

World Cultures: The Ancient Near East & Egypt

V55.0501: Fall Semester 2006

Syllabus and Schedule of Lectures & Readings

Course Information:

Lecture: TR 9:30am - 10:45am SILV 714 (Roth)

Section 2:	W	8:00 am - 9:15 am	48CS 119	Miryam Brand
Section 3:	W	9:30 am - 10:45 am	WAVE 668	Miryam Brand
Section 4:	W	3:30 pm - 4:45 pm	SILV 805	Daniel Rosenberg
Section 5:	W	4:55 pm - 6:10 pm	SILV 208	Daniel Rosenberg
Section 6:	W	3:30 pm - 4:45 pm	25W4 C-9	Zachary Levine
Section 7:	W	4:55 pm - 6:10 pm	SILV 207	Zachary Levine

Course Faculty:

Professor: Ann Macy Roth

amr349@nyu.edu

Office Hours: Tuesdays 12:30 pm – 2:00 pm; Wednesdays 11:00 am – 12:30 pm

Office Location: Back of Gray Art Library (Silver Center 3rd floor); left office.

Preceptor: Miryam Brand

mtb281@nyu.edu

Office Hours: Thursdays, 11 am - 12 pm

Office Location: KJCC 206 West (53 Washington Square South)

Preceptor: Daniel Rosenberg

dar314@nyu.edu

Office Hours: Wednesdays 1400-1500 hrs (2-3 pm)

Office Location: 54 Washington Square South (enter at KJCC Building) Rm 213

Preceptor: Zachary Levine

zpl202@nyu.edu

Office Hours: Thursday, 4-5 pm, and by appointment

Office Location: KJCC 206 West (53 Washington Square South)

Course Aims:

The World Cultures courses are intended to teach students about cultures that differ from their own, including their history, beliefs, and practices, and about the methods that scholars use to study them. In studying cultures that no longer exist (ancient Mesopotamia and ancient Egypt), a multi-disciplinary and comparative approach is most useful. The course therefore will also introduce the basic concepts of archaeology, textual analysis, and the study of art and iconography. Materials studied will thus include all forms of cultural production: literature, architecture, religious writings, works of art, archaeological remains, and administrative documents.

By the end of the course, students should be familiar with the chronological development of the ancient Egyptian and Mesopotamian civilizations, the basic tenets of their religious beliefs, their social forms and organizations, the conventions and achievements of their art, and the forms of their major buildings and monuments. More importantly, however, students will understand how scholars have used the textual and archaeological remains of these cultures to reconstruct them.

Course Format:

The course will consist of two weekly lectures (usually with illustrations) and a weekly discussion section with a preceptor. During the discussion section, you will have the opportunities to raise questions based on the readings and lectures. New material will also be presented and discussed in the sections.

Course Requirements and Grading:

Attendance and Participation (15%): Attendance will be taken at all discussion sections, and your participation in discussions noted. You will be asked to sign an attendance sheet during lectures.

Midterm Exam (20%): There will be a midterm exam given in class on October 19. It will include both objective and essay components, and it will cover material from the readings, lectures, and sections up to that point. Make-up exams can only be taken with a verified medical or similarly serious excuse approved by Prof. Roth.

Final Exam (35%): A final exam, of the same format as the Midterm, will be given on Tuesday, December 21st, 8:00 am – 9:50 am (sorry) in our regular classroom. This is the regularly scheduled exam time for this class, and given the size of the class, it cannot be changed. As with the Midterm Exam, any make-ups must be approved by the instructor. **DO NOT** make airline reservations to leave town before the exam. This will not be regarded as an excuse.

Essays (30%): You will be asked to write two short (6-8 page) essays on assigned topics. Each of them will be worth 15% of your grade. Spelling, grammar, writing style, organization, and argumentation are important for these essays.

Required Books:

Course readings will be from the following five books (available at the NYU bookstore and elsewhere), and a bound photocopied selection of readings (available for purchase at Advanced Copy, on LaGuardia Place, just south of West 3rd Street). The readings and assignments are indicated in this syllabus using the abbreviations noted. Except for the first week, they should be read before the first lecture of the week.

Oxford: Ian Shaw, ed., *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt* (2004)

Kemp: Barry Kemp, *Ancient Egypt: Anatomy of a Civilization* (new, 2005 edition)

Blackwells: Marc Van De Mieroop, *A History of the Ancient Near East* (2004)

Simpson: William Kelly Simpson, ed., *The Literature of Ancient Egypt: An Anthology of Stories, Instructions, Stelae, Autobiographies, and Poetry* (new 2003 edition)

Foster: Benjamin Foster, *Distant Days: Myths, Tales, and Poetry of Ancient Mesopotamia* (1995)

Reader: Compiled by AMR, available at Advanced Copy. This small, bound packet of readings will include additional assigned readings for the course as well as a copy of this syllabus and some general reference materials.

Schedule of Classes and Assigned Readings

Week 1: Landscape

What were the landscapes where early civilizations emerged? Did the geography of these areas play a role in the development of civilizations? How did the landscape affect the beliefs and forms of the people?

September 5: Introduction to Course. Landscape of Mesopotamia

September 6: no section

September 7: Landscape of Egypt

Readings: Blackwells, 1-38; Oxford, 1-15, 44-60; Kemp, 1-15

Week 2: Writing and Written Sources

What prompts a people to develop a system of writing? What are the possible ways that words and ideas can be recorded? Can writing systems be used to write languages they weren't invented for? Who learned to write and what effect does the literacy rate have on a culture? What effect do systems of writing have on the people who use them, their culture and their cultural expression? How does writing interact with other forms of communication, such as art?

September 12: Writing in Egypt and Mesopotamia

September 13: Language, Writing, and Culture

September 14: Writing and Art in Egypt

Readings: Kemp, 19-59; Simpson, 431-441; Reader, 8-37

Week 3: The Development of Early Civilizations

What kind of evidence can tell us about the transition from tribal organization to an early state? What constitutes a civilization? How do some people become rulers and others become the ruled? What forms do the first governments take? What roles do violence, economics, and the environment play in this development? How are resources distributed among people?

September 19: Evidence for the Early Egyptian State and Mesopotamian City-States

September 20: The Transition from Prehistory to History

September 21: The History of the Old Kingdom

Readings: Oxford, 57-107; Blackwells, 39-58; Kemp 60-110; Reader, 38-48

Week 4: Mortuary Archaeology

Why are tombs such an important resource for understanding a culture? What can the architecture, rituals, and materials surrounding burial tell us about the beliefs of a people? What are the purposes of extravagant expenditures on death, like pyramids and human sacrifice? Are references to life after death in tombs reliable ways of understanding daily life?

September 26: The Development of Egyptian Pyramids

September 27: Death in Mesopotamia

September 28: Non-royal tombs in the Old Kingdom: Giza & Saqqara

Readings: Simpson: 247-277; Kemp, 111-160; Reader, 49-90; Foster, 78-96

Week 5: War and Peace

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What makes a state stable or unstable? What are the roles of a good leader? How does a ruler share power with his subordinates? What are the effects of civil war?

October 3: The First Intermediate Period

October 4: The Epic of Gilgamesh

October 5: The Middle Kingdom

Readings: Simpson 152-172; 401-424; Oxford, 108-171; Kemp, 163-192; Reader, 91-105

Week 6: Religious Traditions and Ethnicity

What did early people believe about the nature of the universe and the power of the divine? How did these beliefs affect their culture?

October 10: Egyptian Cosmology and the Book of the Divine Cow

October 11: Comparative Cosmologies: Enuma Elish & Genesis

October 12: The First Dynasty of Akkad and the Sumerian Renaissance

Readings: Blackwells, 59-79; Simpson, 289-298; Foster, 9-77; 165-177

Week 7: Cultural Unity and Diversity

How widely influential was the culture of the elite? What provincial variations can be seen in the evidence? What mechanisms might have enforced cultural uniformity?

October 17: Middle Kingdom Archaeology and the Formal State

October 18: Review for Midterm

October 19: Midterm Exam

Readings: Kemp, 193-244; Simpson, 172-174

Week 8: Literature and Society

How was writing used and taught? What are the purposes of literature? Can we trust texts? How should they be analyzed? What can literature tell us about the people who composed and consumed it?

October 24: Egyptian Literature and Thought I

October 25: The Mari Letters

October 26: Egyptian Literature and Thought II

Readings: Blackwells, 80-118; Foster, 295-315; Simpson 13-66; 175-222; Reader, 106-109

Week 9: Conquest

How does military conquest affect the cultures of the conqueror and the conquered? How do military victories translate into empire? How do military and economic interests intersect? What bureaucratic mechanisms are necessary to maintain an empire?

October 31: The Hyksos and the Kerma Culture

November 1: Levantines in Egypt: The problem of the Hyksos

November 2: The Eighteenth Dynasty, Hatshepsut, and Thutmose III

Readings: Oxford, 172-264; Kemp, 247-276; Simpson 69-74.

Week 10: Universal Beliefs

How did the contact between different cultures affect religious beliefs? What were the characteristics of the new religion promulgated by Akhenaton? How much was his religious revolution result of circumstances? How radical a change did it represent?

November 7: Akhenaton and the Religion of the Sun

November 8: Diplomatic Correspondence: The Amarna Letters

November 9: Amarna: the Archaeology

Readings: Blackwells, 121-160, Oxford 265-285; Kemp, 276-301; Reader 110-129

Week 11: Orthodoxy

How do cultures react to revolution? How do periods of turmoil affect the religious beliefs and actions of a people?

November 14: The Tomb of Tutankhamun

November 15: The Question of Monotheism

November 16: Ramesside Literature

Readings: Oxford, 285-323; Simpson 278-288; 80-103; Blackwells, 161-194

Week 12: Daily Life

How did non-elite people live? Were people in historical times essentially different from people today?

November 21: Deir el-Medina: Daily life in the Late New Kingdom

November 22: No section; Monday schedule

November 23: No lecture; Thanksgiving holiday

Readings: Kemp, 302-335; Reader, 130-143

Week 13: Movement of Peoples

Why do people migrate to new places? What are the effects of forced migration?

November 28: The Assyrian Empire and its Art

November 29: Peoples of the Sea/the Babylonian Captivity

November 30: The Egyptian Late Period

Readings: Oxford, 323-387; Blackwells, 197-252; Kemp, 336-385; Simpson, 223-243

Week 14: Influences

What influences did Classical cultures have upon the ancient world? And how has the West perceived the ancient world?

December 5: Egyptian Temples

December 6: Cleopatras, Ancient and Modern

December 7: Ancient Egypt and the West

Readings: Kemp, 387-388; Oxford, 388-436

Week 15:

December 12: Synthesis and Review

December 13: Review for Exam. (Last day of Classes)

Final Exam: December 21, 2006, 8:00– 9:50 am in Silver Center 714 (regular classroom)