

# Middle Eastern Languages and Cultures

Instruction in the Department of Middle Eastern Languages and Cultures covers a wide range of textual and material sources from the Middle East, understood broadly, ranging from antiquity to modernity. Languages taught in the department include the following. Ancient: Ancient Egyptian (hieroglyphic, hieratic, demotic), Sumerian, Akkadian, Eblaite, Ugaritic, Aramaic (biblical, Babylonian, imperial, Syriac), Hebrew (biblical, inscriptional), Avestan, Old Persian, Middle Persian, Parthian, Bactrian, Sogdian. Medieval to Modern: Classical Arabic, Classical Persian, Modern Standard Arabic, spoken dialectal Arabic, modern Hebrew, Persian, and Turkish.

The department's courses may also serve to enhance programs in related fields such as anthropology, linguistics, history of art, history, political science, comparative literature, and folklore. Lecture courses offered by the department present a comprehensive body of information on past (Near Eastern) and present (Middle Eastern) civilizations. Many of the courses taught in the department are restricted to a small number of students and thus afford an opportunity for close interaction with the instructing staff.

Cooperative arrangements between the University and the nearby Graduate Theological Union (GTU) enable students in the Department to use the extensive library holdings of the GTU and to supplement their programs with additional courses in Syro-Palestinian archaeology, Biblical studies, and Semitic epigraphy and philology.

## Libraries

The four MELC library spaces play an essential role in the Department of Middle Eastern Languages and Cultures, and are indispensable for student research. The libraries house reference materials and function as reading and seminar rooms for students and faculty. All MELC libraries are non-circulating. For details on the Department libraries, see [melc.berkeley.edu/libraries](https://melc.berkeley.edu/libraries) (<https://melc.berkeley.edu/libraries/>).

The Islamic Studies Library contains references and other materials relating to Islamic Studies and Arabic, Persian, and Turkish languages and literatures, and incorporates the Mahjoub Persian Library. The Hebrew/Semitics library includes reference volumes and other works relating to the fields of Comparative Semitics, and Hebrew and Judaic studies. Access—apart from seminar classes—is generally limited to graduate students in the Department. The Cuneiform Seminar Room is a library that provides a wide range of reference works, text editions, and primary sources for the study of the Ancient Near East, including Sumerian, Akkadian, Hittite, Archaeology, and Art History.

The Baer-Keller Library of Egyptology is a large collection of Egyptological volumes maintained by the MELC Department primarily for the use of UC Berkeley students and faculty pursuing serious study of Egyptology. Egyptology students and professionals from other institutions are also welcome to use the collection on a temporary basis; interested individuals should apply to the MELC Department for access. The core of the library collection comes from bequests to the Department by Professors Klaus Baer (1987) and Cathleen (Candy) Keller (2008). Professor Baer was an Associate Professor of Egyptology and History at UC Berkeley before becoming a Professor of Egyptology at the Oriental

Institute, University of Chicago. Professor Keller was an Associate Professor of Egyptology at UC Berkeley for many years.

## Research

The Phoebe Hearst Museum of Anthropology (<http://hearstmuseum.berkeley.edu/>) has extensive holdings of ancient artifacts, including Classical material, cuneiform tablets, and an ancient Egyptian collection of more than 17,000 objects.

The Tebtunis Papyri (<http://tebtunis.berkeley.edu/index/>) consist of the papyrus documents that were found in the winter of 1899/1900 at the site of ancient Tebtunis, Egypt. The expedition to Tebtunis, led by the British archaeologists Bernard Grenfell and Arthur Hunt, was financed for the University of California by Mrs. Phoebe Apperson Hearst. The Tebtunis Papyri is the largest collection of papyrus documents from a single site in the United States. Although the collection has never been counted and inventoried completely, the number of fragments contained in it exceeds 21,000.

The department's Cuneiform Seminar Room houses two Open Richly Annotated Cuneiform Corpus (ORACC) (<http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/>) projects: the Digital Corpus of Cuneiform Lexical Texts (DCCLT) (<http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/dcclt/>) under the directorship of Niek Veldhuis (<https://vcresearch.berkeley.edu/faculty/niek-velhuis/>) and Hellenistic Babylonian Texts Images and Names (HBTIN) (<http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/hbtin/>) directed by Laurie Pearce. Dr. Pearce also heads another digital database project, the Berkeley Prosopography Service (BPS) (<http://berkeleyprosopography.org/>).

Other helpful resources can be found on the MELC research (<https://melc.berkeley.edu/research/>) page and those linked to our affiliated programs (<https://melc.berkeley.edu/about/affiliated-programs/>).

Colloquia, Seminars, and Lectures

The MELC Brown Bag Talks are a series of informal papers presented at noon in 254 Social Sciences Building. Visit our News and Events page for more information: [melc.berkeley.edu/news-events](https://melc.berkeley.edu/news-events/) (<https://melc.berkeley.edu/news-events/>).

## Undergraduate Programs

Middle Eastern Languages and Cultures (<https://guide.berkeley.edu/archive/2024-25/undergraduate/degree-programs/middle-eastern-languages-cultures/>): BA (with a specialization in Languages and Literature, or Middle Eastern Worlds.)

Arabic (<https://guide.berkeley.edu/archive/2024-25/undergraduate/degree-programs/arabic/>): Minor  
 Hebrew (<https://guide.berkeley.edu/archive/2024-25/undergraduate/degree-programs/hebrew/>): Minor  
 Persian (<https://guide.berkeley.edu/archive/2024-25/undergraduate/degree-programs/persian/>): Minor  
 Turkish (<https://guide.berkeley.edu/archive/2024-25/undergraduate/degree-programs/turkish/>): Minor

## Graduate Programs

Middle Eastern (<https://guide.berkeley.edu/archive/2024-25/archive/2021-22/graduate/degree-programs/near-eastern-studies/>)  
 Languages and Cultures (<https://guide.berkeley.edu/archive/2024-25/graduate/degree-programs/middle-eastern-languages-cultures/>): PhD, MA (with concentrations in Arabic, Hebrew, and Persian language and

literatures, Middle Eastern Art and Archaeology, Cuneiform Studies, Egyptology, Ancient Iranian Studies, and Islamic Studies.)

## MELC 200 Graduate Proseminar 1 Unit

Terms offered: Prior to 2007

Introduction to the academic profession of Middle Eastern Languages and Cultures. This course will survey the various disciplines and subfields contained under this rubric, including their developmental histories, methodologies, and primary and secondary data sources. Enrollment in this course is required of all graduate students during their first year of study.

### Rules & Requirements

**Credit Restrictions:** Students will receive no credit for NE STUD 200 after completing NE STUD 200. A deficient grade in NE STUD 200 may be removed by taking NE STUD 200.

### Hours & Format

**Fall and/or spring:** 15 weeks - 1-2 hours of seminar per week

### Additional Details

**Subject/Course Level:** Middle Eastern Languages and Cultures/ Graduate

**Grading:** Letter grade.

**Formerly known as:** Near Eastern Studies 200

## MELC 202 Fields, Methods and Current Trends in Ancient Egyptian and Middle Eastern Studies 2 - 4 Units

Terms offered: Prior to 2007

An introduction to the diversity of fields and disciplines that comprise ancient Egyptian and Middle Eastern Studies, including current and traditional methods and trends. Designed for candidates for higher degrees in Middle Eastern Studies and related programs.

### Rules & Requirements

**Prerequisites:** Consent of instructor

### Hours & Format

**Fall and/or spring:** 15 weeks - 3-3 hours of seminar per week

### Additional Details

**Subject/Course Level:** Middle Eastern Languages and Cultures/ Graduate

**Grading:** The grading option will be decided by the instructor when the class is offered.

**Formerly known as:** Near Eastern Studies 202

## MELC 205 Using Cuneiform Texts in Research 3 Units

Terms offered: Prior to 2007

This seminar is meant for graduate students who wish to use cuneiform texts (in original or in translation) for their research. The most general question that we will ask is: how does a text produce meaningful information? The seminar is organized around three tasks: evaluation of secondary literature, methodological reflection on the use of texts, and using cuneiform texts in a scholarly paper.

### Rules & Requirements

**Prerequisites:** Basic knowledge (at least one year) of a cuneiform language

**Repeat rules:** Course may be repeated for credit with instructor consent.

### Hours & Format

**Fall and/or spring:** 15 weeks - 3 hours of seminar per week

### Additional Details

**Subject/Course Level:** Middle Eastern Languages and Cultures/ Graduate

**Grading:** Letter grade.

**Formerly known as:** Near Eastern Studies 205

## MELC C220 Seminar in Middle Eastern Art 2 or 4 Units

Terms offered: Fall 2012

Seminar on critical aspects of Middle Eastern art requiring intensive study and presentation of a research paper. Topics vary from semester to semester.

### Rules & Requirements

**Repeat rules:** Course may be repeated for credit without restriction.

### Hours & Format

**Fall and/or spring:** 15 weeks - 3-3 hours of seminar per week

### Additional Details

**Subject/Course Level:** Middle Eastern Languages and Cultures/ Graduate

**Grading:** Letter grade.

**Formerly known as:** Near Eastern Studies C220/History of Art C220

**Also listed as:** HISTART C220

## MELC 223 Seminar in Middle Eastern Archaeology 2 or 4 Units

Terms offered: Fall 2025, Spring 2024, Spring 2023

Seminar on critical aspects of Middle Eastern archaeology requiring intensive study and presentation of a research paper and oral report.

Topics vary from semester to semester.

### Rules & Requirements

**Credit Restrictions:** Students will receive no credit for NE STUD 223 after completing NE STUD 223B, or NE STUD 223A.

**Repeat rules:** Course may be repeated for credit without restriction.

### Hours & Format

**Fall and/or spring:** 15 weeks - 3-3 hours of seminar per week

### Additional Details

**Subject/Course Level:** Middle Eastern Languages and Cultures/ Graduate

**Grading:** Letter grade.

**Formerly known as:** Near Eastern Studies 223

## MELC 290A Special Studies: Middle Eastern Languages and Cultures 1 - 5 Units

Terms offered: Prior to 2007

Students may enroll in more than one section of 290, but the total number of units of Special Study in any one semester may not exceed 12.

### Rules & Requirements

**Prerequisites:** Consent of instructor

**Repeat rules:** Course may be repeated for credit without restriction.

### Hours & Format

**Fall and/or spring:** 15 weeks - 0-0 hours of independent study per week

### Summer:

6 weeks - 2.5-12.5 hours of independent study per week

8 weeks - 1.5-9 hours of independent study per week

### Additional Details

**Subject/Course Level:** Middle Eastern Languages and Cultures/ Graduate

**Grading:** Letter grade.

**Formerly known as:** Near Eastern Studies 290A

## MELC 290B Special Studies: Arabic 1 - 5 Units

Terms offered: Fall 2024, Spring 2024, Spring 2023

Students may enroll in more than one section of 290, but the total number of units of Special Study in any one semester may not exceed 12.

### Rules & Requirements

**Prerequisites:** Consent of instructor

**Repeat rules:** Course may be repeated for credit without restriction.

### Hours & Format

**Fall and/or spring:** 15 weeks - 1-2 hours of independent study per week

### Summer:

6 weeks - 2.5-12.5 hours of independent study per week

8 weeks - 1.5-9 hours of independent study per week

### Additional Details

**Subject/Course Level:** Middle Eastern Languages and Cultures/ Graduate

**Grading:** Letter grade.

**Formerly known as:** Near Eastern Studies 290B

## MELC 290C Special Studies: Cuneiform 1 - 5 Units

Terms offered: Prior to 2007

Students may enroll in more than one section of 290, but the total number of units of Special Study in any one semester may not exceed 12.

### Rules & Requirements

**Prerequisites:** Consent of instructor

**Repeat rules:** Course may be repeated for credit without restriction.

### Hours & Format

**Fall and/or spring:** 15 weeks - 1-2 hours of independent study per week

**Summer:** 8 weeks - 1.5-9 hours of independent study per week

### Additional Details

**Subject/Course Level:** Middle Eastern Languages and Cultures/ Graduate

**Grading:** Letter grade.

**Formerly known as:** Near Eastern Studies 290C

## MELC 290D Special Studies: Egyptian 1 - 5 Units

Terms offered: Spring 2022

Students may enroll in more than one section of 290, but the total number of units of Special Study in any one semester may not exceed 12.

### Rules & Requirements

**Prerequisites:** Consent of instructor

**Repeat rules:** Course may be repeated for credit without restriction.

### Hours & Format

**Fall and/or spring:** 15 weeks - 1.5-9 hours of independent study per week

**Summer:** 8 weeks - 1.5-9 hours of independent study per week

### Additional Details

**Subject/Course Level:** Middle Eastern Languages and Cultures/  
Graduate

**Grading:** Letter grade.

**Formerly known as:** Near Eastern Studies 290D

## MELC 290E Special Studies: Hebrew 1 - 5 Units

Terms offered: Prior to 2007

Students may enroll in more than one section of 290, but the total number of units of Special Study in any one semester may not exceed 12.

### Rules & Requirements

**Prerequisites:** Consent of instructor

**Repeat rules:** Course may be repeated for credit without restriction.

### Hours & Format

**Fall and/or spring:** 15 weeks - 1-2 hours of independent study per week

**Summer:** 8 weeks - 1.5-9 hours of independent study per week

### Additional Details

**Subject/Course Level:** Middle Eastern Languages and Cultures/  
Graduate

**Grading:** Letter grade.

**Formerly known as:** Near Eastern Studies 290E

## MELC 290F Special Studies: Persian 1 - 5 Units

Terms offered: Prior to 2007

Students may enroll in more than one section of 290, but the total number of units of Special Study in any one semester may not exceed 12.

### Rules & Requirements

**Prerequisites:** Consent of instructor

**Repeat rules:** Course may be repeated for credit when topic changes.

### Hours & Format

**Fall and/or spring:** 15 weeks - 1-5 hours of independent study per week

**Summer:** 8 weeks - 1.5-9 hours of independent study per week

### Additional Details

**Subject/Course Level:** Middle Eastern Languages and Cultures/  
Graduate

**Grading:** Letter grade.

**Formerly known as:** Near Eastern Studies 290F

## MELC 290G Special Studies: Semitics 1 - 5 Units

Terms offered: Prior to 2007

Students may enroll in more than one section of 290, but the total number of units of Special Study in any one semester may not exceed 12.

### Rules & Requirements

**Prerequisites:** Consent of instructor

**Repeat rules:** Course may be repeated for credit without restriction.

### Hours & Format

**Fall and/or spring:** 15 weeks - 1-2 hours of independent study per week

**Summer:** 8 weeks - 1.5-9 hours of independent study per week

### Additional Details

**Subject/Course Level:** Middle Eastern Languages and Cultures/  
Graduate

**Grading:** Letter grade.

**Formerly known as:** Near Eastern Studies 290G

## MELC 290H Special Studies: Turkish 1 - 5 Units

Terms offered: Prior to 2007

Students may enroll in more than one section of 290, but the total number of units of Special Study in any one semester may not exceed 12.

### Rules & Requirements

**Prerequisites:** Consent of instructor

**Repeat rules:** Course may be repeated for credit without restriction.

### Hours & Format

**Fall and/or spring:** 15 weeks - 1-2 hours of independent study per week

**Summer:** 8 weeks - 1.5-9 hours of independent study per week

### Additional Details

**Subject/Course Level:** Middle Eastern Languages and Cultures/ Graduate

**Grading:** Letter grade.

**Formerly known as:** Near Eastern Studies 290H

## MELC 291 Dissertation Writing Workshop 4 Units

Terms offered: Spring 2025, Spring 2022, Fall 2021

A faculty member will oversee the group, offering guidance and making sure guidelines are followed. Students will manage the group's day-to-day operations. At least one week before each meeting a student will pre-circulate a draft of a chapter. During the meeting, students will give feedback on the draft. This feedback will be used to revise the chapter, which will be due at the end of the semester. The workshop is open to graduate students from other departments who are writing on topics associated with Near Eastern Studies.

### Rules & Requirements

**Prerequisites:** Advancement to candidacy, limited to students engaged in research for and writing of the doctoral dissertation

**Repeat rules:** Course may be repeated for credit without restriction.

### Hours & Format

**Fall and/or spring:** 15 weeks - 2 hours of workshop and 1.5 hours of directed group study per week

### Additional Details

**Subject/Course Level:** Middle Eastern Languages and Cultures/ Graduate

**Grading:** Letter grade.

**Formerly known as:** Near Eastern Studies 291

## MELC 292 Museum Internship 4 Units

Terms offered: Spring 2025, Spring 2024, Spring 2023

Jointly supervised by a professional staff of a participating museum and a faculty member in the Art and Archaeology division of the Department of Middle Eastern Languages and Cultures.

### Rules & Requirements

**Repeat rules:** Course may be repeated for credit without restriction.

### Hours & Format

**Fall and/or spring:** 15 weeks - 10-12 hours of internship per week

### Summer:

6 weeks - 24-35 hours of internship per week

8 weeks - 18-26 hours of internship per week

### Additional Details

**Subject/Course Level:** Middle Eastern Languages and Cultures/ Graduate

**Grading:** Offered for satisfactory/unsatisfactory grade only.

**Formerly known as:** Near Eastern Studies 292

## MELC N295 Supervised Field Research in Archaeology 2 - 8 Units

Terms offered: Prior to 2007

Full time participation in an archaeological excavation or exploratory survey, preceded by three hours of seminar per week for one half of one semester, at the discretion of the instructor. Students will participate in all aspects of the operation and will be responsible for preparing a written report on some specific part of the work. Geographical areas and sites to be determined each year. Students taking the seminar only will receive 2 units only.

### Rules & Requirements

**Credit Restrictions:** Students will receive no credit for NE STUD N295 after completing NE STUD 295. A deficient grade in NE STUD N295 may be removed by taking NE STUD 295.

**Repeat rules:** Course may be repeated for credit without restriction.

### Hours & Format

**Summer:** 8 weeks - 2-8 hours of fieldwork per week

### Additional Details

**Subject/Course Level:** Middle Eastern Languages and Cultures/ Graduate

**Grading:** Letter grade.

**Formerly known as:** Near Eastern Studies N295

## MELC 296 Topics in Egyptology 4 Units

Terms offered: Fall 2022

Graduate seminar on varying topics in Egyptology. Focus may be archaeological, chronological, comparative, cultural, historical, methodological, regional, textual, theoretical, thematic, or any combination thereof.

### Rules & Requirements

**Prerequisites:** Consent of instructor

**Repeat rules:** Course may be repeated for credit when topic changes.

### Hours & Format

**Fall and/or spring:** 15 weeks - 3-3 hours of seminar per week

### Additional Details

**Subject/Course Level:** Middle Eastern Languages and Cultures/ Graduate

**Grading:** The grading option will be decided by the instructor when the class is offered.

**Formerly known as:** Near Eastern Studies 296

## MELC 297 Topics in Ancient Ceramics of Egypt and the Levant 2 or 4 Units

Terms offered: Spring 2022

Changing topics in the study of ancient ceramics, stressing the relationship between pottery on the one hand, and archaeological practice and research in Egypt and/or the Levant on the other hand. Emphasis is placed on the relationship between pottery and broader issues involving the history and culture of these regions. Where appropriate, extensive use is made of slides and "hands-on" experience with available ceramic collections (e.g., Hearst Museum collection.)

### Rules & Requirements

**Prerequisites:** 102AB, 124AB or the equivalent; Consent of instructor

**Repeat rules:** Course may be repeated for credit when topic changes.

### Hours & Format

**Fall and/or spring:** 15 weeks - 3-3 hours of seminar per week

### Additional Details

**Subject/Course Level:** Middle Eastern Languages and Cultures/ Graduate

**Grading:** The grading option will be decided by the instructor when the class is offered.

**Formerly known as:** Near Eastern Studies 297

## MELC 298 Seminar 1 - 4 Units

Terms offered: Fall 2025, Spring 2025, Fall 2024

Special topics in Near Eastern Studies. Topics vary and are announced at the beginning of each semester.

### Rules & Requirements

**Prerequisites:** Consent of instructor

**Repeat rules:** Course may be repeated for credit without restriction.

### Hours & Format

**Fall and/or spring:** 15 weeks - 1-4 hours of seminar per week

**Summer:** 8 weeks - 2.5-7.5 hours of seminar per week

### Additional Details

**Subject/Course Level:** Middle Eastern Languages and Cultures/ Graduate

**Grading:** Letter grade.

**Formerly known as:** Near Eastern Studies 298

## MELC 299 Dissertation Research and Writing 3 - 12 Units

Terms offered: Prior to 2007

All students advanced to candidacy must enroll in 299 every semester in which they are registered. When in residence, students are required to meet with their primary dissertation advisor at least twice a semester. Students not in residence should communicate either by phone or email with their advisor at least twice a semester. Semester grade will be based on written work turned in to the instructor to consist of at least one draft chapter of the dissertation or the equivalent.

### Rules & Requirements

**Prerequisites:** Advancement to candidacy, limited to students engaged in research for and writing of the doctoral dissertation

**Repeat rules:** Course may be repeated for credit without restriction.

### Hours & Format

**Fall and/or spring:** 15 weeks - 4-12 hours of independent study per week

**Summer:** 8 weeks - 7.5-22.5 hours of independent study per week

### Additional Details

**Subject/Course Level:** Middle Eastern Languages and Cultures/ Graduate

**Grading:** Letter grade.

**Formerly known as:** Near Eastern Studies 299



## MELC 375 Pedagogy in Middle Eastern Languages and Cultures: Ancient, Classical and Modern Perspectives 3 Units

Terms offered: Fall 2025, Fall 2021

This course provides pedagogical training for graduate students preparing to teach the languages, histories, and cultures of the ancient, classical, and modern Middle East. Recognizing the central role of language instruction, the course is divided into two six-week sessions. The first session explores theories of language acquisition, instructional strategies for teaching foreign languages, and classroom management. The second session addresses pedagogical approaches to teaching content-based courses. Students will develop a teaching portfolio that includes a draft syllabus for an R1A or R1B course, sample lesson plans, and a reflective statement on the pedagogical and scholarly challenges and opportunities within their subfield.

### Rules & Requirements

**Prerequisites:** Graduate Standing

### Hours & Format

**Fall and/or spring:** 15 weeks - 2 hours of seminar per week

### Additional Details

**Subject/Course Level:** Middle Eastern Languages and Cultures/  
Professional course for teachers or prospective teachers

**Grading:** Offered for satisfactory/unsatisfactory grade only.

**Formerly known as:** Near Eastern Studies 375

## MELC 601 Individual Studies for Master's Students 1 - 8 Units

Terms offered: Fall 2021

Individual study for the comprehensive or language requirements in consultation with the graduate adviser. Units may not be used to meet either unit or residence requirements for a master's degree.

### Rules & Requirements

**Repeat rules:** Course may be repeated for credit without restriction.

### Hours & Format

**Fall and/or spring:** 15 weeks - 0-1 hours of independent study per week

**Summer:** 8 weeks - 1.5-15 hours of independent study per week

### Additional Details

**Subject/Course Level:** Middle Eastern Languages and Cultures/  
Graduate examination preparation

**Grading:** Offered for satisfactory/unsatisfactory grade only.

**Formerly known as:** Near Eastern Studies 601

## MELC 602 Individual Study for Doctoral Students 1 - 8 Units

Terms offered: Prior to 2007

Individual study in consultation with the major field adviser, intended to provide an opportunity for qualified students to prepare themselves for the various examinations required of candidates for the Ph.D. May not be used for unit or residence requirements for the doctoral degree.

### Rules & Requirements

**Repeat rules:** Course may be repeated for credit without restriction.

### Hours & Format

**Fall and/or spring:** 15 weeks - 0-1 hours of independent study per week

**Summer:** 8 weeks - 1.5-15 hours of independent study per week

### Additional Details

**Subject/Course Level:** Middle Eastern Languages and Cultures/  
Graduate examination preparation

**Grading:** Offered for satisfactory/unsatisfactory grade only.

**Formerly known as:** Near Eastern Studies 602