

# NEAR EASTERN LANGUAGES & CIVILIZATION (NELC)

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## NELC 010 Archaeology & Technology

Spring 2018: This seminar explores how humans apply and modify technologies in contexts as diverse as everyday life, major politico-economic undertakings, or scholarly research. We investigate this through a comparison of technologies of the past with technologies of the present used to study the past. We will dig into the details of topics like building pyramids and tombs, the function of ancient astronomical devices, pre-telegraph long-distance communication, tools for cutting and carving stone, and kilns for firing pottery. Archaeologists study these issues by examining the material remains of past societies: the cut-marks on stone blocks, extant tomb structures, the debris of manufacturing activities, and much more. Today's technologies enable the detailed scientific examination of the evidence, improving our understanding of the past. Thus, in parallel with our investigation of past technologies, we will also study the history of the application of present technologies to research on the archaeological record. We will dig into topics like the first uses of computers and databases, the development of statistical methods, early digital 3d modeling of objects and architecture, the adoption of geophysical prospection and geographic information systems, and the emerging uses of machine learning. In some cases, we can even compare old and new technologies directly, such as with land measurement and surveying techniques. Throughout the class we will engage in readings and discussions on the theory of humans and technology, to gain a better understanding of how processes such as innovation function in all time periods.

Taught by: Cobb, Peter

Activity: Seminar

1 Course Unit

## NELC 031 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. Requirements: one paper and two take-home exams.

For BA Students: History and Tradition Sector

Taught by: Kashani-Sabet

One-term course offered either term

Activity: Recitation

1 Course Unit

## NELC 032 Topics in 20th C. Middle East

If "the clash of civilizations" is the first image that jumps to mind when thinking about the modern Middle East, then this is the course for you. From the familiar narratives about the creation of modern nation-states to the oft-neglected accounts of cultural life, this course surveys the multi-faceted societies of the twentieth-century Middle East. Although inclusive of the military battles and conflicts that have affected the region, this course will move beyond the cliches of war and conflict in the Middle East to show the range of issues and ideas with which intellectuals and governments grappled throughout the century. The cultural politics and economic value of oil as well as the formation of a vibrant literary life will be among the topics covered in the course. By considering illustrative cultural moments that shed light on the political history of the period, this course will adopt a nuanced framework to approach the Arab/Israeli conflict, the history of the Gulf States, the Iran-Iraq War, and U.S. involvement in the region.

Taught by: Kashani-Sabet

One-term course offered either term

Activity: Lecture

1 Course Unit

## NELC 034 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.

Taught by: Tam

Activity: Seminar

1 Course Unit

## NELC 036 The Middle East through Many Lenses

This freshman 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.

Taught by: Sharkey H

Course usually offered in fall term

Activity: Seminar

1 Course Unit

**NELC 046 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.

For BA Students: History and Tradition Sector

Taught by: Frame

Course usually offered in spring term

Activity: Lecture

1 Course Unit

**NELC 051 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.

Taught by: Dohrmann

Course usually offered in fall term

Activity: Lecture

1 Course Unit

**NELC 052 Medieval and Early Modern Jewry**

Exploration of intellectual, social, and cultural developments in Jewish civilization from the dawn of rabbinic culture in the Near East through the assault on established conceptions of faith and religious authority in 17th century Europe. Particular attention will be paid to the impact of Christian and Muslim "host societies" on expressions of Jewish culture.

For BA Students: History and Tradition Sector

Taught by: Ruderman

Course usually offered in fall term

Activity: Lecture

1 Course Unit

**NELC 053 The History of Jewish Civilization from the Late Seventeenth Century to the Present**

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, Zionism, the Holocaust, and the emergence of new Jewish communities in Israel and the United States. No prior background in Jewish history is expected.

For BA Students: History and Tradition Sector

Taught by: Ruderman

Course usually offered in spring term

Activity: Lecture

1 Course Unit

**NELC 061 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.

Taught by: Houser Wegner

Course not offered every year

Activity: Lecture

1 Course Unit

**NELC 062 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.

For BA Students: History and Tradition Sector

Taught by: Wegner

One-term course offered either term

Activity: Lecture

1 Course Unit

**NELC 064 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.

Taught by: Houser Wegner

Course not offered every year

Activity: Lecture

1 Course Unit

**NELC 068 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.

Taught by: Silverman

Course not offered every year

Activity: Lecture

1 Course Unit

**NELC 101 Introduction to the Ancient Near 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 Near East. Yet these are only a very few of the many fascinating – and at times perplexing – aspects of the civilizations that flourished there c. 3300-300 BCE. This is where writing first developed, where people thought that the gods wrote down what would happen in the future on the lungs and livers of sacrificed sheep, and where people knew how to determine the length of hypotenuse a thousand years before the Greek Pythagoras was born. During this course, we will learn more about these other matters and discover their place in the cultures and civilizations of that area. This is an interdisciplinary survey of the history, society and culture of the ancient Near East, in particular Egypt and Mesopotamia, utilizing extensive readings from ancient texts in translation (including the Epic of Gilgamesh, "one of the great masterpieces of world literature"), but also making use of archaeological and art historical materials. The goal of the course is to gain an appreciation of the various societies 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.

For BA Students: History and Tradition Sector

Taught by: Frame

Course usually offered in fall term

Activity: Lecture

1 Course Unit

**NELC 102 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.

For BA Students: History and Tradition Sector

Taught by: Cobb, Sharkey

Course usually offered in spring term

Activity: Lecture

1 Course Unit

Notes: Fulfills Cross-Cultural Analysis

**NELC 103 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.

For BA Students: History and Tradition Sector

Taught by: Zettler

Course usually offered in fall term

Activity: Lecture

1 Course Unit

**NELC 106 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.

Taught by: Hammer

Activity: Seminar

1 Course Unit

**NELC 111 Water in the Middle East Throughout History**

The role of water in the Middle East cannot be overstated. The Middle East is an arid region, but human and natural systems have interacted to determine relative water scarcity and abundance at different times and places. The location, accessibility, yield, and quality of natural and managed water resources significantly influenced the location and longevity of ancient and modern settlements. Control of water has always affected the economic, political, social life of the communities inhabiting these settlements. 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. It will consider water in river valleys, deserts, highland zones, steppes, and coastal areas of Mesopotamia, Egypt, the Levant, and Arabia from environmental, political, social, cultural, and technical perspectives. We will engage with a variety of media, including academic readings, popular journalism, films, satellite imagery, and digital maps. We will examine irrigation, water supply, sanitation, and water-driven power systems known from ethnographic studies 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 earliest cities arose, and 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 and ancient technologies in an effort to better manage modern water resources.

Taught by: Hammer

Activity: Lecture

1 Course Unit

**NELC 118 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.

Taught by: Entezari

Course usually offered in fall term

Activity: Seminar

1 Course Unit

**NELC 130 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.

For BA Students: Humanities and Social Science S

Taught by: Lowry

Course offered fall; odd-numbered years

Activity: Lecture

1 Course Unit

**NELC 133 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.

Taught by: Sharkey,H

One-term course offered either term

Activity: Seminar

1 Course Unit

**NELC 134 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?

For BA Students: History and Tradition Sector

Taught by: Cobb

Course offered fall; even-numbered years

Activity: Lecture

1 Course Unit

**NELC 136 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.

Taught by: Elias

Course usually offered in fall term

Activity: Lecture

1 Course Unit

**NELC 145 Near Eastern Topics**

Course topics will vary

Course not offered every year

Activity: Seminar

1 Course Unit

Notes: Sometimes offered as a Benjamin Franklin Seminar.

**NELC 150 Introduction to the Bible (The "Old Testament")**

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.

For BA Students: Humanities and Social Science S

Course usually offered in fall term

Activity: Lecture

1 Course Unit

**NELC 154 Women in Jewish Literature**

This course introduces students of literature, women's studies, and Jewish studies to 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 relation 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 & 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 and a memoir written by women in Yiddish, Hebrew, and English. "Jewish woman, who knows your life? In darkness you have come, in darkness do you go." J. L. Gordon (1890)

For BA Students: Arts and Letters Sector

Taught by: Hellerstein

Course not offered every year

Activity: Lecture

1 Course Unit

**NELC 155 ARCHAEOLOGY & THE BIBLE**

Archaeology and the Bible is a chronological survey of the long span of human occupation in the Land of the Bible, known by the names of the modern nation-states and political entities that occupy the area, as well as various short hands such as Levant and Syria-Palestine, from ca. 10,000 BCE, when humans first began to farm and herd animals through the time of the Divided Monarchy of Israel and Judah. While archaeology has moved beyond a primary concern with illuminating the Bible, NELC 155 will investigate the broader import of archaeological discoveries for our understanding of ancient Israel and its neighbors.

Taught by: Zettler

Course not offered every year

Activity: Lecture

1 Course Unit

**NELC 156 Great Books of Judaism (Fall 2018: Lifecycle in the Talmud)**

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.

For BA Students: Arts and Letters Sector

Course usually offered in fall term

Activity: Seminar

1 Course Unit

**NELC 158 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. Spring 2015

Taught by: Fishman

One-term course offered either term

Activity: Seminar

1 Course Unit

**NELC 159 Modern Hebrew Literature and Culture in Translation: Autobiography**

This course follows and analyzes the transformations in Israeli literature and cinema. The lens through which we study this canon changes each semester. These "lenses" include: "Childhood," "Holocaust," "Cities," "Madness," and others. Israeli works constitute much of the course's material, but European and American film and fiction play comparative roles. For a description of the current theme, please see the websites of Cinema and Media Studies, Jewish Studies, NELC, COML, or ENGL.

For BA Students: Arts and Letters Sector

Taught by: Gold

One-term course offered either term

Activity: Lecture

1 Course Unit

**NELC 166 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.

Taught by: Silverman/Wegner

Course not offered every year

Activity: Lecture

1 Course Unit

**NELC 168 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.

Taught by: Houser Wegner

Course not offered every year

Activity: Lecture

1 Course Unit

**NELC 180 Narrative Across Cultures**

An introduction to literary study through a genre, either the short story or poetry. Versions of this course will vary widely in the selection of texts assigned. Some versions will begin with traditional stories or poems, including a sampling of works in translation. Others will focus exclusively on modern and contemporary American short fiction or poetry. This course is designed for the General Requirement, and is ideal for the students wishing to take an English course but not necessarily intending to major.

For BA Students: Arts and Letters Sector

One-term course offered either term

Activity: Lecture

1 Course Unit

**NELC 182 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. This course meets the General Education Curriculums Cross Cultural Analysis foundational approach, whose aim is to help students understand and interpret the cultures of peoples (even long-dead peoples) with histories different from their own; it also fulfills the History and Tradition Sector breadth requirement.

For BA Students: History and Tradition Sector

Taught by: Burge

Course offered spring; even-numbered years

Activity: Lecture

1 Course Unit

**NELC 186 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.

For BA Students: Arts and Letters Sector

Taught by: Fishman

Course not offered every year

Activity: Lecture

1 Course Unit

**NELC 201 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.

For BA Students: Arts and Letters Sector

Taught by: Allen/Gold

Course usually offered in spring term

Activity: Lecture

1 Course Unit

Notes: Fulfills Cross-Cultural Analysis

**NELC 216 Persian Poetry in Translation**

This course introduces some of the major genres and themes of Persian poetry 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

Taught by: Shams

Course usually offered in spring term

Activity: Seminar

1 Course Unit

**NELC 218 Media and Culture in Contemporary Iran**

This course is an introduction to the major cultural themes and trends of contemporary Iran. Through the lens of press, cinema, literature and drama, the course will examine the ways in which contemporary Iranian society has been subject to rapid change and transformation over the past century. This class is designed for both junior and senior students who are keen to better understand the cultural context of Iran as one of the most influential and significant countries in the Middle East.

Taught by: Shams Esmaeili

One-term course offered either term

Activity: Seminar

1 Course Unit

**NELC 231 Modern Arabic Literature**

This course is a study of modern Arabic literary forms such as the free verse poem, the prose-poem, drama, the novel, and the short story.

The class examines issues related to Arabic culture and identity in the modern and post-modern era through the study of Arabic literature. 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. All readings will be in English translations. The class will also address the role of translation in shaping modern Arabic literary forms and creating the image of Arabic literature in other languages. Recent topics have included: Arab Women and War, Modernism and Arabic Poetry, The Arabic Free Verse movement.

Taught by: Fakhreddine

Course not offered every year

Activity: Lecture

1 Course Unit

**NELC 235 Food in the Islamic Middle East: History, Memory, Identity**

In the tenth century, a scholar named Ibn Sayyar al-Warraq 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?

Taught by: Sharkey

Course not offered every year

Activity: Seminar

1 Course Unit

**NELC 238 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.

Taught by: Lowry

Course offered fall; even-numbered years

Activity: Lecture

1 Course Unit

**NELC 239 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.

Taught by: Sharkey

Course not offered every year

Activity: Seminar

1 Course Unit

**NELC 241 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.

Taught by: Zettler

Course not offered every year

Activity: Lecture

1 Course Unit

**NELC 244 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.

Taught by: Tinney

One-term course offered either term

Activity: Seminar

1 Course Unit

**NELC 249 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.

Taught by: Ben-Amos

Course not offered every year

Activity: Lecture

1 Course Unit

**NELC 250 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. Although no prerequisites are required, NELC 250 is a perfect follow-up course for NELC 150 "Intro to the Bible."

Taught by: Cranz

One-term course offered either term

Activity: Seminar

1 Course Unit

**NELC 252 THEMES JEWISH TRADITION: Iberian Conversos: Jew-Christian?**

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.

For BA Students: History and Tradition Sector

Taught by: Ben-Amos/ Dohrmann/Fishman

One-term course offered either term

Activity: Seminar

1 Course Unit

**NELC 254 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.

For BA Students: Arts and Letters Sector

Taught by: Ben-Amos

Course not offered every year

Activity: Lecture

1 Course Unit

**NELC 258 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.

Taught by: Ben-Amos

Course usually offered in fall term

Activity: Lecture

1 Course Unit



**NELC 259 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.

For BA Students: Arts and Letters Sector

Taught by: Gold

Course usually offered in fall term

Prerequisites: Hebrew 054 or the equivalent, per instructor's evaluation

Activity: Seminar

1 Course Unit

**NELC 266 History of Ancient Egypt**

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

Taught by: Wegner

Course usually offered in fall term

Activity: Lecture

1 Course Unit

**NELC 281 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.

Taught by: Spooner

Course usually offered in spring term

Activity: Lecture

1 Course Unit

**NELC 285 Jews Under Medieval Islam**

This seminar will examine what Jews living in Muslim lands wrote during medieval times, focusing on a range of primary sources including poetry, Bible commentary, historiography and polemics. Through these sources we will develop an understanding of the place of this community in Jewish history as well as within the medieval empire of Islam.

For BA Students: Humanities and Social Science S

Taught by: Goldstein

Course not offered every year

Activity: Lecture

1 Course Unit

**NELC 320 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.

Taught by: Hammer

Activity: Seminar

1 Course Unit

**NELC 323 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.

Taught by: Pittman

Course not offered every year

Activity: Seminar

1 Course Unit

**NELC 332 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.

Taught by: Sharkey

Course not offered every year

Prerequisites: A university-level survey course in Middle Eastern, African, or Mediterranean history.

Activity: Seminar

1 Course Unit

**NELC 334 Africa and the Middle East**

Taught by: Troutt Powell

One-term course offered either term

Activity: Seminar

1 Course Unit

**NELC 335 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.

Taught by: Sharkey

One-term course offered either term

Activity: Seminar

1 Course Unit

**NELC 336 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.

Taught by: Sharkey

Course usually offered in fall term

Prerequisites: NELC 102 or other relevant introductory courses on the Middle East.

Activity: Seminar

1 Course Unit

**NELC 339 Descent to the Underworld in Ancient Near-Eastern and Western Literature**

From antiquity to the present the hero's journey to the underworld, or the land of the dead, has offered poets and philosophers a metaphor to express our search for life's meaning. In antiquity that meaning was to be found by an extraordinary individual in a heroic quest beyond the grave. In this course we will consider various interpretations what of this "katabasis" means within the context of our everyday struggle to find meaning.

Taught by: Foley

Activity: Seminar

1 Course Unit

**NELC 346 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.

Taught by: Hammer

Activity: Lecture

1 Course Unit

**NELC 359 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.

Taught by: Gold

Course usually offered in spring term

Prerequisites: Hebrew 059 or the equivalent, per instructor's evaluation

Activity: Seminar

1 Course Unit

**NELC 362 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.

Taught by: Peter Cobb

Prerequisite: Prior archaeological classwork and/or experience preferred

Activity: Lecture

1 Course Unit

**NELC 383 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.

Taught by: Fishman

Course not offered every year

Activity: Seminar

1 Course Unit

**NELC 395 Senior Conference**

Directed study for seniors.

One-term course offered either term

Activity: Independent Study

1 Course Unit

**NELC 399 Independent Study**

Supervised reading and research

One-term course offered either term

Activity: Independent Study

1 Course Unit

**NELC 422 Intermediate Urdu Part II**

This continuing second-year course allows students to continue improving their Urdu proficiency while also gaining a broad foundational understanding of Urdu society and culture throughout South Asia.

The course provides students the tools needed to handle a variety of authentic written and spoken Urdu sources including film, music, media reports, folk tales, and simple literature. Students will also continue to increase their speaking and writing proficiency to be able to discuss a broad range of concrete, real-world topics. The course is designed for students with one year of previous Urdu or Hindi study or the equivalent proficiency.

For BA Students: Last Language Course

Taught by: Pien

Activity: Seminar

1 Course Unit

**NELC 434 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.

Taught by: Fakhreddine

One-term course offered either term

Activity: Lecture

1 Course Unit

**NELC 437 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.

Taught by: Lowry

Course not offered every year

Activity: Seminar

1 Course Unit

**NELC 450 Introduction to the Bible (The "Old Testament")**

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.

For BA Students: Humanities and Social Science S

Course usually offered in fall term

Activity: Lecture

1 Course Unit

**NELC 451 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.

Taught by: Dohrmann

Course usually offered in fall term

Activity: Lecture

1 Course Unit

**NELC 454 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.

Taught by: Fishman

Course not offered every year

Activity: Seminar

1 Course Unit

**NELC 456 Great Books of Judaism (Fall 2018: Lifecycle in the Talmud)**

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.

For BA Students: Arts and Letters Sector

Course usually offered in fall term

Activity: Seminar

1 Course Unit

**NELC 458 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. Spring 2015

Taught by: Fishman

One-term course offered either term

Activity: Seminar

1 Course Unit

**NELC 463 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.

Taught by: Silverman

Course not offered every year

Activity: Lecture

1 Course Unit

**NELC 467 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. Follows NELC 266/466 - History of Egypt taught in the fall semester.

Taught by: Wegner

Course not offered every year

Activity: Lecture

1 Course Unit

**NELC 468 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.

Taught by: Silverman/Wegner

Course not offered every year

Activity: Lecture

1 Course Unit

**NELC 469 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.

Taught by: Wegner

Course not offered every year

Activity: Lecture

1 Course Unit

**NELC 481 Elementary Amharic I**

The Elementary Amharic I course can be taken to fulfill a language requirement, or for linguistic preparation to do research on Ethiopia/Africa-related topics. The course emphasizes communicative competence to enable the students to acquire linguistic and extra-linguistic skills in Amharic. The content of the course is selected from various everyday life situations to enable the students to communicate in predictable common daily settings. Culture, as it relates to language use, is also part of the course content.

For BA Students: Language Course

Taught by: Hailu

Course usually offered in fall term

Activity: Lecture

1 Course Unit

Notes: Offered through the Penn Language Center

**NELC 482 Elementary Amharic II**

Continuation of Elementary Amharic I.

For BA Students: Language Course

Course usually offered in spring term

Prerequisite: Completion of NELC 481

Activity: Lecture

1 Course Unit

Notes: Offered through the Penn Language Center

**NELC 483 Intermediate Amharic I**

For BA Students: Language Course

Taught by: Hailu

Course usually offered in fall term

Prerequisites: Completion of NELC 482 or permission of the instructor.

Activity: Lecture

1 Course Unit

Notes: Offered through the Penn Language Center

**NELC 484 Intermediate Amharic II**

For BA Students: Last Language Course

Taught by: Hailu

Course usually offered in spring term

Activity: Lecture

1 Course Unit

Notes: Offered through the Penn Language Center

**NELC 489 Medieval Islamic Art and Architecture**

An introduction to the major architectural monuments and trends, as well as to the best-known objects of the medieval (seventh-to fourteenth-century) Islamic world. Attention is paid to such themes as the continuity of late antique themes, architecture as symbol of community and power, and the importance of textiles and primacy of writing. Suitable for students of literature, history, anthropology as well as art history.

Taught by: Holod

Course not offered every year

Activity: Lecture

1 Course Unit

**NELC 518 Media and Culture in Contemporary Iran**

This course is an introduction to the major cultural themes and trends of contemporary Iran. Through the lens of press, cinema, literature and drama, the course will examine the ways in which contemporary Iranian society has been subject to rapid change and transformation over the past century. This class is designed for both junior and senior students who are keen to better understand the cultural context of Iran as one of the most influential and significant countries in the Middle East.

Taught by: Shams Esmaili

One-term course offered either term

Activity: Seminar

1 Course Unit

**NELC 535 Muslims, Christians, and Jews in the Middle East: Historical Perspectives**

This class is 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 useful.

Taught by: Sharkey

Course not offered every year

Activity: Seminar

1 Course Unit

**NELC 536 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.

Taught by: Sharkey

Course usually offered in fall term

Prerequisites: NELC 102 or other relevant introductory courses on the Middle East.

Activity: Seminar

1 Course Unit

**NELC 544 Reading Ancient Mesopotamia**

An introduction to the literature of Ancient Mesopotamia.

Taught by: Tinney

One-term course offered either term

Activity: Seminar

1 Course Unit

**NELC 550 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. Although no prerequisites are required, NELC 250 is a perfect follow-up course for NELC 150 "Intro to the Bible."

One-term course offered either term

Activity: Seminar

1 Course Unit

Notes: May be repeated for credit.

**NELC 552 Themes Jewish Tradition**

Course topics will vary; they have included: Holy Men & Women (Ben-Amos); Rewriting the Bible (Dohrmann); Jewish Political Thought & Action (Fishman) When did the Bible become the Bible? What was the nature of canon and authority in early Israel and Judaism, and how did biblical communities think about their sacred texts? How and what did the Bible mean to ancient readers? The answers to these questions are varied and surprising. This course looks at early biblical and Jewish texts that both write and re-write the tradition's own central texts. We will think widely and creatively about ancient textuality, orality, interpretation, composition, and authority. Drawing on literary theory, the course will examine the ways that biblical and post-biblical literature from the Second Temple to the rabbinic period (with some forays into contemporary literature) manifest complex ideas about power, meaning, and religiosity in early Judaism.

Taught by: Ben-Amos/Dohrmann/Fishman

One-term course offered either term

Activity: Seminar

1 Course Unit

**NELC 557 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.

Course usually offered in spring term  
Prerequisites: Proficiency in Hebrew and/or Greek recommended.  
Undergraduates need permission to enroll.

Activity: Seminar

1 Course Unit

Notes: May be repeated for credit

**NELC 559 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.

For BA Students: Arts and Letters Sector

Taught by: Gold

Course usually offered in fall term

Prerequisites: Hebrew 054 or the equivalent, per instructor's evaluation

Activity: Seminar

1 Course Unit

**NELC 562 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.

Taught by: Peter Cobb

Prerequisite: Prior archaeological classwork and/or experience preferred

Activity: Lecture

1 Course Unit

**NELC 567 Seminar on Egyptian Archaeology and History**

Specific topics will vary from year to year.

Taught by: Wegner

Course not offered every year

Activity: Seminar

1 Course Unit

**NELC 568 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.

Course usually offered in spring term

Activity: Lecture

1 Course Unit

**NELC 582 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.

Activity: Seminar

1 Course Unit

**NELC 606 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.

Taught by: Pastoral Nomadism in the Past and Present

Activity: Seminar

1 Course Unit

**NELC 617 Topics in the Art of Iran**

Topic varies. Spring 2018: The pro-seminar will examine aspects of continuity and rupture in the visual culture(s) of the Iranian world. This is an opportunity for students whose preparations may be centered on other contiguous periods or regions to consider the manner in which Middle Asia and its rich visual cultures contributed to the forging of Late Antique and medieval/ Islamic visual expressions of kingship, territory and religion. The seminar will consider a range of materials from archaeological sites, rock reliefs and wall paintings to textiles, silver vessels, coins and ceramics, with special attention to materials excavated or otherwise held by the Penn Museum.

Taught by: Holod, Kuttner

Course not offered every year

Activity: Seminar

1 Course Unit

**NELC 618 Iranian Cinema: Gender, Politics and Religion**

This seminar explores Iranian culture, art, history and politics through film in the contemporary era. We will examine a variety of works that represent the social, political, economic and cultural circumstances of post-revolutionary Iran. Along the way, we will discuss issues pertaining to gender, religion, nationalism, ethnicity, and the function of cinema in present day Iranian society. Films to be discussed will be by internationally acclaimed filmmakers, such as Abbas Kiarostami, Mohsen Makhmalbaf, Rakhshan Bani-Etemad, Tahmineh Milani, Jafar Panahi, Bahman Ghobadi, among others.

One-term course offered either term

Activity: Seminar

1 Course Unit

**NELC 620 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.

Taught by: Hammer

Activity: Seminar

1 Course Unit

**NELC 632 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.

Taught by: Sharkey

Course not offered every year

Prerequisites: A university-level survey course in Middle Eastern, African, or Mediterranean history.

Activity: Seminar

1 Course Unit

**NELC 633 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.

Taught by: Allen

Course usually offered in spring term

Activity: Seminar

1 Course Unit

**NELC 638 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.

Taught by: Lowry

Course not offered every year

Prerequisites: Some background knowledge about Islam is an asset.

Activity: Seminar

1 Course Unit

**NELC 641 Iraq: Ancient Cities and Empires**

This course consists of an analytical survey of civilization in the ancient Mesopotamia from prehistoric periods to the middle centuries of the first millennium B.C. A strong focus is placed on Mesopotamia (Iraq, eastern Syria) proper, but it occasionally covers its adjacent regions, including Anatolia (Turkey), north-central Syria, and the Levantine coast. As we chronologically examine the origin and development of civilization in the region, various social, political, economic, and ideological topics will be explored, including subsistence, cosmology, writing, trade, technology, war, private life, burial custom, and empire. Based on both archaeological and historical evidence, these topics will be examined from archaeological, anthropological, historical and art historical perspectives. Students will be exposed to a variety of theoretical approaches and types of relevant evidence, including settlement survey data, excavated architectural remains and artifacts, and written documents. The course aims to provide students with a strong foundation for further study in Near Eastern civilization.

Taught by: Zettler

Course not offered every year

Activity: Lecture

1 Course Unit

**NELC 646 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.

Taught by: Hammer

Activity: Lecture

1 Course Unit

**NELC 659 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.

Taught by: Gold

Course not offered every year

Prerequisites: Hebrew 059 or the equivalent, per instructor's evaluation

Activity: Seminar

1 Course Unit



**NELC 664 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.

Taught by: Houser Wegner

Course not offered every year

Activity: Lecture

1 Course Unit

**NELC 666 History of Ancient Egypt**

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

Taught by: Wegner

Course usually offered in fall term

Activity: Lecture

1 Course Unit

**NELC 668 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.

Taught by: Silverman

Course not offered every year

Activity: Lecture

1 Course Unit

**NELC 681 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.

Taught by: Spooner

Course usually offered in spring term

Activity: Lecture

1 Course Unit

**NELC 686 Topics in Mid East History**

Reading and discussion course on selected topics in Middle Eastern history.

Activity: Seminar

1 Course Unit

**NELC 731 Topics in Islamic Archaeology**

Course not offered every year

Activity: Seminar

1 Course Unit

**NELC 999 Independent Study**

Directed research or candidacy exam and proposal preparation.

One-term course offered either term

Activity: Independent Study

1 Course Unit