Course will focus on writings by Jews and about Jews, produced between the 7th and 10th centuries, complemented by secondary sources. Texts will include selections from archaeological inscriptions; Midrash; liturgical poetry; Targum; Masora; geonic responsa, writings by Muslims and by Church Fathers. While students must be able to read Hebrew, much class time will be devoted to the improvement of reading and comprehension skills. Undergraduates should seek permission of the instructor.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: HEBR 6100, JWST 5300, NELC 5300

1 Course Unit

MELC 5400 Introduction to Modern Hebrew Literature

The objective of this course is to develop an artistic appreciation for literature through in-depth class discussions and text analysis. Readings are comprised of Israeli poetry and short stories. Students examine how literary language expresses psychological and cultural realms. The course covers topics such as: the short story reinvented, literature and identity, and others. Because the content of this course changes from year to year, students may take it for credit more than once. This course is conducted in Hebrew and all readings are in Hebrew. Grading is based primarily on participation and students' literary understanding.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: NELC 5400

Prerequisite: HEBR 0400

1 Course Unit

MELC 5405 Manuscript Arts in the Islamic World

This hands-on seminar will explore the long tradition of manuscript-making and manuscript-makers in the Islamic world, using the extensive collections of Arab, Persian, Turkish and Indian volumes at the University of Pennsylvania and the Free Library of Philadelphia. These include copies of the Qur'an (Islam's holy text) and other religious, scientific, historical and literary texts. Emphasis will be placed on traditional materials and artistic techniques, specifically calligraphy, binding, illumination and illustration, as well as on production methods and the historical, social, and economic contexts in which manuscripts were made, used and collected from early Islamic times to the early modern period. Also at issue will be the ways that Islamicate manuscripts were transformed over the centuries as they journeyed from their diverse places of origin (Egypt, Morocco, Syria, Iran, India, etc.) to Philadelphia. The goal is to develop the art historical skills involved in the study of Islamicate codices, through close examination, discussion and presentation, and to recognize that every manuscript has a story. Most of the class sessions will be held either at the Kislak Center in Van Pelt Library or at the Free Library on the Parkway.

Also Offered As: ARTH 5360, NELC 5405

1 Course Unit

MELC 5410 Seminar in Modern Hebrew Literature

This course introduces students to selections from the best literary works written in Hebrew over the last hundred years in a relaxed seminar environment. The goal of the course is to develop skills in critical reading of literature in general, and to examine how Hebrew authors grapple with crucial questions of human existence and national identity. Topics include: Hebrew classics and their modern "descendents," autobiography in poetry and fiction, the conflict between literary generations, and others. Because the content of this course changes from year to year, students may take it for credit more than once. This course is conducted in Hebrew and all readings are in Hebrew. Grading is based primarily on participation and students' literary understanding.

Spring

Also Offered As: NELC 5410

Mutually Exclusive: MELC 4300

Prerequisite: HEBR 1000

1 Course Unit

MELC 5505 Islamic Intellectual Tradition

This comprehensive survey of the traditions of rational thought in classical Islamic culture is distinguished by its attempt to contextualize and localize the history of what is best described as philosophy in Islam, including not only the Islamic products of the Hellenistic mode of thought but also religious and linguistic sciences whose methodology is philosophical. The course examines the influence of these different disciplines upon each other, and the process of the Islamic "aspecting" of the Greek intellectual legacy. The readings thus include not only the works of Hellenized philosophers (falasifa) of Islam, but also those of theologians (mutakallimun), legists (fiqh scholars), and grammarians (nahw/lugha scholars). No prerequisites. Additional advanced-level assignments can be given for graduate credit.

Spring

Also Offered As: NELC 5505

Mutually Exclusive: MELC 4505

1 Course Unit

MELC 5620 Intro to Digital Archaeology

Digital methods allow archaeologists to approach research questions about the human past with increasing accuracies on larger datasets and at multiple scales. This class introduces students to the three main steps of digital archaeology: data management, analysis, and sharing. Data management involves the design, creation, and curation of digital objects that capture the archaeological process and evidence. Students will gain deep familiarity in working with the main types of digital archaeological data: structured data (relational databases), 3d models/spatial data, and raster images. The class will provide abundant hands-on experience with the latest equipment and software for working with many different kinds of data. We will learn about data analysis techniques through a close examination of a variety of case studies in the literature that demonstrate how other archaeologists have applied digital methods to their archaeological questions. Finally, we will discuss the importance of sharing data through open access data publication and we will apply our skills with structured data to existing online archaeological datasets. The goal of this class is to prepare students to make methodological decisions during future research endeavors, both in the field and in the archaeological lab.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: NELC 5620

1 Course Unit

MELC 5700 Iranian Cinema: Gender, Politics and Religion

This seminar explores Iranian culture, society, history and politics through the medium of film. We will examine a variety of cinematic works that represent the social, political, economic and cultural circumstances of contemporary Iran, as well as the diaspora. Along the way, we will discuss issues pertaining to gender, religion, nationalism, ethnicity, and the role of cinema in Iranian society and beyond. Discussions topics will also include the place of the Iranian diaspora in cinema, as well as the transnational production, distribution, and consumption of Iranian cinema. Films will include those by internationally acclaimed filmmakers, such as Rakhshan Bani-Etemad, Asghar Farhadi, Bahman Ghobadi, Abbas Kiarostami, Mohsen Makhmalbaf, Dariush Mehrjui, Tahmineh Milani, Jafar Panahi, Marjane Satrapi and others. All films will be subtitled in English. No prior knowledge is required.

No prior knowledge is required.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: NELC 5700

1 Course Unit

MELC 5920 The University, the Museum, and the Middle East

This seminar explores how two kinds of institutions - the research university and the museum - developed in the United States as American scholars and philanthropists and the U.S. government engaged with the wider world. We will take the involvement of the University of Pennsylvania and the Penn Museum in the Middle East as a test case for this history, while focusing on the period from the late nineteenth century to the present. We will approach questions in transnational intellectual, cultural, and political history through the lens of Penn's Middle Eastern engagements. For example, how did the university and its museum contribute to the construction of the Middle East as a zone of U.S. diplomatic intervention? How have American scholarly traditions shaped academic fields of inquiry including "Semitics" (a term used a century ago to suggest the study of biblical languages and traditions), "Oriental Studies" (a now-passe and politically loaded term suggesting connections to American traditions of Orientalist thought), "Islamic Studies", and "Egyptology"? How did Penn's archaeological expeditions to celebrated sites like Ur in the late nineteenth century influence the late Ottoman Empire's policies towards antiquities and museums? How did Penn's broader expeditions in the twentieth century, to Egypt, Iran, and elsewhere, shape nationalist imaginations in the United States and in Middle Eastern countries, while also informing international antiquities policies? Finally, how have institutions like Penn and the Penn Museum responded to changing American popular attitudes and U.S. foreign policy concerns relative to the Middle East, during the Cold War and post-2001 ("post-9/11") eras, and most recently, amid civil strife in Syria and Iraq? This seminar offers students an opportunity to consult Penn's phenomenal collections of Middle East-related materials as they pursue end-of-semester research. These collections include artifacts (museum objects), archival records (such as documents, drawings, and photographs), and rare books and manuscripts from the Penn Museum and Penn Libraries.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: NELC 5920

1 Course Unit

MELC 5925 Geophysical Prospection for Archaeology

Near-surface geophysical prospection methods are now widely used in archaeology as they allow archaeologists to rapidly map broad areas, minimize or avoid destructive excavation, and perceive physical dimensions of archaeological features that are outside of the range of human perception. This course will cover the theory of geophysical sensors commonly used in archaeological investigations and the methods for collecting, processing, and interpreting geophysical data from archaeological contexts. We will review the physical properties of common archaeological and paleoenvironmental targets, the processes that led to their deposition and formation, and how human activity is reflected in anomalies recorded through geophysical survey through lectures, readings, and discussion. Students will gain experience collecting data in the field with various sensors at archaeological sites in the region. A large proportion of the course will be computer-based as students work with data from geophysical sensors, focusing on the fundamentals of data processing, data fusion, and interpretation. Some familiarity with GIS is recommended.

Spring, even numbered years only

Also Offered As: AAMW 5720, ANTH 5720, CLST 7315, NELC 5925

1 Course Unit

MELC 5930 Women Making History: The Penn Museum and the Centennial 2020

The year 2020 marks the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which declared that the right of citizens to vote "shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex". To mark this centennial - to both celebrate it and critically assess its impact on American society - we will investigate the history of women at the Penn Museum as archaeologists, ethnographers, epigraphers, philanthropists, and more. At the same time, we will examine material in the Penn Museum that women collected, donated, or studied. Our goal will be to produce original research that may contribute to future exhibits and publications as well as to broader public forums. Sponsored by the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, our seminar will focus heavily on western Asia, southeastern Europe, and North Africa - all zones that scholars have variously associated with the Near East or Middle East, and where the Penn Museum has been active since its foundation in 1887. To situate the Penn Museum and its collections within a global and comparative frame, we will also study select women who made major scholarly contributions to other parts of the world such as the Americas and Oceania. Among the figures we will study are Sarah Yorke Stevenson (Egypt), Katharine Woolley (Mesopotamia/Iraq), Harriet Boyd Hawes (Ottoman Crete and Greece), Florence Shotridge (Alaska), Zelia Nuttall (Mexico and Russia), and Tatiana Proskouriakoff (Guatemala). We will venture into many different kinds of history. In regional terms, our scope will be transnational and international: we will cover the United States and the Middle East in the wider world. In thematic and methodological terms, we will approach our subject through biography, oral history, and microhistory; material history and museum studies; cultural and intellectual history; women's and gender studies; and the history of academic disciplines, especially archaeology and anthropology.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: NELC 5920

1 Course Unit

MELC 5950 Ruins and Reconstruction

This class examines our enduring fascination with ruins coupled with our commitments to reconstruction from theoretical, ethical, socio-political and practical perspectives. This includes analyzing international conventions and principles, to the work of heritage agencies and NGOs, to the implications for specific local communities and development trajectories. We will explore global case studies featuring archaeological and monumental sites with an attention to context and communities, as well as the construction of expertise and implications of international intervention. Issues of conservation from the material to the digital will also be examined. Throughout the course we will be asking what a future in ruins holds for a variety of fields and disciplines, as well as those who have most to win or lose in the preservation of the past.

Also Offered As: ANTH 5805, CLST 7317, HSPV 5850, NELC 5950

1 Course Unit

MELC 6010 Reading Ancient Mesopotamia

An introduction to the literature of Ancient Mesopotamia. The literature of ancient Mesopotamia flourished thousands of years ago in a culture all of its own, yet the survival of hundreds of thousands of written records challenges us to read it and make sense of it without simply approximating it to the realm of our own understanding. How can we learn to do this? Situating our understanding of how we read and how we understand culture within an interdisciplinary range of literary-critical and analytic approaches, we will approach this question by immersing ourselves in the myths tales and mentalities that made Mesopotamian literature meaningful. To give us a measure of our progress we will bracket the semester by reading Gilgamesh which is never less than a great story, but which will take on new layers of meaning as the semester develops and we learn to read the text in more and more Mesopotamian ways. As we journey through these mysterious realms we will reflect not only Mesopotamia and its immortal literature but on what it means to read and understand any cultures other than our own.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: NELC 6010

1 Course Unit

MELC 6020 Iraq: Ancient Cities and Empires

Iraq: Ancient Cities and Empires is a chronological survey of the ancient civilization that existed in the drainage basin of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers from the early settled village farming communities of the 7th millennium BCE to the middle of the 1st millennium BCE, when Nebuchadnezzar II ruled Babylon and much of the Middle East. Though organized period by period, NELC 241 explores various social, political, economic, and ideological topics, exposing students to various strands of evidence, including settlement survey data, excavated architectural remains, artifacts, and documentary sources, as well as an eclectic mix of theoretical perspectives. The course aims to provide students with a strong foundation for the further study of the ancient and pre-modern Middle East.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: NELC 6020

1 Course Unit

MELC 6040 Ancient Iranian Empires

Iran - as a landmass and a political entity - was central to the ancient world in a variety of ways. Ancient Iranian Empires were of central importance to - and centrally located in - the ancient world. It was the successor kingdom to the Assyrians and Babylonians; the power against which Greece and Rome defined themselves; and the crucible in which various communities and models of rule developed. This course offers a survey of the history of the ancient Persianate world, focusing in particular on the political and imperial entities that rose to power, the cultural, political, mercantile, and other contacts they shared with their neighbors to the East and West, and the communities and religious groups that arose and flourished within their lands. Ancient Iranian empires rivaled the Greek and Roman Empires to their West, and the central and eastern Asian Empires to their east, and the ongoing history of diplomacy, cultural contact, and war between these regions was formative to each and to the ancient world as a whole. Iran was home to and similarly formative for a variety of religions, including Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity, Manichaeism, and Islam, and a central question Ancient Iranian political powers sought to address was how to negotiate and address the variety of populations under their control. The course will conclude by studying how, rather than a simplistic story of decline, the strategies, policies, institutions, and memory of the Iranian Empires continued to shape early Islam, medieval imagination, and modern political regimes.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: NELC 6040

1 Course Unit

MELC 6050 Art of Ancient Iran

This lecture course offers a survey of ancient Iranian art and culture from the painted pottery cultures of the Neolithic era to the monuments of the Persian Empire.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: AAMW 6220, ARTH 6220, NELC 6050

1 Course Unit

MELC 6060 Art of Mesopotamia

Visual expression was first developed in Mesopotamia in the same environment as the invention of writing. This lecture class will introduce the arts of the major periods of Mesopotamian History ending with the "cinematic" effects achieved by the Assyrian artists on the walls of the royal palaces. The strong connection between verbal and visual expression will be traced over the three millennia course of Mesopotamian civilization from the earliest periods through the imperial art of the Assyrians and Babylonians of the first millennium BCE. The class and the assignments will regularly engage with objects in the collections and on display in the galleries of the Penn Museum.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: AAMW 6240, ARTH 6240, NELC 6060

Mutually Exclusive: ARTH 2240

1 Course Unit

MELC 6080 Worlds of Late Antiquity

The period between the third and eighth centuries - from the Tetrarchy led by Diocletian to the rise of Umayyad Caliphate - is characteristically regarded as a period of ferment and change, whether that be on the still-influential model of Decline and Fall first proposed by Edward Gibbon in the eighteenth century or the somewhat less deterministic account of transformation favored by Peter Brown in the late twentieth. These narratives tend to emphasize the large-scale processes that played out over these centuries, such as the florescence and fragmentation of two world empires; the emergence of two highly influential monotheistic religions of the book; and the codification of legal systems that continue to dominate contemporary practices and theories of law. Equally, what characterizes these centuries is the particular granularity and character of the textual and archaeological evidence that exists for the functioning of this world at the micro-scale, as against the periods that preceded and followed. This course traces the social, economic, cultural, and religious institutions and processes that make this period distinctive, explores the nature of the evidence for those institutions and processes, and exposes to scrutiny the assumptions and preconceptions that underpin the scholarly narratives that have been constructed about them.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: ANCH 6080, NELC 6080, RELS 6080

1 Course Unit

MELC 6100 History of Ancient Egypt

Review and discussion of the principal aspects of ancient Egyptian history, 3000-500 BC.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: NELC 6100

1 Course Unit

MELC 6105 Art and Architecture in Ancient Egypt

This course will be an introduction to the art, architecture and minor arts that were produced during the three thousand years of ancient Egyptian history. This material will be presented in its cultural and historical contexts through illustrated lectures and will include visits to the collection of the University Museum.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: AAMW 6180, ARTH 6180, NELC 6105

1 Course Unit

MELC 6108 The Archaeology of Nubia

The course will examine the archaeology of Ancient Nubia from Pre-history through the Bronze and Iron Ages, ca. 5000 BCE to 300 AD. The course will focus on the various Nubian cultures of the Middle Nile, and social and cultural development, along with a detailed examination of the major archaeological sites and central issues of Nubian archaeology.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: NELC 6108

Mutually Exclusive: MELC 4110

1 Course Unit

MELC 6110 The World of Cleopatra

The figure of Cleopatra is familiar from modern stories, legends, and film. Was this famous woman a brazen seductress or a brilliant political mind? How many of these presentations are historically accurate? This class will examine the Ptolemaic period in Egypt (305-30 BCE), the time period during which Cleopatra lived, in an attempt to separate myth from reality. The Ptolemaic period is filled with political and personal intrigue. It was also a time of dynamic multiculturalism. Arguably one of the most violent and fascinating eras in ancient Egyptian history, the Ptolemaic period is largely unknown and often misunderstood. This course will examine the history, art, religion and literature of Egypt's Ptolemaic period which culminated in the reign of Cleopatra VII.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: NELC 6110

Mutually Exclusive: MELC 0225

1 Course Unit

MELC 6120 Women in Ancient Egypt

This class will examine the many roles played by women in ancient Egypt. From goddesses and queens, to wives and mothers, women were a visible presence in ancient Egypt. We will study the lives of famous ancient Egyptian women such as Hatshepsut, Nefertiti and Cleopatra. More independent than many of their contemporaries in neighboring areas, Egyptian women enjoyed greater freedoms in matters of economy and law. By examining the evidence left to us in the literature (including literary texts and non-literary texts such as legal documents, administrative texts and letters), the art, and the archaeological record, we will come away with a better understanding of the position of women in this ancient culture.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: NELC 6120

Mutually Exclusive: MELC 0220

1 Course Unit

MELC 6125 The Religion of Ancient Egypt

Weekly lectures (some of which will be illustrated) and a field trip to the University Museum's Egyptian Section. The multifaceted approach to the subject matter covers such topics as funerary literature and religion, cults, magic religious art and architecture, and the religion of daily life.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: NELC 6125

Mutually Exclusive: MELC 0215

1 Course Unit

MELC 6140 Tutankhamun's Tomb: Its Treasures and Significance

This course examines the short life of the young boy king and what the discovery of his tomb and its contents mean in terms of Egypt's long history and accomplishments.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: AAMW 6141, AFRC 6140, NELC 6140

Mutually Exclusive: MELC 2140

1 Course Unit

MELC 6305 Themes Jewish Tradition

Course topics will vary; they have included The Binding of Isaac, Responses to Catastrophes in Jewish History, Holy Men & Women (Ben-Amos); Rewriting the Bible (Dohrmann); Performing Judaism (Fishman); Jewish Political Thought (Fishman); Jewish Esotericism (Lorberbaum) Democratic culture assumes the democracy of knowledge - the accessibility of knowledge and its transparency. Should this always be the case? What of harmful knowledge? When are secrets necessary? In traditional Jewish thought, approaching the divine has often assumed an aura of danger. Theological knowledge was thought of as restricted. This seminar will explore the "open" and "closed" in theological knowledge, as presented in central texts of the rabbinic tradition: the Mishnah, Maimonides and the Kabbalah. Primary sources will be available in both Hebrew and English.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: NELC 6305

Mutually Exclusive: MELC 0330

1 Course Unit

MELC 6310 Faces of Love: Gender, Sexuality and the Erotic in Persian Literature

Beloved, Lover and Love are three concepts that dominate the semantic field of eroticism in Persian literature and mysticism. The interrelation among these concepts makes it almost impossible to treat any one of the concepts separately. Moreover, there exists various faces and shades of love in the works of classical and modern Persian literature that challenges the conventional heteronormative assumptions about the sexual and romantic relationships between the lover and the beloved. A sharp contrast exists between the treatment of homosexuality and 'queerness' in Islamic law, on the one hand and its reflection in Persian literature, particularly poetry (the chief vehicle of Persian literary expression), on the other. This course introduces and explores different faces of love, eroticism and homoeroticism in the Persian literary tradition from the dawn of dawn of the Persian poetry in the ninth century all through to the twenty-first century. It offers a comprehensive study of representations and productions of heteronormativity, sexual orientation and gender roles with particular reference to the notion of love, lover and beloved in Persian literature.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: NELC 6305

Mutually Exclusive: MELC 2400

1 Course Unit

MELC 6350 Archaeological Fieldwork in Southern Iraq

After several decades of closure to foreign researchers, the heartland of the world's earliest cities (southern Iraq) has reopened for archaeological expeditions. This course is a seminar for graduate students who will conduct fieldwork in Spring 2019 at two major Mesopotamian cities, Ur (Tell al-Muqayyar) and Lagash (Tell al-Hiba), as part of Penn-led teams. Leading up to fieldwork, we will conduct a critical review of past investigations at these and other contemporary Mesopotamian sites of the fifth-second millennium BC. We will discuss how recent work in northern Mesopotamia (Syria, SE Turkey, Kurdistan), Anatolia, and South Caucasia provides new archaeological approaches to be applied, new questions to be answered, and new models to be tested in southern Iraq. In the field, students will work alongside the instructor and other archaeological project staff to learn and hone excavation and survey techniques. During and following fieldwork, each student will conduct an independent project on material excavated and surveyed in the field at Ur and/or Lagash. This project should align with the student's interests and will further the research program of the archaeological teams at Ur and Lagash.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: NELC 6350

1 Course Unit

MELC 6375 Rabbinic Literature: History and Methods

This course is intended as an in-depth survey of research debates, historical-critical methods and resources employed in the study of classical (pre-Geonic) rabbinic literature; in other words, this class offers a robust introduction to the history of the field. The course will introduce students to much (but by no means all) of the fundamental modern scholarship of the 19th-21st centuries, divided into key topics.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: JWST 6375, NELC 6375

1 Course Unit

MELC 6400 Age of Caliphs, 600-1100

There are few moments of human history that were as creative as the seventh, eighth and ninth centuries in the Near East. Nor are there many such moments in history that pose as many questions to the historian. How do we know what we think we know about early and 'classical' Islamic history? In what ways is pre-modern Islamic history distinctive? How do we understand the role of religion in pre-modern societies? In this course, we will examine the social and political history of the Islamic Near East (with a few exotic pit-stops) in its formative centuries, from the rise of Islam to the coming of the Saljuq Turks. Special topics include: the rise of Islam; the early Islamic conquests; the expansion and disintegration of the imperial caliphate under the Umayyads and 'Abbasids; religious authority in early Islam; 'Abbasid successor states; Shi'ism; provincial cultures.

Fall

Also Offered As: NELC 6400

Prerequisite: MELC 0002

1 Course Unit

MELC 6414 Jerusalem: Holy City

This course will survey the cultural history of Jerusalem over three millennia with a special focus on its configuration as contested, sacred space in multiple traditions (including Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and others). The course will address how Jerusalem acquired its "holy" status on both a micro-level (via sacred spaces within the city) and macro-level (as a target for pilgrimage in competition with other cities in the region). These aspects of the city will be analyzed both as they are depicted in texts and as they are attested in the art and architecture found in Jerusalem and in similar cities in the broader Mediterranean/Middle East. The course will examine how sacred space and sacred urbanism are produced through interactions with texts, artifacts, and built environments.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: JWST 6414, NELC 6414

Mutually Exclusive: MELC 0014

1 Course Unit

MELC 6500 Seminar in Selected Topics in Arabic Literature

This is the graduate seminar course in which a variety of aspects of Arabic literature studies are covered at the advanced graduate level. Students in this course are expected to be able to read large amounts of literature in Arabic on a weekly basis and to be able to discuss them critically during the class itself. Topics are chosen to reflect student interest. Recent topics have included: 1001 NIGHTS; the short story; the novel; MAQAMAT; classical ADAB prose; the drama; the novella; modern Arabic poetry.

Fall

Also Offered As: NELC 6500

1 Course Unit

MELC 6510 Approaches to Islamic Law

This course aims to introduce students to the study of Islamic law, the all-embracing sacred law of Islam. In this course we will attempt to consider many different facets of the historical, doctrinal, institutional and social complexity of Islamic law. In addition, the various approaches that have been taken to the study of these aspects of Islamic law will be analyzed. The focus will be mostly, though not exclusively, on classical Islamic law. Specific topics covered include the beginnings of legal thought in Islam, various areas of Islamic positive law (substantive law), public and private legal institutions, Islamic legal theory, and issues in the contemporary development and application of Islamic law.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: NELC 6510, RELS 6510

1 Course Unit

MELC 6520 Orality and Literacy

Orality and literacy have been two modes of communication. Orality preceded literacy but did not phase out once literacy became a channel for communication. The two forms occur in different society, and in literary society interact with each other. Their modes of interaction will be the primary focus of the course.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: NELC 6520

1 Course Unit

MELC 6550 Islamic Archaeology Seminar

This seminar will address the problems of studying architecture in the Islamic world. Considered will be issues of architectural design, regional and trans-regional constructional traditions, structural know-how and innovation, patronage and use. The examples discussed will be mainly religious and social service complexes. Attention will be paid to the manner of transmission of architectural design knowledge and constructional skill. Open to graduate students only.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: ARTH 7380, NELC 6550

1 Course Unit

MELC 6560 Religion and the Visual Image: Seeing is Believing

Seeing is Believing engages in a historical, theoretical, and cross-cultural analysis of the place of visuality in religion and of religion in visual culture. We will examine images, buildings, places, objects, performances and events. The geographical, cultural and historical scope of the material is broad, including subjects from Europe, the Islamic World, non-Muslim South Asia, the US and Latin America from the medieval period until the present. Theoretical works will be read in conjunction with representative examples to invite intellectual engagement in a socially and historically grounded way. Important issues to be covered include the relationship of visual to material culture; visual theories versus theories of vision; locating religion in human sensory experience; perception at individual and collective levels; authenticities, fakes and simulacra; iconoclasm and image veneration; aesthetics, use and utility; and things.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: NELC 6560, RELS 5410, SAST 5410

1 Course Unit

MELC 6605 Muslims, Christians, and Jews in the Middle East: Historical Perspectives

A reading- and discussion-intensive seminar that addresses several recurring questions with regard to the Middle East and North Africa. How have Islam, Judaism, and Christianity influenced each other in these regions historically? How have Jews, Christians, and Muslims fared as religious minorities? To what extent have communal relations been characterized by harmony and cooperation, or by strife and discord, and how have these relations changed in different contexts over time? To what extent and under what circumstances have members of these communities converted, intermarried, formed business alliances, and adopted or developed similar customs? How has the emergence of the modern nation-state system affected communal relations as well as the legal or social status of religious minorities in particular countries? How important has religion been as one variable in social identity (along with sect, ethnicity, class, gender, etc.), and to what extent has religious identity figured into regional conflicts and wars? The focus of the class will be on the modern period (c. 1800-present) although we will read about some relevant trends in the early and middle Islamic periods as well. Students will also pursue individually tailored research to produce final papers. Prior background in Islamic studies and Middle Eastern history is required. Middle Eastern history is required. This class is intended for juniors, seniors, and graduate students.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: NELC 6605

1 Course Unit

MELC 6610 Nationalism and Communal Identity in the Middle East

This seminar views the phenomenon of nationalism as it affected the modern Middle East in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Together we will consider the diverse components of nationalism, including religion, language, territorial loyalty, and ethnicity, and test the thesis that nations are "imagined communities" built on "invented traditions." At the same time, we will examine other forms of communal identity that transcend national borders or flourish on more localized scales. This class approaches nationalism and communal identity as complex products of cultural, political, and social forces, and places Middle Eastern experiences within a global context. Students must take a survey of modern Middle Eastern history or politics before enrolling in this class. This class is intended for juniors, seniors, and graduate students.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: NELC 6610

Mutually Exclusive: MELC 1610

Prerequisite: MELC 0002

1 Course Unit

MELC 6615 Migration and the Middle East

This reading-and discussion-intensive seminar examines the phenomenon of migration into, out of, within, and across the Middle East and North Africa. We will focus on the period from the late nineteenth century to the present, and will emphasize the cultural (rather than economic) consequences of migration. Along the way we will trace connections between the Middle East and other regions-- notably the Americas, sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, the Caucasus, and Western Europe. Readings are interdisciplinary and include works of history, anthropology, sociology, medical research, literature, political science, geography, and human rights advocacy. As students develop final projects on topics of their choice, we will spend time throughout the semester discussing tactics for research and writing.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: NELC 6615

1 Course Unit

MELC 6620 North Africa: History, Culture, Society

This interdisciplinary seminar aims to introduce students to the countries of North Africa, with a focus on the Maghreb and Libya (1830-present). It does so while examining the region's close economic and cultural connections to sub-Saharan Africa, Europe, and the Middle East. Readings will include histories, political analyses, anthropological studies, and novels, and will cover a wide range of topics such as colonial and postcolonial experiences, developments in Islamic thought and practice, and labor migration. This class is intended for juniors, seniors, and graduate students.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: AFRC 6620, NELC 6620

1 Course Unit

MELC 6630 Egypt in Four Revolutions

This seminar offers an in-depth look at the political and social history of revolution and protest in modern Egypt. We will examine four such seminal events, through different lenses: The Urabi Revolution (1879-1882), The 1919 Revolution, The 1952 Revolution, and The 2011 Revolution. We will discuss their political, social, and economic causes and effects; popular participation and the use of public space; the roles of the army, women, youth, and social organizations in those events; their ideological and international aspects; their colonial and post-colonial contexts; and more. We will use cutting edge research from several disciplines, as well as literature, film, music, photography, and social media as sources. Students will leave the class with a firm grasp of the social and political history of modern Egypt, as well as of current scholarly discussions about the nature of revolution and protest.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: NELC 6630

1 Course Unit

MELC 6650 Topics In Anthropology and the Modern World

This course relates anthropological models and methods to current problems in the Modern World. The overall objective is to show how the research findings and analytical concepts of anthropology may be used to illuminate and explain events as they have unfolded in the recent news and in the course of the semester. Each edition of the course will focus on a particular country or region that has been in the news.

Fall

Also Offered As: ANTH 6110, NELC 6650

1 Course Unit

MELC 6700 Media and Culture in Contemporary Iran

This course offers a comprehensive introduction to the culture and media of modern Iran, with a critical perspective on issues such as identity formation, ethnicity, race, and nation-building. It focuses on how these issues relate to various aspects of modern Iranian culture - such as religion, gender, sexuality, war, and migration - through the lens of media, cinema, and literature.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: NELC 6700

1 Course Unit

MELC 6720 Key Concepts in Modern Persian Poetry

This graduate seminar which is tailored for graduate students with higher intermediate and advanced command of Persian language focuses on a variety of recurrent concepts in Modern Persian poetry. The seminar will run as a workshop and students are expected to embark on a project in which they explore large amounts of literary materials in Persian. Students must feel confident to read and discuss large amounts of literature in Persian on a weekly basis. Concepts such as exile, home, belonging, body, borders, nationalism and selfhood will be explored.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: NELC 6720

1 Course Unit

MELC 6900 GIS for the Digital Humanities and Social Sciences

This course introduces students to theory and methodology of the geospatial humanities and social sciences, understood broadly as the application of Geographical Information Systems (GIS) and spatial analysis techniques to the study of social and cultural patterns in the past and present. By engaging with spatial theory, spatial analysis case studies, and technical methodologies, students will develop an understanding of the questions driving, and tools available for, humanistic and social science research projects that explore change over space and time. We will use ESRI's ArcGIS software to visualize, analyze, and integrate historical, anthropological, and environmental data. Techniques will be introduced through the discussion of case studies and through demonstration of software skills. During supervised laboratory sessions, the various techniques and analyses covered will be applied to sample data and also to data from a region/topic chosen by the student.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: AAMW 6460, NELC 6900

Mutually Exclusive: MELC 1905

1 Course Unit

MELC 6910 Digital Exploration of the Past: Archives, Databases, Maps, and Museums

This course exposes students to digital methods for investigating past environments and societies, including digitization of analog records, the construction and querying of databases, and the creation of digital maps. The ultimate goal of the course will be to carry out a final project that benefits the Penn Museum and the public. In fall 2018, our exploration of digital methods will center around the archaeological site of Ur (Tell el-Muqayyar), located in southern Iraq. Ur was one of the earliest cities in the world, and, thanks to campaigns partly funded by Penn in the 1920s and 1930s, is one of the best-excavated sites in southern Mesopotamia. Here at Penn, we have unparalleled access to archival documentation and artifacts from the site. We will draw upon this access to contribute to an on-going digital humanities project in the Penn Museum (the public "Ur Online" database). In the process, students will re-assess data that has the potential to change anthropological ideas about issues such as the environmental setting of the earliest cities and archaeological ideas about demographic and urban structure within the city of Ur itself. There are no prerequisites, but students must bring an interest in Mesopotamian archaeology and/or the origins of urbanism and be motivated to carry out individual and group research guided by the instructor & classmates.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: AAMW 6190, NELC 6910

1 Course Unit

MELC 6920 Material World in Archaeological Science

By focusing on the scientific analysis of inorganic archaeological materials, this course will explore processes of creation in the past. Class will take place in the Center for the Analysis of Archaeological Materials (CAAM) and will be team taught in three modules: analysis of lithics, analysis of ceramics and analysis of metals. Each module will combine laboratory and classroom exercises to give students hands-on experience with archaeological materials. We will examine how the transformation of materials into objects provides key information about past human behaviors and the socio-economic contexts of production, distribution, exchange and use. Discussion topics will include invention and adoption of new technologies, change and innovation, use of fire, and craft specialization.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: ANTH 5221, NELC 6920

Mutually Exclusive: ANTH 2221

1 Course Unit

MELC 6930 Archaeobotany Seminar

In this course we will approach the relationship between plants and people from archaeological and anthropological perspectives in order to investigate diverse plant consumption, use, and management strategies. Topics will include: archaeological formation processes, archaeobotanical sampling and recovery, lab sorting and identification, quantification methods, and archaeobotany as a means of preserving cultural heritage. Students will learn both field procedures and laboratory methods of archaeobotany through a series of hands-on activities and lab-based experiments. The final research project will involve an original in-depth analysis and interpretation of archaeobotanical specimens. By the end of the course, students will feel comfortable reading and evaluating archaeobotanical literature and will have a solid understanding of how archaeobotanists interpret human activities of the past.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: AAMW 5390, ANTH 5230, CLST 7313, NELC 6930

1 Course Unit

MELC 7060 Ancient Art of Mesopotamia Seminar

This graduate seminar will address various topics in the visual and architectural arts of ancient Mesopotamia. Topics include: Assyrian Reliefs, Art and Architecture of the Old Akkadian period, Early Dynastic art and architecture, and The Rise of first cities in Mesopotamia and Iran. This course is only open to graduate students.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: AAMW 7240, ARTH 7240, NELC 7060

1 Course Unit

MELC 7550 Qur'anic Studies

This seminar explores the nature and uses of the Qur'an. It focuses on the practice and theory of Qur'an commentary and interpretation (safsir and ta'wil). A major portion of the course will involve a close examination of manuscripts of the Qur'an at the Philadelphia Museum of Art and the Kislak Center at the University of Pennsylvania, concentrating on the relationship between the text and marginalia as well as on the peculiarities of individual manuscripts. The rest of the course will center around reading commentaries on the Qur'an in manuscript as well as print. In addition, we will read and discuss theoretical works on the history and nature of Qur'an commentary, literary criticism and textual analysis, and spend some of the later section of the course discussing issues of translation and editorial processes involved in popularizing Qur'an commentaries on the internet. **READING KNOWLEDGE OF ARABIC REQUIRED.**

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: NELC 7550, RELS 7420

1 Course Unit

MELC 7560 Islamic Art Seminar

This course focuses on art of the Islamic world. Open to graduate students only.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: AAMW 7350, ARTH 7350, NELC 7560

1 Course Unit

MELC 7561 Islamic Architecture Seminar

This seminar will address the problems of studying architecture in the Islamic world. Considered will be issues of architectural design, regional and trans-regional constructional traditions, structural know-how and innovation, patronage and use. The examples discussed will be mainly religious and social service complexes. Attention will be paid to the manner of transmission of architectural design knowledge and constructional skill. Open to graduate students only.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: AAMW 7370, ARTH 7370, NELC 7561

1 Course Unit

MELC 9999 Independent Study

Directed research or candidacy exam and proposal preparation.

Not Offered Every Year

Also Offered As: NELC 9999

1 Course Unit