

Literatures of the ancient Near East I 2024-2025

Open to: MA students and Erasmus students

Syllabus academic years: 2024–2025

Lecturer: Ludovica Bertolini

Number of lessons: 7 frontal lessons + reading weeks + student's essay and 15 minutes presentations on selected topics discussed during the classes

Hours per lesson: 2

Language of instruction: English

Type of attestation: credit (zápočet)

Abstract: The course aims at introducing the students to the large literary milieu of the Ancient Near East. This first semester the lectures will focus on the Sumerian traditional corpus of the Old Babylonian period. Nevertheless, short account on previous forms of literary compositions will be addressed during the course. Importance will be given to the institution of the Edubba, the curricular setting, and some literary typologies found in the corpus of Sumerian Literature.

Topics:

1. Introduction
 - a. Sumerian as a language
 - b. Geographical and historical context
 - c. The sources
 - d. Materiality and typologies of tablets
 - e. Physical features and arrangement of the texts
 - f. Context, circulation, fruition of literature
 - g. What about authors?
 - h. Literary genres, style and metric
2. Edubba and the scribal curriculum
 - a. The school
 - b. The stages of the curriculum
 - c. The Nippurite curriculum
3. Mythological cycles of the main Sumerian deities
 - a. Enki (Enki and Ninhursaga; Enki and the world order; Enki and Ninmah)
 - b. Enlil (Enlil and Sud; Enlil and Ninlil)
 - c. Inana (Inana and Enki; Inana and Ebih; Inana and Shukaletuda)
 - d. Ninurta (Ninurta's return to Nibru; Lugale, Ninurta and the turtle)
4. The deeds of kings
 - a. Enmerkar (Enmerkar and the lord Aratta; Enmerkar and Ensuhgirana)
 - b. Lugalbanda (Lugalbanda and the cave; Lugalbanda and the Anzu bird)
 - c. Gilgamesh (Gilgamesh and Agga; Gilgamesh and the Bull of Heaven)
 - d. Gilgamesh and the Bull of Heaven; Gilgamesh and Huwawa; Gilgamesh, Enkidu and the Netherworld; Death of Gilgamesh)
5. Hymns

- a. Sumerian hymns, general aspects
 - b. Divine Hymns
 - c. Temple Hymns
 - d. Royal hymns
6. Letter prayers
 7. Lamentations
 8. Dialogues, disputes, Edubba texts, fables, humorous texts

Suggested readings:

- Charpin, D. 1986. *Le clergé d'Ur au siècle d'Hammurabi* (Hautes Études Orientales 22). Genève: Librairie Droz.
- Delnero, P. 2010. "The sumerian extract tablets and Scribal Education," *JCS* 62, 45-52.
- Robson, E. 2001. 'The Tablet House: A Scribal School in Old Babylonian Nippur,' *RA* 95, 39-66.
- Robson, E. 2011. "The Production and Dissemination of Scholarly Knowledge," in: Radner, K. – Robson, E. (eds.) *Handbook of Cuneiform Culture*. Oxford: Oxford university Press
- Rubio, G. 2011. "Sumerian Literature," in: Carl S. Ehrlich (eds), *From an Antique Land. An Introduction to Ancient Near Eastern Literature*. Lahnam – Bouldr – New York – Toronto – Plymouth: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 11-76.
- Ryholt, K.- Barjamovic, G. (eds.) *Problems of canonicity and identity formation in ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia*. Copenhagen: Department of Cross-Cultural and Regional Studies, University of Copenhagen, 2016. [only the Sumerian part: Cooper, Delnero, Rubio]
- Tinney, S. 1999. 'On the curricular setting of Sumerian Literature,' *Iraq* 61, 159-172.
- Tinney, S. 2011. "Tablets of Schools and Scholars: a Portrait of the Old Babylonian Corpus," in: Radner, K. – Robson, E. (eds.) *Handbook of Cuneiform Culture*. Oxford: Oxford university Press
- Valdhuis, N. 1997. *Elementary education at Nippur. The list of Trees and Wooden Objects*. Groeningen.
- Vanstiphout. H.L.J. 1979. 'How Did They Learn Sumerian?,' *JCS* 31, 118-126.
- Veldhuis, N. 2004. *Religion, literature, and scholarship: the Sumerian composition Nanše and the birds with a catalogue of Sumerian bird names* (Cuneiform Monographs 22). Leiden – Boston: Brill-Styx.
- Volk, K. 2000. "Edubba'a und Edubba'a-Literatur: Rätsel un Lösung," *ZA* 90, 1-30.

Further bibliography will be issued during the course.