

Economy and Society of the Ancient Near East (A006686)

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

Credits 5.0 **Study time 150 h**

Course offerings in academic year 2026-2027

A (semester 1) English Gent

Lecturers in academic year 2026-2027

Goddeeris, Anne	LW21	staff member
De Graef, Katrien	LW21	lecturer-in-charge

Offered in the following programmes in 2026-2027

	crdts	offering
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 Unveiled	5	A
Micro-credential The Ancient Near East Unveiled	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 Culture and Society	5	A

Teaching languages

English

Keywords

economy, society, politics, gender, daily life, Mesopotamia, Babylonia, Assyria, Elam, Levant

Position of the course

This advanced course offers the students insight in the social structures of the Ancient Near East (ca. 3500 – ca. 300 BCE) on political, economic, institutional and societal level.

Contents

The lectures provide students with an insight in the societal, economic and political structures of the Ancient Near East through thematic classes (money and market, political institutions, agriculture, law, trade, city(state) and empire, private and institutional economies, social classes, gender) 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 societal, economic and political structures of Mesopotamia (Sumer, Babylonia and Assyria), societal aspects and structures from neighbouring areas (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 economy", "urbanisation and infrastructure", "military and diplomatic strategies", "identity and diversity"), 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 societal, economic and political structures of the Ancient Near East.
- 2 To show insight in various aspects of the societal, economic and political 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 society, economy and politics 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

This course unit cannot be taken via an exam contract

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 presentation 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: Economy and Society of the Ancient Near East

Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty

Optional: no

Language : English

Available on Ufora : Yes

Type: Slides

Name: Slides: Economy and Society of the Ancient Near East

Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty

Optional: no

Language : English

Available on Ufora : Yes

Type: Reader

Name: Reader: Economy and Society of the Ancient Near East

Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty

Optional: no

Language : English

References

- Budin, S. 2023. Gender in the Ancient Near East, Routledge.
- Leick, G. 2001: Mesopotamia: the Invention of the City, Penguin.
- Liverani, M. 2014: The Ancient Near East. History, Society and Economy, Routledge.
- Podany, A.H. 2012: Brotherhood of Kings. How International Relations Shaped the Ancient Near East, Oxford University Press.
- Podany, A.H. 2022: Weavers, Scribes, and Kings. A New History of the Ancient Near

East, Oxford University Press.

Postgate, N. 1994: Early Mesopotamia. Society and Economy at the Dawn of History, Routledge.

Roth, M.T. 1997: Law Collections from Mesopotamia and Asia Minor, Scholars Press.

Seri, A. 2006. Local Power in Old Babylonian Mesopotamia, Equinox.

Van De Mieroop, M. 1999: The Ancient Mesopotamian City, Oxford 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, Presentation, 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.