

The Age of Empires: The Ancient Near East in the First Millennium BC

AWAS 1300

Instructor:

Prof. John Steele,
Department of Egyptology and Ancient Western Asian Studies
Office: Wilbour Hall 203
Email: john_steele@brown.edu

Course Description:

The first millennium BC saw a series of empires vying for control of the Near East: the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Persians, and the Greeks of Alexander the Great and his successors. The course will explore the political, social and cultural history of Mesopotamia and the Ancient Near East under these empires, using evidence drawn from archaeology and ancient texts (in translation).

Course Objectives:

By the end of the course students should be able to:

- Outline the basic history of the Ancient Near East during the first millennium BC
- Understand the variety of different sources that are used in studying the history of the Near East in this period and what considerations must be followed when using them to answer historical questions
- Write well argued and structured answers to historical questions

Class Organization:

- First meeting each week: Lecture
- Second meeting each week: Seminar. All students should complete the required reading before each seminar. A group of students will be assigned the task of leading each seminar. By the end of the day before the seminar, the group should post a series of discussion questions on the CANVAS website. For the first twenty minutes of each seminar, the group will present the readings, outlining the main points of each reading and highlighting the most important (or problematical) points. All students will then divide into small groups and discuss the questions that have been posted on CANVAS. Finally, we will discuss these (and other questions) as a group.

Assessment:

Seminar preparation and participation	20%
2 1500-word papers	40% (due 27 Feb, 10 April)
1 3000-word research paper and presentation	40% (due 1 May)

Class Schedule and Readings

Recommended text: F. Joannès, *The Age of Empires: Mesopotamia in the First Millennium BC* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004). [Also on reserve at the Rock]

All other readings will either be posted on CANVAS or will be placed on reserve at the Rock.

Readings marks with a * are optional for undergraduates but required for graduate students.

1. Introduction, Historical and geographical setting

2. Sources, Historiography

- F. Joannès, *The Age of Empires: Mesopotamia in the First Millennium BC* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), introduction and chapter 1.
- A. Kuhrt, “Ancient Mesopotamia in Classical Greek and Hellenistic Thought”, in J. M. Sasson (ed.), *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East* (New York: Scribner, 1995), 55–65. [CANVAS]
- J.-J. Glassner, *Mesopotamian Chronicles* (Atlanta: Society for Biblical Literature, 2004), chapter 1. [CANVAS]
- *M. van de Mieroop, *Cuneiform Texts and the Writing of History* (London: Routledge, 1999), chapters 1–3. [Rock Reserve]
- *D. C. Snell, “The Historians Task”, in D. C. Snell (ed.), *A Companion to the Ancient Near East* (Malden: Blackwell, 2005), 110–121. [CANVAS]

3. The Neo-Assyrian Empire

- F. Joannès, *The Age of Empires: Mesopotamia in the First Millennium BC* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), chapter 2.
- H. Tadmor, “Propaganda, Literature, Historiography: Cracking the Code of the Assyrian Royal Inscriptions”, in S. Parpola and R. Whiting (eds.), *Assyria 1995: Proceedings of the 10th Anniversary Symposium of the Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project* (Helsinki: The Neo Assyrian Text Corpus Project), 325–338. [CANVAS]
- A. K. Grayson, “Assyrian Rule of Conquered Territory in Ancient Western Asia”, in J. M. Sasson (ed.), *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East* (New York: Scribner, 1995), 959–968. [CANVAS]
- *M. Fales, “On *Pax Assyriaca* in the Eighth-Seventh Centuries BCE and Its Implications”, in R. Cohen and R. Westbrook (eds.), *Isaiah’s Vision of Peace in Biblical and Modern International Relations: Swords into Plowshares* (Palgrave MacMillan), 17–35. [CANVAS]

4. The Neo-Assyrian Empire: Structure of an Empire

- F. Joannès, *The Age of Empires: Mesopotamia in the First Millennium BC* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), chapters 3 and 4.
- E. Leichty, “Esarhaddon, King of Assyria”, in J. M. Sasson (ed.), *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East* (New York: Scribner, 1995), 949–958. [CANVAS]
- K. Radner, “Royal Decision-making: Kings, Magnates, and Scholars”, in K. Radner and E. Robson (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Cuneiform Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 358–379. [CANVAS]
- *K. Radner, “The Assyrian King and His Scholars: The Syro-Anatolian and the Egyptian Schools”, in M. Lukko, S. Svärd, and R. Mattila (eds.), *Of God(s), Trees, Kings, and Scholars: Neo-Assyrian and Related Studies in Honour of Simo Parpola* (Helsinki: Finnish Oriental Society, 2009), 221–238. [CANVAS]
- *K. Radner, “The Trials of Esarhaddon: The Conspiracy of 670 BC”, in P. A. Miglus and J. Ma. Córdoba (eds.), *Assur und sein Umland* (Madrid: Universidad Autónoma da Madrid, 2003), 165–184. [CANVAS]

5. The Neo-Assyrian Empire: Expansion and Decline

- G. Frame, “Babylon: Assyria’s Problem and Assyria’s Prize”, *Journal of the Canadian Society for Mesopotamian Studies* 3 (2008), 21–31. [CANVAS]
- H. Tadmor, “World Dominion: The Expanding Horizon of the Assyrian Empire”, in L. Milano, S. de Martino, F. M. Fales and G. B. Lanfranchi (eds.), *Landscapes: Territories, Frontiers and Horizons in the Ancient Near East* (Padova: Sargon, 1999), 55–62. [CANVAS]

- A. Fuchs, "Assyria at War: Strategy and Conduct", in K. Radner and E. Robson (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Cuneiform Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 380–401. [CANVAS]
- *A. Spalinger, "Esarhaddon and Egypt: An Analysis of the First Invasion of Egypt", *Orientalia* 43 (1974), 295–326. [CANVAS]
- *S. Zamazalová, "Before the Assyrian Conquest in 671 B.C.E.: Relations between Egypt, Kush and Assyria", in J. Mynářová (ed.), *Egypt and the Near East - the Crossroads: Proceedings of an International Conference on the Relations of Egypt and the Near East in the Bronze Age* (Prague: Charles University, 2011), 297–328. [CANVAS]

6. The Neo-Babylonian Empire and its Neighbours

- F. Joannès, *The Age of Empires: Mesopotamia in the First Millennium BC* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), chapters 5 and 6.
- D. J. Wiseman, *Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), chapter 1. [Rock Reserve]
- *D. S. Vanderhooft, *The Neo-Babylonian Empire and Babylon in the Latter Prophets* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999), chapter 2. [Rock Reserve]

7. Nebuchadnezzar and the (Re)building of Babylon

- F. Joannès, *The Age of Empires: Mesopotamia in the First Millennium BC* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), chapter 7.
- P.-A. Beaulieu, "Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon as World Capital", *Journal of the Canadian Society of Mesopotamian Studies* 3 (2008), 5–12. [CANVAS]
- D. J. Wiseman, *Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), chapter 2. [Rock Reserve]
- *M. van de Mieroop, "Reading Babylon", *American Journal of Archaeology* 107 (2003), 257–275. [CANVAS]

8. Nabonidus and the Persian conquest

- F. Joannès, *The Age of Empires: Mesopotamia in the First Millennium BC* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), chapter 8.
- P.-A. Beaulieu, "King Nabonidus and the Neo-Babylonia Empire", in J. M. Sasson (ed.), *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East* (New York: Scribner, 1995), 969–980. [CANVAS]
- A. Kuhrt, "The Cyrus Cylinder and Achaemenid Imperial Policy", *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 25 (1983), 83–97. [CANVAS]
- *M. Jursa, "The Transition of Babylonia from Neo-Babylonian Empire to Achaemenid Rule", in H. Crawford (ed.), *Regime Change in the Ancient Near East and Egypt: From Sargon of Agade to Saddam Hussein* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 73–94. [CANVAS]

9. Babylonia under Persian rule

- E. Haerinck, "Babylonia under Achaemenid Rule", in J. Curtis (ed.), *Mesopotamia and Iran in the Persian Period: Conquest and Imperialism 539–331 BC* (London: British Museum), 26–34. [CANVAS]
- A. Kuhrt, "Achaemenid Babylonia: Sources and Problems", in H. Sancisi-Weerdenburg and A. Kuhrt (eds.), *Achaemenid History IV: Centre and Periphery* (Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 1990), 177–194. [CANVAS]
- *R. J. van der Spek, "Cyrus the Great, Exiles and Foreign Gods: A Comparison of Assyrian and Persian Policies on Subject Nations", in W. Henkelman, C. Jones, M. Kozuh and C. Woods (eds.), *Extraction and Control: Studies in Honor of Matthew W. Stolper* (Chicago: Oriental Institute, 2014), in press. [CANVAS]

10. Alexander and the Seleucids

- F. Joannès, *The Age of Empires: Mesopotamia in the First Millennium BC* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), chapter 9.
- B. R. Foster and K. Polinger Foster, *Civilizations of Ancient Iraq* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), chapter 9. [CANVAS]
- *A. Kuhrt and S. Sherwin-White, “Aspects of Seleucid Royal Ideology: The Cylinder of Antiochus I from Borsippa”, *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 111, 71–86. [CANVAS]
- *S. Sherwin-White, “Seleucid Babylonia: A Case Study for the Installations and Development of Greek Rule”, in A. Kuhrt and S. Sherwin-White (eds.), *Hellenism in the East: The Interaction of Greek and non-Greek Civilizations from Syria to Central Asia after Alexander* (London: Duckworth, 1987), 1–31. [CANVAS]

11. Life and Culture in Hellenistic and Parthian Babylonia

- P. Clancier, “Cuneiform Culture’s Last Guardians: The Old Urban Notability of Hellenistic Uruk”, in K. Radner and E. Robson (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Cuneiform Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 753–773. [CANVAS]
- R. J. van der Spek, “The Babylonian City”, in A. Kuhrt and S. Sherwin-White (eds.), *Hellenism in the East: The Interaction of Greek and non-Greek Civilizations from Syria to Central Asia after Alexander* (London: Duckworth, 1987), 57–74. [CANVAS]
- G. de Breucker, “Berossos between Tradition and Innovation”, in K. Radner and E. Robson (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Cuneiform Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 637–657. [CANVAS]
- *S. Dalley and A. T. Reyes, “Mesopotamian Contact and Influence in the Greek World”, in S. Dalley (ed.), *The Legacy of Mesopotamia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 107–124. [CANVAS]

12–13. Student Presentations