

The Pennsylvania State University

Egyptian Civilization

CAMS 20-001 – Fall 2026



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CAMS Department
Weaver Building 221

Class time: M/W/F 11:15 am – 12:05 pm
Venue: Hammond Building 304
Office hours: 10:00 – 11:30 am T/Th
Weaver 221 & Zoom

Course Description:

Ancient Egypt stands as one of history's most complex and enduring civilizations, offering an unparalleled case study in the dynamics of complex society. This course provides a comprehensive introduction to Egyptian civilization from its prehistoric origins through the Ptolemaic period, examining the rise of monarchy and civil administration, the invention and function of writing, the development of civic religion, and the mechanics of imperial expansion and collapse. Students will engage with primary sources, monumental architecture, and archaeological evidence to trace Egypt's evolving relationships with neighboring civilizations, including the Mycenaeans, Hittites, Nubians, and Persians. Beyond Egypt itself, the course situates this remarkable civilization within broader Mediterranean and Near Eastern economic and political networks. Through close reading, virtual site exploration, and critical analysis, students will develop essential skills in historical thinking while gaining deep insight into the foundations of complex human society.

Career Readiness in Liberal Arts

This course helps you build skills that matter beyond college, including communication, critical thinking, collaboration, and ethical reasoning. Through reading, writing, discussion, and research, you will practice learning that connects directly to academic, professional, and civic life. By the end of the course, you should be able to identify the strengths you are developing and explain how they support your future goals and [career readiness](#). For further assistance and support, please visit the [Liberal Arts Career Enrichment Network](#) and [Nittany Lion Careers](#).

Career Skills You Learn in this CAMS Course

The career skills you will learn in this class are research, close reading, textual and material analysis, written and oral communication, project management, data organization, cultural awareness, and the ability to interpret historical evidence across languages and time periods.

Course Activities and Grading:

1. Participation (30%)

- Students are expected to **complete assigned readings** and **actively participate** in class discussions.
- 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.
- The instructor will also start a threaded discussion in **Ed Discussions** each week, contributing to asynchronous discussions and interacting with your classmates is **required** to earn participation grades.

2. In-class quizzes (5% x 6 = 30%)

- Short 5 – 10-minute quizzes (delivered through Canvas) to test students' knowledge of assigned readings and content covered in lectures.

3. Student presentation (20%)

- Option 1: Museum object project
 - Visit the online catalog of any museum with a collection of Egyptian artifacts, choose an object of special interest to you and conduct research on it.
- Option 2: Ancient Egypt in modern culture
 - Review a movie/TV show/song/anime inspired by ancient Egyptian themes and analyze how ancient Egyptian culture is represented, interpreted in the modern imagination.
- Share your findings with a **7–8-minute** presentation in class.

4. Final exam (20%)

- 90-minute closed-book exam consisting of identification questions, multiple choice questions, and short essay questions.

Make-up Work and Late Submission Policy:

- Make-up work or late submissions of assignments without a penalty require a documented, university-approved excuse, such as illness, health issues, or family emergency. Students who do

not provide such documentation may still submit their work; however, late submissions will incur a penalty of **1% reduction in the final grade for the assignment per calendar day** past the deadline.

- Students who anticipate needing an extension should **notify the instructor as early as possible**, preferably **before the due date**, to discuss their situation and determine whether an accommodation can be made. Extensions may be granted at the discretion of the instructor and typically require supporting documentation.

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 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.

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.

You may use AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Claude) to support your learning in this course, but you **must cite AI assistance properly** using the citation format specified in our course materials and **verify all AI-generated information against credible academic sources** before including it in your work. AI tools can make errors and produce inaccurate information, so critical evaluation and verification are essential scholarly skills. You are responsible for the accuracy and integrity of your submissions, and submitting AI-generated content without proper citation constitutes academic dishonesty. When in doubt about appropriate AI use, consult me before submitting your work.

Main Reference Books:

Redford, Donald B. *A History of Ancient Egypt: Egyptian Civilization in Context*. Dubuque:

Kendall Hunt Publishing Company, 2019. **[PDF in Canvas under Modules]**

Smith, William S. *The Art and Architecture of Ancient Egypt*. New Haven: Yale University Press,

1981. **[PDF of older edition in Canvas under Modules]**

Note: You can acquire the two main textbooks from the PSU bookstore, **all other 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.

Week 1

Class 1.1 Course Introduction

NO REQUIRED READINGS

Class 1.2 Geography

Required readings:

- Redford, *A History of Ancient Egypt*, chapter 1 (Geography).
- Baines & Malek, *Cultural Atlas of Ancient Egypt*, 12-21 (Geography of ancient Egypt).
- Explore Egyptian sites using [Google Earth](#)

Class 1.3 Study of Ancient Egypt and Development of Egyptology

Required readings:

- Redford, *A History of Ancient Egypt*, introduction.
- Baines & Malek, *Cultural Atlas of Ancient Egypt*, 22-29 (Study of ancient Egypt).

Week 2

Class 2.1 Periodization of History

Required readings:

- Shaw, "Introduction: Chronologies and Cultural Change in Egypt," in *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt* (2000), 1–15.
- Redford, *A History of Ancient Egypt*, appendix II-III.

Class 2.2 Prehistory

Required readings:

- Redford, *A History of Ancient Egypt*, chapter 2 (Prehistory).
- Smith, *The Art and Architecture of Ancient Egypt* (1981), sections 2 (Predynastic).
- Explore the [Hierakonpolis Online](#) website

Class 2.3 Rise of Pharaonic State

Required readings:

- Redford, *A History of Ancient Egypt*, chapter 3 (Advent of complex society and rise of the pharaonic state).
- Smith, *The Art and Architecture of Ancient Egypt* (1981), section 3 (Dynasties 1 & 2).

Week 3

9/7: NO CLASS (LABOR DAY)

Class 3.1 The High Old Kingdom 1

Required readings:

- Redford, *A History of Ancient Egypt*, chapter 4 (Dynasties 3 & 4).

Class 3.2 The High Old Kingdom 2

Required readings:

- Watch the videos on the Giza cemetery and the Great Pyramids in Ed Discussion.
- Smith, *The Art and Architecture of Ancient Egypt* (1981), sections 4 & 5 (Dynasties 3 & 4).

Week 4

Class 4.1 Collapse of the Old Kingdom

Required readings:

- Redford, *A History of Ancient Egypt*, chapter 5 (Collapse of the OK and the regime of Herakleopolis).
- Smith, *The Art and Architecture of Ancient Egypt* (1981), sections 6 & 7 (Dynasties 5 & 6).

Class 4.2 Transition to the First Intermediate Period

Required readings:

- Smith, *The Art and Architecture of Ancient Egypt* (1981), sections 8 (First Intermediate Period).
- Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature I* (2006), 84-85 (Stela of Count Indi of This), 85 (Autobiography of Ankhthifi), 88-89 (Stela of Iti), 89-90 (Stela of Seneni), 90 (Stela of Qedes), 90-93 (Stela of Tjetji), 97 (Instructions for Merikare).

Class 4.3 Middle Kingdom 1

Required readings:

- Redford, *A History of Ancient Egypt*, chapter 6 (Middle Kingdom).

Week 5

Class 5.1 Middle Kingdom 2

Required readings:

- Smith, *The Art and Architecture of Ancient Egypt* (1981), sections 9 & 10.

Class 5.2 Middle Kingdom and the Outside World

Required readings:

- Smith, *The Art and Architecture of Ancient Egypt* (1981), section 11 (Minor arts and foreign relations).
- Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature I* (2006), 211 (Shipwrecked Sailor), 222 (Story of Sinuhe).

Class 5.3 Second Intermediate Period 1

Required readings:

- Redford, *A History of Ancient Egypt*, chapter 7 (Decline of the Middle Kingdom and the Hyksos Conquest).
- Smith, *The Art and Architecture of Ancient Egypt* (1981), section 12 (Second Intermediate Period).

Week 6

Class 6.1 Second Intermediate Period 2

Required readings:

- Bourriau, "The Second Intermediate Period (c.1650-1550 BC)," in *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt* (2000), 172–206.

Class 6.2 Rise of the New Kingdom 1

Required readings:

- Redford, *A History of Ancient Egypt*, chapter 8 (Rise of the Egyptian empire).

Class 6.3 Rise of the New Kingdom 2

Required readings:

- Smith, *The Art and Architecture of Ancient Egypt* (1981), section 13 (Early 18th Dynasty).

Week 7

Class 7.1 Mid-18th Dynasty and the Amarna Period

Required readings:

- Redford, *A History of Ancient Egypt*, chapter 9 (Monarchy in crisis).
- Smith, *The Art and Architecture of Ancient Egypt* (1981), section 16 (Change to Amarna).

Class 7.2 Mid-18th Dynasty Art

Required readings:

- Smith, *The Art and Architecture of Ancient Egypt* (1981), sections 14 & 15 (mid-18th Dynasty).
- Cline & Stannish, "Amenhotep III's 'Aegean List' from Kom El- Hetan, Once More," *JAEI* 3, no. 2 (2011): 6–16.

Class 7.3 Ancient Egypt in Modern Imagination 1

Recommended readings and watch lists:

- Abraham I. Fernández Pichel, ed., *How Pharaohs Became Media Stars: Ancient Egypt and Popular Culture*, Archaeopress Egyptology 48 (Summertown, Oxford: Archaeopress Publishing Ltd, 2023). [[Open Access](#)]
- Elliott Colla, *Conflicted Antiquities: Egyptology, Egyptomania, Egyptian Modernity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008). [[Open Access](#)]
- Rune Nyord, *Yearning for Immortality: The European Invention of the Ancient Egyptian Afterlife* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2025). [[Open Access](#)]
- Miguel J. Versluys, ed., *Beyond Egyptomania: Objects, Style and Agency* (De Gruyter, 2020). [[Open Access](#)]
- Elliott Colla, *Conflicted Antiquities: Egyptology, Egyptomania, Egyptian Modernity* (Durham, N. C.: Duke University Press, 2007). [[Open Access](#)]
- Eleanor Dobson, *Victorian Alchemy: Science, Magic and Ancient Egypt* (UCL Press, 2022). [[Open Access](#)]
- Sally MacDonald and Michael Rice, *Consuming Ancient Egypt, Encounters With Ancient Egypt* (Walnut Creek: Routledge, 2010). [[Open Access](#)]
- Scott Trafton and Donald E. Pease, *Egypt Land: Race and Nineteenth-Century American Egyptomania* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004). [[Open Access](#)]
- Movies and TV shows: Cleopatra (1963), The Mummy movie series, Stargate, The Prince of Egypt (1998), Gods of Egypt (2016), Moon Knight (Marvel)
- Games: The Assassin's Creed: Origins, Age of Mythology, Tomb Raider: The Last Revelation

Week 8

Class 8.1 Ancient Egypt in Modern Imagination 2

Class 8.2 Ancient Egypt in Modern Imagination 3

Class 8.3 Student Presentation Project Workshop

Week 9

Class 9.1 The Amarna Period

Required readings:

- Smith, *The Art and Architecture of Ancient Egypt* (1981), section 17 (The Amarna Period).
- Cohen and Westbrook, “Introduction,” in *Amarna Diplomacy* (2000), 1–12.

Class 9.2 Late 18th Dynasty: Reaction to Amarna and the Dahamunzu Affair

Required readings:

- Aidan Dodson, “The Death of Tutankhamun and Its Aftermath,” in *Tutankhamun, King of Egypt: His Life and Afterlife*, Lives and Afterlives (2022), 89–96. [[Open Access](#)]
- Bryce, “The Death of Niphururiya and Its Aftermath,” *JEA* 76, no. 1 (1990): 97–105.

Class 9.3 Early Ramesside Period 1

Required readings:

- Redford, *A History of Ancient Egypt*, chapter 10 (Reaction against Egypt and the Hittite war).
- Watch the ISAC lecture: The Battle of Kadesh: A Debate

Week 10

Class 10.1 Early Ramesside Period 2

Required readings:

- Redford, *A History of Ancient Egypt*, chapter 11 (Ramesses the Great).

Class 10.2 Egypt and the Outside World

Required readings:

- Shaw, “Egypt and the Outside World,” in *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt* (2000), 308–23.
- Read about the excavation of the Uluburun Shipwreck

Class 10.3 Decline of the New Kingdom

Required readings:

- Redford, *A History of Ancient Egypt*, chapter 12 (Decline of the New Kingdom).

Week 11

Class 11.1 The Ramesside Period: Art, Architecture, and Literature

Required readings:

- Smith, *The Art and Architecture of Ancient Egypt* (1981), section 19 (Ramesside period).

Class 11.2 The Libyan Period

Required readings:

- Redford, *A History of Ancient Egypt*, chapter 13 (Libyan kings).
- Smith, *The Art and Architecture of Ancient Egypt* (1981), section 20 (Period of decline).

Class 11.3 The Kushite Dynasty and Assyrian Rule

Required readings:

- Redford, *A History of Ancient Egypt*, chapter 15 (Kush, Assyria, and the struggle for Egypt).
- Taylor, “The Third Intermediate Period,” in *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt* (2000), 345–54.

Week 12

Class 12.1 26th Dynasty

Required readings:

- Redford, *A History of Ancient Egypt*, chapter 16 (Dynasty 26).
- Roger Forshaw, *Egypt of the Saite Pharaohs, 664-525 BC* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019), 200–6. [[Open Access](#)]

Class 12.2 Kushite and Saite Revival

Required readings:

- Smith, *The Art and Architecture of Ancient Egypt* (1981), section 21 (The Kushite and Saite revival, end of Dynastic Egypt).

Class 12.3 Egypt under the Persians

Required readings:

- Redford, *A History of Ancient Egypt*, chapter 17 (Egypt under Persian rule).
- Stephen Ruzicka, “Managing Egypt, 518–415,” in *Trouble in the West: Egypt and the Persian Empire, 525-332 BC*, ed. Stephen Ruzicka (Oxford University Press, 2012), 26–34. [[Open Access](#)]

Week 13

Class 13.1 Egypt under the Ptolemies

Required readings:

- Redford, *A History of Ancient Egypt*, chapter 18 (Egypt under the Ptolemies).

Class 13.2 Evolution of the Egyptian Belief System 1

Required readings:

- Redford, *A History of Ancient Egypt*, chapter 14 (Evolution of the Egyptian belief system).

Class 13.3 Evolution of the Egyptian Belief System 2

Required readings:

- Selections from the Pyramid Texts, Coffin Texts, and Book of the Dead

11/22 – 11/28 NO CLASS (THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY)

Week 14

Class 14.1 Student Presentations

Class 14.2 Student Presentations

Class 14.3 Student Presentations

Week 15

Class 15.1 Student Presentations

Class 15.2 Student Presentations

Class 15.3 Student Presentations

12/12 – 12/13 Study Days

12/14– 12/18 FINAL EXAM WEEK