

Religions of the Ancient Near East (A006685)

Course size *(nominal values; actual values may depend on programme)*

Credits 5.0

Study time 150 h

Course offerings and teaching methods in academic year 2025-2026

A (semester 1)

English

Gent

seminar

independent work

peer teaching

lecture

Lecturers in academic year 2025-2026

Goddeeris, Anne

LW21

staff member

De Graef, Katrien

LW21

lecturer-in-charge

Offered in the following programmes in 2025-2026

[Bachelor of Arts in History](#)

5

A

[Master of Science in Teaching in Arts and Humanities \(main subject Archaeology\)](#)

5

A

[Master of Arts in Archaeology](#)

5

A

[Micro-credential The Ancient Near East Unravelling](#)

5

A

[Exchange Programme Cultures and Languages in Context](#)

5

A

[Exchange Programme History](#)

5

A

[Exchange Programme Oriental Languages and Cultures](#)

5

A

[Elective Set Religion Studies](#)

5

A

Teaching languages

English

Keywords

religion, cult and rites, mythology, Mesopotamia, Anatolia, Elam, Levant

Position of the course

This advanced course offers the students insight in the nature and evolution of the religions, religious practices and mythological texts of the Ancient Near East (ca. 3500 – ca. 300 BCE).

Contents

The lectures provide students with an insight in the religious structures of the Ancient Near East through thematic classes (pantheon, afterlife, temple and sacrifice, prayers and rituals, cosmogonic and anthropogonic mythological traditions, religious titles and offices, magic and medicine, science and philosophy) in which case studies are explored in depth on the basis of visual material and excerpts of historical, literary and administrative sources. In addition to the religion, religious practices and mythology of Mesopotamia (Sumer, Babylonia and Assyria), religious aspects and structures from neighbouring areas (Anatolia, Elam, Levant) are offered in a comparative perspective.

Within the framework of a project (the topic of which changes annually, e.g. "the role of women in religion", "divine kingship", "creation myths", "religious syncretism", "influence on later religious traditions"), the student will be taught in seminars how to consult and critically process secondary sources and primary sources (in translation) in order to be able to write a paper and give a presentation on a chosen subject within the topic of the project.

Initial competences

- good knowledge of English
- passive knowledge of French and German (to be able to consult specialist literature)

Final competences

- 1 To be able to show an overall insight in the nature and evolution of the religions, religious practices and mythological texts of the Ancient Near East.
- 2 To show insight in various aspects of the religious structures of the Ancient Near East discussed in the thematic classes and case-studies.
- 3 To be able to interpret the archaeological and epigraphic sources discussed in class and to be able to evaluate their significance for the religions of the Ancient Near East.
- 4 To be able to consult and critically process secondary sources and primary sources (in translation).
- 5 To be able to write a paper on a subject chosen within the framework of the topic of the project.
- 6 To be able to give a presentation on a subject chosen within the framework of the topic of the project.

Conditions for credit contract

Access to this course unit via a credit contract is unrestricted: the student takes into consideration the conditions mentioned in 'Starting Competences'

Conditions for exam contract

Access to this course unit via an exam contract is unrestricted

Teaching methods

Seminar, Lecture, Independent work, Peer teaching

Extra information on the teaching methods

- Lecture 20h: theoretical underpinning and elaboration of case studies in thematic classes
- Seminar 5h: supervising the writing and presenting of a paper.
- Self-reliant study activities 10h: the student writes a paper and prepares an oral presentation.
- Microteaching 5h: the students give an oral presentation of their paper by means of a powerpoint presentation in class, after which their paper is open for discussion in the group.

Study material

Type: Syllabus

Name: Syllabus: Religions of the Ancient Near East
Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty
Optional: no
Language : English
Available on Ufora : Yes

Type: Slides

Name: Slides: Religions of the Ancient Near East
Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty
Optional: no
Language : English
Available on Ufora : Yes

Type: Reader

Name: Reader: Religions of the Ancient Near East
Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty
Optional: no
Language : English
Available on Ufora : Yes

References

Bottéro, J. 2000: Ancestor of the West: Writing, Reasoning, and Religion in Mesopotamia, Elam, and Greece, University of Chicago Press.
Bottéro, J. 2001: Religion in Ancient Mesopotamia, University of Chicago Press.
Cohen, M.E. 2015: Festivals and Calendars of the Ancient Near East, CDL Press.
Dalley, S. Myths from Mesopotamia: Creation, The Flood, Gilgamesh, and Others,

Oxford University Press.

Jacobsen, Th. 1978: *The Treasures of Darkness: A History of Mesopotamian Religion*, Yale University Press.

Snell, D.C. 2011: *Religions of the Ancient Near East*, Cambridge University Press.

Van De Mieroop, M. 2017: *Philosophy before the Greeks. The Pursuit of Truth in Ancient Babylonia*, Princeton University Press.

Course content-related study coaching

The lectures are interactive: the content of the thematic classes and case-studies is discussed in an interactive and demand-driven way during the lectures. Within the framework of the seminars, the students are taught to consult and critically process secondary sources and primary sources (in translation) in order to write a paper and give a presentation on a subject chosen within the framework of the theme of the project. These seminars are highly interactive through the use of the flipped classroom method. The course is concluded by microteaching sessions in which the students present orally their papers and take part in a final group discussion.

After the examinations there is individual feedback regarding the written examination and the paper.

Assessment moments

end-of-term and continuous assessment

Examination methods in case of periodic assessment during the first examination period

Written assessment with open-ended questions

Examination methods in case of periodic assessment during the second examination period

Written assessment with open-ended questions

Examination methods in case of permanent assessment

Participation, Assignment

Possibilities of retake in case of permanent assessment

examination during the second examination period is possible

Extra information on the examination methods

periodic evaluation: written examination with open questions.

permanent evaluation: written paper and oral presentation paper.

Calculation of the examination mark

written examination with open questions: 60%

written paper and oral presentation paper: 40%

In order to pass this course, the student has to pass both the written examination and the paper.

Students who do not take part in the assessment of one or more parts of the course evaluation or obtain a mark of less than 10/20 for one of its parts cannot pass the course evaluation. Should the average mark nevertheless be higher than 10/20, the final mark will be reduced to the highest non-pass mark (= 9).

Facilities for Working Students

Possible exemption from educational activities requiring student attendance in lectures.

Possible rescheduling of the written examination to a different time in the same academic year.

Participation in microteaching is compulsory.

Feedback can be given by email or during an appointment.