

Ancient Near Eastern and Egyptian Mythology

CAMS/RLST44 - Spring 2024



Prof. Ziting Wang
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CAMS Department
Weaver Building 221

Class date & time: M/W/F 1:25 – 2:15 pm
Venue: Boucke Building 311
Office hours: 10:00 – 11:30 T/Th
Zoom & and Weaver Building Library (3/F)

Course Description:

Dive into the rich tapestry of Ancient Near Eastern mythologies spanning from Mesopotamia, Levant, Egypt, to Hatti. This course offers a comprehensive survey of these captivating mythological traditions, grounding them within their unique cultural and historical contexts. Students will unravel the intricate relationships between myth and religion and explore the influence of these ancient mythical narratives on Greek and Roman mythologies, as well as Biblical traditions. Beyond historical exploration, the course delves into the enduring legacies of these myths in contemporary realms: from their imprints on modern art, architecture, and literature to their resonances in popular movies and TV shows. Through this journey, students will not only gain insights into ancient worldviews but will also develop a deeper understanding of the profound and lasting influences these stories exert on modern culture.

Course Activities and Grading:

1. Participation (20%)

- Students are expected to **complete assigned readings** before each class and **actively participate** in class discussions.

- The instructor will also start a threaded discussion in **Ed Discussions** each week, contributing to asynchronous discussions outside the classroom is an alternative way to earn participation grades.
 - You are allowed **two unexcused absences**, but if you have to miss more classes, make sure to notify me before class (or shortly afterward) and provide a valid excuse.
2. In-class quizzes (5% x 4 = 20 %)
- Short **5 – 10-minute** short quizzes to test students' knowledge of assigned readings and content covered in lectures
3. Student presentation (20%)
- Option 1: Museum object project
 - Choose a museum object (e.g., the Burney Relief) that reflects a mythological theme or story and conduct research on the production, purpose/use, ownership, disposal, rediscovery, and history of collection/research of the object
 - Option 2: Ancient myths in modern culture
 - Choose a piece of art/architecture or a movie/TV show/video game inspired by ancient Near Eastern and Egyptian mythology and analyze how ancient narratives are reinterpreted in modern culture
 - Present your findings with an **8 – 10-minute** in-class presentation
4. Group project (20%)
- Form groups of 3-4 and create a virtual exhibit on a specific theme or story from Ancient Near East and Egyptian Mythology
 - Curate digital artworks and 3D models from Sketchfab relevant to your theme and design a cohesive and interactive virtual exhibit in Spatial.io
 - Include informational tags or audio guides for each exhibit piece
 - Present your virtual exhibit to the class, explaining your theme, chosen artifacts, and their significance.
5. Final exam (20%)
- 45-minute in-class closed-book exam consisting of identification questions, multiple choice questions, and short essay questions

Grades will be assigned in accordance with the following scale:

A (93 – 100), A- (90 – 92.9), B+ (87 – 89.9), B (83 – 86.9), B- (80 – 82.9), C+ (77 – 79.9), C (70 – 76.9), D (60 – 69.9), F ($\leq$ 59.9).

Other Responsibilities and Information:

Students who miss a class are responsible for all class material, discussions, etc., occurring in their absence. Absent students are expected to make arrangements with other class members to obtain notes or to be apprised of class developments when absent.

Students must bear in mind that the **class lectures** and presentations are the **de-facto study guides** for all tests and written exercises in this course. Any necessary digital files will be uploaded onto Canvas **before** each class. PowerPoint presentations will be uploaded **after** class.

Courtesy is expected and much appreciated. The use or display of **cell phones, smartphones**, portable media players, and other electronic devices (except laptops or tablets used for note-taking and course materials) is **strictly prohibited** in this class. These gadgets must be turned off before the class starts and stored away. Should a student need to keep a cell phone on during class, due to a personal or family **emergency**, this student should let the instructor know before the class starts. During class, students are advised to abstain from checking their email, watching online clips, or surfing the web. Everyone is expected to behave in a **thoughtful** and **respectful** manner.

Penn State [instruction modes](#) specify that in-person courses can hold up to **24%** of class meetings remotely. If the instructor is attending a conference or finds herself under the weather, this course will hold that specific class meeting via Zoom. When that happens, students will be **notified in advance**. In that case, students will be asked to leave their cameras on. In order to preserve the privacy of their surroundings, students may want to use any of the backgrounds provided by Zoom.

Students are expected to behave within the guidelines of **academic and personal integrity**. Penn State defines academic integrity as the pursuit of scholarly activity in an open, honest, and responsible manner. All students should act with personal integrity, respect other students' dignity, rights, and property, and help create and maintain an environment in which all can succeed through the fruits of their efforts (Faculty Senate Policy 49-20). For more information about academic integrity at Penn State, see the [policy website](#). Students who may need general guidance concerning writing should utilize the [Penn State Learning Center](#) in 220 Boucke.

Penn State **welcomes students with disabilities** into the University's education programs. If you have a disability-related need for reasonable academic adjustments in this course, contact the Office for Disability Services. For further information regarding policies, rights and responsibilities please visit the [Office for Disability Services \(ODS\) website](#). Instructors should be notified as early in the semester as possible regarding the need for reasonable accommodations.

Penn State takes great pride to foster a **diverse and inclusive environment** for students, faculty, and staff. Acts of intolerance, discrimination, or harassment due to age, ancestry, color, disability, gender, gender identity, national origin, race, religious belief, sexual orientation, or veteran status are not tolerated and can be reported through Educational Equity via the [Report Bias webpage](#)

Many students at Penn State face personal challenges or have psychological needs that may affect their academic progress, social development, or emotional well-being. The university offers a variety of **confidential services to help you through difficult times**. Please note the following:

[Counseling and Psychological Services](#) at University Park (CAPS): 814-863-0395
Penn State Crisis Line (24 hours/7 days/week): 877-229-6400
Crisis Text Line (24 hours/7 days/week): Text LIONS to 741741

According to [Penn State policy G-9: Academic Integrity](#), an academic integrity violation is “an intentional, unintentional, or attempted violation of course or assessment policies to gain an academic

advantage or to advantage or disadvantage another student academically.” Unless your instructor tells you otherwise, you must complete all coursework entirely on your own, using only sources that have been permitted by your instructor, and you may not assist other students with papers, quizzes, exams, or other assessments. If your instructor allows you to use ideas, images, or word phrases created by another person (e.g., from Course Hero or Chegg) or by **generative technology**, such as ChatGPT, you must identify their source. You may not submit false or fabricated information, use the same academic work for credit in multiple courses, or share instructional content. Students with questions about academic integrity should ask their instructor before submitting work.

Main Reference Books:

Dalley, Stephanie. *Myths from Mesopotamia: Creation, the Flood, Gilgamesh, and Others*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008. [Main textbook]

Bryce, Trevor R., and Jessie Birkett-Rees. *Atlas of the Ancient Near East: From Prehistoric Times to the Roman Imperial Period*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2016.

Dunand, Françoise, and Christiane Zivie-Coche. *Gods and Men in Egypt: 3000 BCE to 395 CE*. Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 2004.

Hoffner, Harry A. *Hittite Myths*. Edited by Gary M. Beckman. 2nd ed. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998.

Lichtheim, Miriam. *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings. Volumes I-III*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006.

Note: All required reading materials will be provided by the instructor in **Canvas Modules**.

Class Structure and Schedule

Note: The instructor **reserves the right to amend the syllabus** in any way or fashion whenever deemed necessary. Students will be notified of any changes in advance.

I. Mesopotamian Mythology

Week 1: Introduction: Ancient Mesopotamia

Class 1.1 (1/8) Course Introduction

NO REQUIRED READINGS

Class 1.2 (1/10): Ancient Mesopotamian History & Civilization I

Required readings:

- Bryce & Birkett-Rees, *Atlas of the Ancient Near East*, sections 1, 4, 8, 11, 12, 14.
- Watch the ISAC lecture: [Highlights from the Mesopotamian Gallery \(McGuire Gibson\)](#)

Class 1.3 (1/12): Ancient Mesopotamia History & Civilization II

Required readings:

- Bryce & Birkett-Rees, *Atlas of the Ancient Near East*, sections 15-21.
- Watch the ISAC lecture: [The OI in Iraq \(McGuire Gibson\)](#)

Week 2 Cosmogonies, Theologies & Flood I

Class 2.1 (1/15): NO CLASS (MLK DAY)

Class 2.2 (1/17): Eridu Genesis

Required readings:

- Bryce & Birkett-Rees, *Atlas of the Ancient Near East*, sections 23, 28, 29, 42, 57.
- Jacobsen, in *Context of Scripture I*, 513-15.
- Rubio, in *From an Antique Land*, 11-25.

Class 2.3 (1/19): Atrahasis

Required readings:

- Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia*, 1-20.
- Rubio, in *From an Antique Land*, 25-46.

Class 3.1 (1/22) Atrahasis

Required readings:

- Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia*, 20-38.
- Watch the Penn Museum lecture: [The Great Flood and Its Aftermath \(Stephen Tinney\)](#)

Week 3 Cosmogonies, Theologies & Flood II

Class 3.2 (1/24): *Enūma Eliš* & QUIZ 1

Required readings:

- Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia*, 228-49.
- Gonzalo Rubio, "Time before Time: Primeval Narratives in Early Mesopotamian Literature," in *Time and History in the Ancient Near East*, 3–18.

Class 3.3 (1/26): *Enūma Eliš*

Required readings:

- Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia*, 249-74.
- Watch the Penn Museum lecture: [How the Great God Marduk Built the City of Babylon \(Steve Tinney\)](#)

Week 4 Myth vs. Epic I

Class 4.1 (1/29): The Babylonian Gilgamesh I-VI

Required readings:

- Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia*, 39-59.
- Watch the ISAC lecture: [News from Old Uruk \(Margarete van Ess\)](#)

Class 4.2 (1/31): The Babylonian Gilgamesh I-VI

Required readings:

- Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia*, 59-83.
- Watch the Penn Museum lecture: [Gilgamesh \(Steve Tinney\)](#)

Class 4.3 (2/2): The Babylonian Gilgamesh I-VI

Required readings:

- George, *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic* I, chapter 3.

Week 5 Myth vs. Epic II

Class 5.1 (2/5): The Babylonian Gilgamesh VII-XII

Required readings:

- Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia*, 83-109.

Class 5.2 (2/7): The Babylonian Gilgamesh VII-XII

Required readings:

- Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia*, 109-125.
- Foster, in *From an Antique Land*, 137-64.

Class 5.3 (2/9): The Babylonian Gilgamesh VII-XII

Required readings:

- Foster, in *From an Antique Land*, 164-84.

Week 6: Journey to the Netherworld

Class 6.1 (2/12): The Descent of Ishtar

Required readings:

- Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia*, 154-62.
- Foster, in *From an Antique Land*, 184-214.

Class 6.2 (2/14): Nergal & Ereshkigal & QUIZ 2

Required readings:

- Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia*, 163-181.

Class 6.3 (2/16): Adapa; Etana

Required readings:

- Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia*, 182-88, 189-202.
- Watch the Penn Museum lecture: [Adapa the Sage \(Steve Tinney\)](#)

II. Egyptian Mythology

Week 7

Class 7.1 (2/19): Ancient Egyptian History & Civilization I

Required readings:

- Baines & Malek, *Cultural Atlas of Ancient Egypt*, 12-21 (Geography), 187-88 (Peripheral regions), 190-97 (Everyday life), 204-8 (Women and men).

Class 7.2 (2/21): Ancient Egyptian History & Civilization II

Required readings:

- Baines & Malek, *Cultural Atlas of Ancient Egypt*, 30-55 (Historical background), 209-19 (Religion).

Class 7.3 (2/23): Ancient Egyptian History & Civilization III

Required readings:

- Baines & Malek, *Cultural Atlas of Ancient Egypt*, 56-70 (Art and architecture).

Week 8

Class 8.1 (2/26): STUDENT PRESENTATION

Class 8.2 (2/28): STUDENT PRESENTATION

Class 8.3 (3/1): STUDENT PRESENTATION

3/3 – 3/9 NO CLASS (SPRING BREAK)

Week 9: Cosmologies and Theogonies

Class 9.1 (3/11): Heliopolitan and Memphite Traditions

Required readings:

- Heliopolitan creation myth (Heliopolis, Atum)
 - Allen, *Genesis in Egypt*, 1-35.
- Memphite creation myth (Memphis, Ptah)
 - Allen, *Genesis in Egypt*, 38-41.

Class 9.2 (3/13): Theban Tradition

Required readings:

- Theban creation myth (Thebes, Amun)
 - Ritner, in *Context of Scripture I*, 37-40, 55-57 (Daily ritual of the Karnak Temple).
 - Baines & Malek, *Cultural Atlas of Ancient Egypt*, 84-106 (Thebes).

Class 9.3 (3/15): Creation by Aten

Required readings:

- Atenist tradition (Amarna, Aten)
 - Lichtheim, in *Context of Scripture I*, 44-46.
 - Explore the [Amarna3D](#) website.
 - Explore Cambridge University's [AmarnaProject](#) website.
 - Explore [noblemen's tombs at Amarna](#) on Osirisnet

Week 10: Solar Myths

Class 10.1 (3/18): Creation and Destruction of Man

Required readings:

- Man as tears of Re
 - Allen, in *Context of Scripture I*, 26-27.
- Destruction and death of man
 - Allen, in *Context of Scripture I*, 27-30.
 - Lichtheim, in *Context of Scripture I*, 36-37.

- Kákosy, “Ideas About the Fallen State of the World in Egyptian Religion,” *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 17.

Class 10.2 (3/20): The Eye and Daughters of Re & QUIZ 3

Required readings:

- Isis and the Secret Name of Re
 - Ritner, in *Context of Scripture I*, 32-34.
- The Daughters of Re/Wandering Goddess
 - Richter, “On the Heels of the Wandering Goddess,” 155–86.

Class 10.3 (3/22): The Sun God as a Personal God & Syncretism

Required readings:

- Fox, in *Context of Scripture I*, 47 (Penitential hymns).
- Lichtheim, in *Context of Scripture I*, 43-44.
- Assmann, “Confession in Ancient Egypt,” in *Transformations of the Inner Self in Ancient Religions*, 231-44.

Week 11: Death and Resurrection

Class 11.1 (3/25): The Osirian Myth

Required readings:

- Lichtheim, in *Context of Scripture I*, 41-43.
- Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature I*, 123-25.
- Mojsov, *Osiris: Death and Afterlife of a God*, chapters 2-4.
- Explore the [Chapels of Osiris in the Temple of Seti I at Abydos](#)

Class 11.2 (3/27): Osiris and the Judgment of the Dead

Required readings:

- Selections from Faulkner, *The Egyptian Book of the Dead (Ani)*.
- Mojsov, *Osiris: Death and Afterlife of a God*, chapters 5-6.

Class 11.3 (3/29): Myths and Funerary Beliefs

Required readings:

- Lichtheim, in *Context of Scripture I*, 48-50 (Harpers’ songs).
- Baines & Malek, *Cultural Atlas of Ancient Egypt*, 220-21.
- Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature I*, 163-69 (The Debate Between a Man and His Ba)
- Mojsov, *Osiris: Death and Afterlife of a God*, chapter 8

Week 12: Myths and Royal Ideology

Class 12.1 (4/1): Birth of Horus in the Delta

Required readings:

- Graham, “From Isis and Horus in the Delta to Mary and Jesus in Ireland,” *GM* 265.

- Bakry, “A Stela of Horus Standing on Crocodiles from the Middle Delta,” *Rivista Degli Studi Orientali* 42.

Class 12.2 (4/3): Contendings between Horus and Seth

Required readings:

- Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature* II, 214-223.
- Redford, “Contendings of Horus and Seth,” in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt. Vol. I. A-F*, 294–95.
- Allam, “Legal Aspects in the ‘Contendings of Horus and Seth,’” in *Studies in Pharaonic Religion and Society in Honour of J. Gwyn Griffiths*, 137–45.

Class 12.3 (4/5): Divine Selection and Birth of New Kingdom Kings

Required readings:

- Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt* II, 75-86 (Divine birth of Hatshepsut), 320-24 (Thutmose IV’s Dream Stela).
- Murnane, Texts from the Amarna Period, 22-27 (Divine birth of Amenhotep III).
- Matić, “Materiality and Sex in the Divine Birth Legend of Hatshepsut and Amenhotep III,” in *Perspectives on Materiality in Ancient Egypt*, 35–54.

Week 13: Miscellaneous

Class 13.1 (4/8): Story of Magicians

Required readings:

- Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature* I, 215-22 (Three Tales of Wonder).
- Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature* III, 125-51 (Setne I & II).
- Botta, “Sin and Forgiveness in the Demotic Story of Setne I,” in *Jerusalem Studies in Egyptology*, 233–41.
- Rutherford, “Kalasiris and Setne Khamwas,” *Zeitschrift Für Papyrologie Und Epigraphik* 117, 203–9.

Class 13.2 (4/10): Adventures I & QUIZ 4

Required readings:

- Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature* I, 211-15 (The Shipwrecked Sailor).
- Baines, “Interpreting the Story of the Shipwrecked Sailor,” *JEA* 76 (1990): 55–72.

Class 13.3 (4/12): Adventures II

Required readings:

- Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature* II, 200 (The Doomed Prince), 203-11 (The Two Brothers).
- Wente, “Doomed Prince,” in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt. Vol. I. A-F*, 406.
- Spalinger, “Transformations in Egyptian Folktales: The Royal Influence,” *RdE* 58 (2007): 137–56.

III. Hittite-Hurrian Mythology

Week 14

Class 14.1 (4/15): Introduction to Hittite and Hurrian History & Civilization

Required readings:

- Bryce & Birkett-Rees, *Atlas of the Ancient Near East*, sections 24, 25, 26.
- Watch [OI Armchair Travelers: Hattuša \(Theo van den Hout\)](#)

Class 14.2 (4/17): Hittite Myths: Illuyanka; Telipinu

Required readings:

- Hoffner, *Hittite Myths*, 10-20.
- Beckman, in *From an Antique Land*, 215-31.

Class 14.3 (4/19): Hurrian Myths: Kumarbi; Ullikummi; Song of Release

Required readings:

- Hoffner, *Hittite Myths*, 42-46, 55-77.
- Beckman, in *From an Antique Land*, 231-52.

IV. Ugaritic Mythology

Week 15 Ugaritic Mythology

Class 15.1 (4/22): Introduction to Levantine/Ugaritic History & Civilization

Required readings:

- Bryce & Birkett-Rees, *Atlas of the Ancient Near East*, sections 22, 23, 27, 31, 36, 37.
- Pitard, in *From an Antique Land*, 277-86.

Class 15.2 (4/24): The Epic of Ba'lu

Required readings:

- Smith, in *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry*, 81-164 (read only the English translation).

Class 15.3 (4/26): The Epic of Ba'lu

Required readings:

- Smith, in *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry*, 81-164 (read only the English translation).

4/27 – 4/28 Study Days

4/29 – 5/3 FINAL EXAM WEEK