

CULTURES & CONTEXTS
EGYPT OF THE PHARAOHS: THE MIDDLE KINGDOM
CORE-UA.0545 – Spring 2016

Lecture and Recitation Sections:

MW	11:00 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.	Meyer 122	Ann Macy Roth	(Section 1)
F	8:00 a.m. – 9:15 a.m.	25 W 4th C-18	Sophie Kroft	(Section 2)
F	9:30 a.m. – 10:45 a.m.	Silver 510	Sophie Kroft	(Section 3)
F	11:00 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.	12WaverlyPl L114	Tara Prakash	(Section 4)
F	12:30 p.m. – 1:45 p.m.	25 W 4th C-18	Tara Prakash	(Section 5)

Course Faculty:

Professor: Ann Macy Roth – ann.macy.roth@nyu.edu

Office Hours: Mondays 2:00 – 3:15 p.m., Wednesdays 12:30 – 2 p.m.; by appointment

Office Location: Silver 303-A8; Office Telephone: (212) 998-8991

Recitation Instructor: Sophie Kroft – s.kroft@nyu.edu

Office Hours: Wednesdays 9:30 – 10:45 a.m. and by appointment

Office Location: Silver 303-A8; Office Telephone: (212) 998-8991

Recitation Instructor: Tara Prakash – tcp233@nyu.edu

Office Hours: Fridays 9:45 – 10:45 and by appointment

Office Location: Silver 303-A8; Office Telephone: (212) 998-8991

Course Aims:

Cultures & Contexts courses are intended to teach students about cultures that differ from their own, to demonstrate that there are many different but equally valid systems of beliefs and ideas that people construct to live in the world. The Egypt of the Pharaohs version of the course focuses, of course, on Egypt, but rather than survey over 3000 years of history (which tends to become a history class), we will focus on the evidence for Egyptian culture during a shorter period, the four hundred years of the Middle Kingdom. This period was viewed throughout the rest of Egyptian history as the classical period, a kind of golden age. From roughly 2055-1650 BCE, in a period of stability and isolation, the Egyptians built upon older traditions and developed new forms and means of cultural expression, particularly in the areas of literature and sculpture, but also in technology, religion, political structures, social organization, and mortuary monuments.

Such an ancient culture must be reconstructed from what it has left behind. In this course, we will examine the character of Middle Kingdom Egyptian culture using a variety of primary sources—texts (literature, religious writings, and royal inscriptions) and material culture (works of art, architecture, archaeological remains). Students will learn how scholars analyze this kind of material to reconstruct Middle Kingdom life and use these methods themselves to gain insight into the Egyptians' religious beliefs, social forms and organizations, and the conventions and achievements of their literature, art, and architecture, as well as to critically evaluate the interpretations and reconstructions in the secondary scholarship.

Course Requirements and Grading:

All grades will be assigned on a 100 point scale and calculated according to the weight of the grade. Attendance at all lectures and section and all assigned readings are required. According to Core Guidelines, no more than 10% of students should receive As, and no more than 15% should receive A-s. (The official NYU grading scale is reproduced at the end of this syllabus.)

Attendance (5%): You will be asked to sign an attendance sheet for each lecture. Initially, your grade is 100%. Once your unexcused absences have exceeded a (low) threshold, your *total* absences will be multiplied by 5% and subtracted from this. (Religious holidays and documented medical emergencies are excused absences.)

Section Grade (15%): This grade will be assigned by your section instructor, based on section attendance and participation and completion of section assignments. See your section syllabus for details.

Essays (35%): You will be asked to write four short essays on assigned topics, due **February 17th, March 21st, April 13th and May 4th**. The first essay will be at least 3 pages (1000 words) and worth 5% of your grade; the remaining essays will be at least 6 pages (2000 words) and be worth 10% of your grade. Spelling, grammar, writing style, organization, and argumentation are important for these essays. Your section instructors will explain and help you practice the analysis necessary.

Midterm Exam (15%): There will be a midterm exam given in class on **Wednesday, March 9th**. It will include objective and essay components, and it will cover material from the readings, lectures, and sections up to that point, including primary sources, interpretations, *and a map*. Make-up exams can only be taken with a verified medical or similarly serious excuse approved by Prof. Roth.

Final Exam (30%): A final exam, cumulative, and of the same general format as the Midterm Exam, will be given in our regular classroom on **Monday, May 16th, 10-11:50 a.m.** This is the scheduled exam time for this class, and it cannot be changed. As with the Midterm Exam, any make-ups must be approved by the instructor, and they will only be approved for a very pressing, usually medical, reason. **DO NOT** make (or let your parents make) airline reservations to leave town before the exam. This will not be regarded as a valid reason to take the exam early.

Required Books:

Course readings will be from the following two books. They should be available at the NYU bookstore and elsewhere. PDFs of additional readings and web materials will be posted on NYU Classes. The reading assignments are indicated in this syllabus using the boldface headings given here.

Simpson: W. K. Simpson, ed., *The Literature of Ancient Egypt*

Szpakowska: Kasia Szpakowska, *Daily Life in Ancient Egypt*

PDF: Selected readings posted by author on NYU Classes site, under Resources/Readings

Web: Selected web pages and sites will be posted under Resources/Web. Please read notes!

To keep the reading coherent, not all readings will match the lecture. **Note**: Recitation Instructors may assign additional readings, which are equally required.

Schedule of Lectures & Reading Assignments (Preliminary—this will be updated)

Reading assignments may be done before or after the lecture or both

Week 1

Monday, January 25: Egypt, 2055-1650 BCE / Background: The Egyptian Landscape

Wednesday, January 27: Background: Egyptian History and Kingship

PDF: Kings of the Middle Kingdom; Timeline

Week 2

Monday, February 1: Background: Egyptian Writing

Simpson: 1-10 and preceding figures (Introduction)

Wednesday, February 3: Background: Egyptian Religion and Cosmology

Simpson: 45-53 (Shipwrecked Sailor); PDF: Hornung Nonexistence; Guide to the Gods

Week 3

Monday, February 8: Background: Egyptian Art and Artistic Conventions

PDF: Baines What is Art, Peck Human Figure

Wednesday, February 10: Background: Egyptian Conceptions of Gender

Szpakowska: 208-224

Week 4

Monday, February 15: No Class – Presidents' Day

Wednesday, February 17: The Old Kingdom and First Intermediate Period (*Essay #1 due*)

Simpson: 401-413 (Weni, Harkhuf, Qar), 152-165 (Merikare)

Week 5

Monday, February 22: Six Theban Kings and the Beginning of the Middle Kingdom

PDF: Lichtheim Prayers of a Theban King; Hayes Scepter D11

Wednesday, February 24: Mentuhotep II, Mentuhotep III, and Senwosret I: Early Temples

Web: Osirisnet: The Temple of Mentuhotep;

Week 6

Monday, February 29: The Hekanakht Papyri: The Life of an Egyptian Entrepreneur

PDF: Allen Hekanakht Letters Excerpts

Wednesday, March 2: Scribal Education in the Early Middle Kingdom

Simpson: 431-437 (Satire on the Trades); Szpakowska, 81-121; PDF: Hayes Scepter Crafts Professions

Week 7

Monday, March 7: Literature as Propaganda in the Early Middle Kingdom

Simpson: 214-220 (Neferti), 166-171 (Teaching of Amenemhat), 54-66 (Sinhue);

PDF: Hayes Scepter D12 Early

Wednesday, March 9: **Midterm Exam**

Week 8

Monday, March 14 & Wednesday, March 16: No Class – 🎵 Spring Break 🎵

Week 9

Monday, March 21: Royal Pyramids of the Early and Middle Twelfth Dynasty (*Essay #2 due*)
PDF: Lehner MK Pyramids

Wednesday, March 23: Middle Kingdom Houses/ Birth & Childhood
Szapowska: 1-22, 23-63; Simpson: 13-24 (Magicians); PDF: Hayes Scepter Home Farm

Week 10

Monday, March 28: Daily Life, Material Culture, and Magic
Szapowska: 64-80; 122-178 PDF: Hayes Scepter Daily Life

Wednesday, March 30: Death and Burial
Simpson: 263-266 (Coffin Texts); Szpakowska: 179-207; PDF: More Coffin Texts

Week 11

Monday, April 4: The Herakleopolitan Burial Style
PDF: Roehrig Meketre; Berman Coffins; Freed & Doxey Models

Wednesday, April 6: Pessimism in the Middle Kingdom
Simpson: 178-213 (Lebensmüde, Ipuwer, Khakheperreseneb)

Week 12

Monday, April 11: Tombs of Upper Egyptian Officials
Simpson: 418-424 (BH Autobiographies); PDF: Hayes Scepter People and Animals;
Web: Osirisnet: Middle Kingdom Tombs

Wednesday, April 13: The Sanctuary of Heqaib (*Essay #3 due*)
PDF: Raue Sanctuary of Heqaib

Week 13

Monday, April 18: The Terrace of the Great God at Abydos (guest lecture: Sophie Kroft)
Simpson: 425-427 (Ikhnofret); PDF: Abydos stelas

Wednesday, April 20: Senwosret III and the Nubian Forts (guest lecture: Tara Prakash)
PDF: Badawy Aksut

Week 14

Monday, April 25: Portraiture of Middle Kingdom Kings
Simpson: 172-174 (Loyalist), 301-307 (S III Song Cycle); PDF: Aldred Portraiture;
Hayes Scepter D12 Later

Wednesday, April 27: Late Middle Kingdom Burial Style
PDF: Hayes Scepter Burial

Week 15

Monday, May 2: The Temple of Medinet Madi / Sobeknofru, the Female King
PDF: TBA

Wednesday, May 4: The Thirteenth Dynasty and the End of the Middle Kingdom (*Essay #4 due*)
Simpson: 339-344 (Neferhotep Stela); PDF: Hayes Scepter D13

Week 16

Monday, May 9: The Legacy of the Middle Kingdom

Final Exam: Monday, May 16th, 10-11:50 a.m.

Outline of Assignments:

These are very summary descriptions of the short essay assignments that will be required for this class. You will be given much more guidance in handouts that will describe the required format and suggest more specific questions to address and organization.

Essay #1 – (3 pages, 1000 words) – Senwosret III and the Semna Stelas. Due February 17th

In a very brief essay, discuss the stelas that were set up by Senwosret III in Elephantine and at the Nubian fortress of Semna. What can these inscriptions tell you about the Egyptian relationship with Nubia and Egyptian attitudes towards the Nubians? What do they say about Egyptian kingship? Who was the audience for the stelas? Use short excerpts from the texts to argue for your conclusions, applying some of the Egyptian cultural concepts introduced during the introductory lectures. Images of the stela will be posted along with the translations, which can also be used in your arguments.

Essay #2 – (6 pages/2000 words) – Egyptian-Western Comparison: Texts Due March 21st

Middle Kingdom Egyptian texts sometimes fulfilled purposes that are familiar to western readers. The wisdom of old men advised young men how to succeed in life, the biographies of the dead are recounted to memorialize them, and official texts made the rulers look good. For this assignment, you are asked to choose an example of these types of literature and to compare it to a corresponding example from the western tradition, pointing out similarities and differences, and discussing what is distinctly Egyptian about the Egyptian example. You will be given a list of likely Egyptian texts and suggestions about where to look for comparative examples.

Essay #3 – (6 pages/2000 words) – Egyptian-Western Comparison: Art & Artifacts Due April 13th

Like texts, objects created by the Middle Kingdom Egyptians are often similar in the purpose or function to those used in western cultures. As with the texts, a comparison of similar objects can be used to bring out the distinctive characteristics of Egyptian culture. To do this assignment, you will choose an object or artwork from the Middle Kingdom Egyptian galleries at the Metropolitan Museum or the Brooklyn Museum and an object with the same function from a western culture and write a comparison of the two objects, explaining what their differences tell you about the differences in the cultures that created them. (Suggestions about possible pairings will be given.)

Essay #4 – (6 pages 2000 words) – Critiquing Arguments on a Problem involving Senwosret III Due May 4th

(We're still working on this.)

Course Policies:

Attendance at lectures and sections is required. If you find it necessary to be absent, you must present documented excuses. A small (and undisclosed) number of unexcused absences will be allowed before a grade is affected, but if there is a good (i.e., medical or similarly dire) reason for your absence, you would be better off documenting it. Documentation should be shown to the section instructor if your recitation section was missed, or to Prof. Roth if a lecture was missed.

Students are responsible for the material and information presented in lectures and sections, whether they are present or not. This includes excused absences.

Students are expected to show consideration for their fellow students in lectures and sections. Cell phones should be turned OFF during *all* your classes. If you are using a computer (allowed *only* for taking notes) during a lecture, sit at the back of the class so the light from your screen does not prevent the students behind you from seeing the PowerPoint slides. You may not eat in class. You may not drink sugary drinks that might be spilled and attract vermin. You may not leave trash on the floor or in the seats. This should all be obvious.

No electronics at all may be used in your discussion sections.

Essays will not be accepted after the due date without excellent excuses. Papers *must* be submitted through NYU Classes. Extensions will not be granted unless there are genuinely exceptional circumstances that warrant them. (Poor planning is not, alas, exceptional.) If you see an exceptional circumstance on the horizon, e-mailing us about it *before* the paper is late (or the exam is missed) will make the acceptance of your excuse more likely.

Papers may be submitted for comments in advance of the due date. Papers may be submitted to Prof. Roth or your recitation instructor *at least* a week before the paper is due. Note that your paper will not necessarily be graded by the same person who offered preliminary comments, and therefore that fixing the flaws pointed out does not guarantee you an A (or even a B), although it will most likely improve your grade.

The grade of A is given only for papers and exams that exceed the requirements of the assignment are essentially flawless in content and presentation. If you feel a grade is unfair and you would like to re-submit the paper or exam to Prof. Roth, be aware that your grade can be lowered as well as raised.

Plagiarism and other forms of cheating will not be tolerated. They will result in *at least* a reduction of your grade (often to zero) and the circumstance will be reported to the deans, as the faculty handbook requires. In extreme cases, students will fail the course. Students are strongly advised to avoid even the appearance of cheating during exams and to be extremely careful about their use of sources. Changing around the words of a source does *not* “make it your own.”

Grading Scale:

	B+	87-89	C+	77-79	D+	67-69	
A	95-100	B	83-86	C-	70-72	D	63-66
A-	90-94	B-	80-82	C	73-76		