ANCIENT MESOPOTAMIA
History and Culture
Fall 2005

Instructor: N. Yoffee (Office hours: Frieze Bldg, rm B-188. T 2:30-3:30, W 11-12, Th 2:30-3:30, or by appointment - nyoffee@umich.edu) GSI Nathan Ritter (Office hrs: TBA rittern@umich.edu)

Lectures: T Th 11:30-1:00 Mason Hall 1401

Course description: Sumerian, Babylonian, and Assyrian civilization from the first cuneiform documents (ca. 3100 BC) to the fall of the Neo-Babylonian empire (539 BC); special attention to issues of social and political organization.

Major topics: Rise of first city-states, writing systems and literacy, social and economic change, law, Mesopotamia and its neighbors, the collapse of Mesopotamian civilization.

Undergrad requirements: 2 mid-term exams (15% each), final exam (30%), 2 short essays (8 pages [2500 words] maximum, 20% each); twice weekly questions for instructor (1/3 letter grade credit). See below for term paper instructions.

Grad student requirements: 2 take-home essays/book reviews (20% each), term paper (20 page minimum, 60%)

Tentative lectures:
1. Introduction to course. Problem-orientation. The past and the present in Iraq
2. Geography, environment, peoples
3. The evolution of civilization. An overview of Mesopotamian prehistory through the Ubaid period.
4. The first cities and states. Uruk archaeology, writing, stratification, the Uruk expansion.
5. Early Dynastic period. City-states and Mesopotamian civilization.
7. The Third Dynasty of Ur. Bureaucracy and the state.
8. The best of times, the worst of times. Economics, politics, social organization in the Ur III period
9. Discussion (optional—Jewish holiday)
10. Level and trend in the 3rd millennium B.C.
11. In-class examination
12. No class (Jewish holiday)
13. No class (Fall study day)
14. Old Assyrian period: Politics
15. Old Assyrian period: Long-distance trade, merchants, and the state
16. Early Old Babylonian period. Isin-Larsa period
17. The first dynasty of Babylon. Hammurabi, nomads and the state
18. Mesopotamian law. Law codes and legal cases.
20. Collapse of the Old Babylonian state
22. Middle Babylonian period (Kassites), Middle Assyrian period
24. International relations. End of the “old order.”
25. Neo-Assyrian politics and economy
27. Neo-Babylonian state.
28. The collapse of Mesopotamian civilization.

Textbooks
Available for purchase in Shaman Drum bookstore is *A History of the Ancient Near East* by Marc Van De Mieroop (2004), which is the basic textbook for the class. (In the assigned readings, this is referred to as MVDM).

**Essays**

Students will write two short essays, 8 pages maximum each (not including bibliography). Essay topics will be chosen in consultation with the instructor and gsi. This course can fulfill the undergraduate writing requirement. See gsi/Sweetland Center to receive credit for this course.

**First essay.** Students meet with the gsi/instructor before Oct. 10 to discuss a possible topic for the first essay. The topic of the first essay must be chosen (in writing) by Oct. 17. A list of sources and an outline for the essay must be submitted by Oct. 31. The outline of the first essay and the list of sources will be critiqued by the gsi/instructor both in meetings with students and in writing. The first essay is due (in hard copy) before Nov. 14. The first essay will be returned to students within one week of submission. Students may rewrite their essays in response to critiques, and grades may be adjusted on the basis of the revisions.

The second essay is due before the last day of class. The choice of topic is due before Nov. 14 but earlier is better. An outline and list of sources must be submitted for the second essay before Nov. 21. Critiques of the outline and sources will be returned to students before the Thanksgiving vacation.

**Check-list of essay submission dates and procedures:**

- Oct 10 (or before) meet with instructor, gsi about topic
- Oct 17 submit topic
- Oct 31 submit outline of first essay and list of sources
- Nov 7 (or before) receive critique/feedback from instructor, gsi
- Nov 14 submit first essay
- Nov 14 (or before) meet with instructor/gsi about topic for second essay
- Nov 21 (or before) receive 1st essay/grade from instructor/gsi; options for re-writing
- Nov 21 (or before) outline of second essay and a list of sources
- Before Thanksgiving receive critique/feedback from instructor, gsi
- Dec 1 Re-written first essays due
- Before last day of classes submit 2nd essay

**Note on sources:**

- 5 sources minimum are expected for each essay. Write 2-3 sentences in your bibliography about what you learned from each source.
- No web sites can be considered as sources—unless they are approved by the instructor or gsi.
- The gsi will provide instructions on how to find sources, how to write footnotes and bibliography.

Students are expected to abide by university policy not to copy in whole or in part essays from
web sources or to receive assistance in the writing of their essays from anyone other than the instructor and gsi.

**Essay topics** fall within three categories: *persons, peoples, and themes*. Recommendations are given below, but students may suggest to the instructor and gsi their own topics within these categories. Students must choose their essay topics from two of these categories. Further, each category is divided into three time periods. Students must choose their topics from two different time periods. (For example: essay 1 = Naram-Sin (3rd mill.), essay 2 = women in the 2nd mill. B.C.).

Note: Prof. P. Michalowski teaches a course in ACABS on Mesopotamian literature and religion; consequently topics on Mesopotamian mythology, epics, and the like are not listed for this history course.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Persons</th>
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<th>Themes</th>
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<td><strong>(3rd millennium)</strong></td>
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<td>Ur-Namma</td>
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| | **(2nd mill.)** | | **(2nd mill.)** |
| | | | |
| **(3rd millennium)** | | | |
| Hammurabi | Amorites | law |
| Shamshi-Adad | Sealand dynasty | women |
| Tukulti-Ninurta | Hittites | trade |
| Shupiluliuma | Hurrians | nomads |
| Hattushili III | Mittannians | |
| | Kassites | |
| | Elamites | |

| | **(1st mill.)** | | **(1st mill.)** |
| | | | |
| **(3rd millennium)** | | | |
| Nebuchadnezzar II | Urartians | Assyrian capitals |
| Nabonidus | Persians | Israel and Assyria |
| Cyrus | Chaldeans | collapse of |
| Assyria/Babylonia | | Assyrian royal court |
| Ashurbanipal | | mathematics/astronomy |
| Ashurnasirpal II | | |
Undergrad questions following each lecture:

It is important for our relatively large class that I can gauge what interests or troubles you have about the lectures. Your feedback will help me design better lectures and tie up loose ends. Your engagement with the lecture material is also enhanced by this exercise. Consequently, comments and questions are now required by every student after every lecture. They are due before midnight the day on the day the lecture is given. Send the comments/questions to Nathan Ritter via c-tools.

Nathan Ritter will record your compliance with the assignment and note particularly useful comments/questions. For those who submit at least 20 sets of comments/questions, at least 6 of which are considered appropriate and useful (by Nathan's reasonably liberal standard), a rise of 1/3 letter grade for the course will be applied. (This should be a powerful incentive for doing this assignment well). For those who do not submit 20 comments/questions, or whose questions are not considered relevant/useful a subtraction of 1/3 letter grade will be considered.

Section attendance

Attendance in sections is mandatory. Not only is Nathan going to discuss matters raised in readings and lectures, but he will also bring translations of various texts (literary texts, royal inscriptions, contracts, law suits, etc) for discussion. Poor attendance in sections will result in subtraction of 1/3 letter grade.

Meetings with students

I shall meet all students in my office early in the term in order to get to know your interests and backgrounds a bit, and perhaps to begin thinking of appropriate essay topics. I shall pass around a sign-up sheet with times in 10-minute intervals for my office hours (T and Th 2:30-3:30, W 11-12). As many as 3 students can sign up for one time. Think about what times will be convenient for you.

Lecture outlines

I shall send via email or c-tools a lecture outline the night before the lecture. Please check your email the night before the lecture or early in the day before the hour of the lecture to get this lecture outline. Print the outline and bring it to class so that you will be able to follow the lecture and also have a spelling guide to the names discussed in the lecture.
Provisional lecture schedule and reading list

Note: required readings in the textbook are listed for each lecture and should be read before the lecture. Other, extended readings are found in the Shapiro library’s electronic reserve facility. Students can download these readings or read them online. Some books are on physical reserve in the Shapiro’s reserve book room.

1. T, Sept. 6   Introduction to course. Problem orientation. The past and the present in Iraq

2. Th, Sept 8   Geography, environment, peoples

   MVDM (= textbook), pp. 1-16

   A.L. Oppenheim

   S. Pollock

3. T, Sept. 13  The evolution of civilization. An overview of Mesopotamian prehistory through the Ubaid period

   R. Matthews

4. Th, Sept. 15 The first cities and states. Uruk archaeology, writing, stratification, the Uruk expansion

   MVDM, pp. 19-38

   S. Pollock
   1999   *Ancient Mesopotamia: The Eden that Never Was*, pp. 93-116, 149-172

   J. Cooper
5. T, Sept. 20 **Early Dynastic period. City-states and Mesopotamian civilization**

MVDM, pp. 39-58

P Michalowski


MVDM, pp. 59-69

P. Michalowski

M. Van De Mieroop

7. T, Sept. 27 **Third Dynasty of Ur. Bureaucracy and the State.**

MVDM, pp. 69-79

8. Th, Sept 29 **The best of times the worst of times. Economics and social organization in the Ur III period**

T. Jones

P. Steinkeller

9. T, Oct. 4 **Discussion** (Jewish holiday—attendance optional)

10. Th, Oct. 6 **Level and trend in the 3rd mill. B.C.**
I. J. Gelb

I.M. Diakonoff

11. T, Oct. 11 In-class mid-term exam

12. Th, Oct 13 No class (Jewish holiday)

13. T, Oct. 18 No class (Fall study day)

MVDM, pp. 89-104

M.T. Larsen
1977 The Old Assyrian City-State and its Colonies. Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag (read pp. 27-84)

K.R. Veenhof

15. T, Oct. 25 Old Assyrian Trade

Marc Van De Mieroop
1999 Cuneiform Texts and the Writing of History. (See above), pp. 92-98

16. Th, Oct. 27 Early Old Babylonian period. Isin-Larsa period

MVDM, pp. 81-89

M. Van de Mieroop

V. Donbaz and N. Yoffee
17. T, Nov. 1 **Hammurabi and the first dynasty of Babylon. Mari. Nomads and OB states**

MVDM, pp. 104-112

J. Sasson

J. Margueron
1995 Mari: A Portrait in Art of a Mesopotamian City-State. In J. Sasson and others, eds. (cited above), pp. 885-900

R. Whiting
1995 Amorite Tribes and Nations of Second-Millennium Western Asia. In Sasson and others, pp. 1231-1242

18. Th, Nov. 3 **Mesopotamian law. Law codes and legal cases**

N. Yoffee

R. Westbrook

M. Roth
1995 *Law Collections from Mesopotamia and Asia Minor*. Atlanta: Scholars Press (read pp. 1-10)

19. T, Nov. 8 **Remarkable Old Babylonian women. Economic, religious, and social behavior and status**

R. Harris

N. Yoffee
1998 The Economics of Ritual in Old Babylonian Kish. *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 41: 310-343

R. Harris
20. Th, Nov. 10 **Collapse of the Old Babylonian State**

N. Yoffee  


21. T, Nov. 15 **Discussion. Take-home examination question distributed.**  
**Due Friday, Nov. 18**

22. Th, Nov. 17 **Mesopotamia and the North: Hurrians, Mittannians, Hittites**

MVDM, pp. 112-160

(Notable readings)

21. T, Nov. 22 **Middle Babylonian period (Kassites) and Middle Assyrian periods.**

MVDM, pp. 161-178

W. Sommerfeld  
1995 *The Kassites of Ancient Mesopotamia. Origins, Politics, and Culture*

Th, Nov. 24 **Thanksgiving vacation**

24. T, Nov. 29 **International relations. End of the Old Order**

MVDM, pp. 179-194

W. van Soldt  
1995 *Ugarit: A Second Millennium Kingdom on the Mediterranean Coast: Thirteenth To Tenth Centuries BCE*. In J. Sasson and others, eds., pp. 1255-1266

23. Th, Dec. 1 **Neo-Assyrian Politics and Economy**

MVDM, pp. 197-252

26. T, Dec. 6 **Israel and the Assyrians. Collapse of the Neo-Assyrian state**

N. Yoffee  
1988 The Collapses of Ancient Mesopotamian States and Civilization. In *The Collapse*

M.T. Larsen

P. Machinist

27. Th, Dec. 8 Neo-Babylonian state

MVDM, pp. 253-256

P-A Beaulieu
1995 King Nabonidus and the Neo-Babylonian Empire. In J. Sasson and others, eds., pp. 969-980

28. T, Dec. 13 The end of Mesopotamian states and civilization

MVDM, pp. 267-280
(Extended readings)

FINAL EXAM, Friday, Dec. 16, 1:30-3:30