

# NEJS 202b Akkadian Epistolary Texts Syllabus

M 5:00–8:00p.m., Room Lown 103

Instructor: Bronson Brown-deVost

**Course Description:** Epistolary texts form one of the largest corpora of Akkadian writings that have survived to the present day. They provide a special avenue of access to various segments of Mesopotamian societies in a number of Akkadian dialects from the Sargonic period to the Hellenistic. We will have two main aims in this course: 1) gaining a better understanding of Akkadian dialects through epistolary texts, and 2) an exploration of the areas of ancient Mesopotamian studies that can be elucidated by the Akkadian epistolary corpus.

## **Contact Information and Office Hours:**

Bronson Brown-deVost

[bronson@brandeis.edu](mailto:bronson@brandeis.edu)

Office: TBD.

Office Hours: Tues. 2–5, or by appointment.

**Course Requirements:** Students are expected to have completed introductory Akkadian; they should also have a grasp of scholarly German since many resources for the class will be in that language. Course readings and assignments are to be completed before class and will be necessary to get the most out of each class session.

All of your work for this class is expected to be your own. If you have any questions concerning academic honesty, please see me to discuss the situation.

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If you are a student with a documented disability at Brandeis University and if you wish to request a reasonable accommodation for this class, please see me immediately. Please keep in mind that reasonable accommodations are not necessarily provided retroactively.

**Course Assignments:** Each student will be required to prepare a group of texts for a class session. This will involve collecting pictures, handcopies, editions, and other highly relevant materials for these several texts along with a small bibliography of useful reference works on dialect grammar, lexicon, signs, etc. I will be available to provide any assistance and advice necessary to complete this assignment. This will afford the students greater facility with the basic research tools of the field. The student will also be required to take a leading role in the reading and discussion of her or his texts during class.

Each student will write a short prospectus for a research project that uses Akkadian epistolary sources to discuss some facet of Mesopotamian studies: religion, politics, history, rhetoric, economics, etc... This prospectus should clearly define the topic being researched, the reason or reasons why such a project is necessary or useful, the relevant previous scholarship, the methodologies to be employed, and the relevance of the topic to wider fields of academic study. The prospectus should also contain at least a preliminary bibliography.

There will be a mid-course one-on-one evaluation. This brief evaluation will serve to keep each student aware of her or his progress and of what needs to be done for successful completion of the course. It will also serve as a time to begin discussing paper topics.

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I reserve the right to offer a final exam should I feel that it will present a substantial benefit to the students.

**Classroom Restrictions:** The use of computers or electronic devices shall be strongly restricted in class. Direct engagement with the cuneiform texts will afford students the greatest ability to engage in the class; this means carefully preparing the texts so that all but the most cursory notes are unnecessary.

Given the time of the class, some may feel the need to bring food and drink, this is perfectly admissible provided that it does not create any appreciable distraction. We will take a brief break in the middle of class, but please wait until after class to consume larger meal items.

**Absences:** Regular attendance will be necessary for successful progress through this course. Thus, students will be afforded only two unexcused absences. In the event of an absence, the student is responsible for arranging a time during office hours to catch up on the missed class material. Excused absences may be granted at the discretion of the instructor, all doctor ordered absences will be respected, though special arrangements will need to be made in the event of any extended absence.

## **Grade Breakdown:**

Class Participation and Presentations: 40%.

Midterm Oral Examination: 30%.

Final Paper: 30%.

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## Course Schedule (subject to change):

Intro: 1/13.1

1. Old Akkadian (Miscellaneous letters and the usage of Old Akkadian in comparative semitic linguistics) (1/13.2-2/3.1: 2 full sessions)

Readings: Hasselbach, *Sargonic Akkadian* (read through entire volume)

**1/13** (example letters)

Gir 36

Di 1

Ga 2

Di 9

**1/27**

Di 5

Ad 10

Gir 17

Gir 18

Eš 5

Gir 27

Ad 3

Gir 29

Um 3

Ki 1

Ki 2

Ki 4

Si 1

Gir 37

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**2/3** (first half of class)

Ad 12

Gir 19

Nip 1

2. Early Old Babylonian (Miscellaneous letters demonstrating the linguistic transition from Ur III Akkadian to Old Babylonian) (2/3.2-2/10.1: 1 full session)

Readings: Whiting, *Old Babylonian Letters from Tell Asmar*, pp. 1–35

**2/10** (most of class)

Whiting (text numbers):

6

8

31

28

11

12

17

53

Al-Rawi, “Two Old Akkadian Letters,” *ZA* 82 (1992):180–185:

IM 85455

IM 85456

3. Old Babylonian (Political and Administrative letters in the Age of Hammurabi) (2/10.2-2/17.1: 1 full session)

**2/17** (most of class)

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ARM I no. 108

Van Koppen 1997, 420 (M.A.R.I. 8)

ARM V no. 14 = LAPO no. 916 (copy of previous letter)

Charpin, D. 1990. "Une alliance contre l'Elam et le rituel du lipit napištim." In *Mélanges Jean Perrot*. Edited by F. Vallat. Paris: Éditions Recherche sur les Civilisations: 111–12.

A.2996 quoted from Charpin 1999, 125 fn. 50

AbB 4 no. 79 (Ashm. 1923, 6; OECT 3 no. 1 pl. 1)

AbB 9 no. 32 (YBC 4521; YOS 2 pl. xi no. 32, pl lvi) (Compare LH §32)

AbB 14 no. 98 (AO 6328. TCL 17 Pl. XXXVI No. 44) (Compare LH §28)

4. Old Babylonian (Letters concerning women at Mari) (2/17.2-3/3.1: 1 full session)

**3/3** (first half of class)

ARM 26 no. 304 ll. 37-46

ARM 26 no. 315 ll. 34-70

ARM 10 no. 32

ARM 10 no. 33

ARM 10 no. 34

ARM 10 no. 135

5. Old Assyrian (Business letters) (3/3.2-3/17.1: 2 full sessions); Guest lecture on Old Assyrian social networks by Adam Anderson

AAA 1, 2

BIN 6, 19

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RA 60, 143

6. Middle Assyrian (Legal summonses) (3/17.2-3/24.1: 1 full session)

**3/24**

Ass. 11017n = A 133

Ass. 11017c = A 748

Ass. 11019c = VAT 8745

Ass. 11018q = VAT 16374

Ass. 11018p = VAT 8748

Ass. 11019a = VAT 8752

Ass. 11017v = Erlenmeyer collection (Basel); Hall, ZA 73, 75-81

7. Middle Babylonian (Temple Administration in Nippur) (3/24.2-3/31.1: 1 full session)

BE 17, no. 23 (cp. Iqqur īpuš §8)

BE 17, no. 31

BE 17, no. 45

BE 17, no. 47

8. Amarna (Diplomatic letters) (3/31.2-4/7.1: 1 full session)

EA 17

EA 64

EA 287

9. Neo Assyrian (Letters from Scholars) (4/7.2-4/21.1: 2 full session)

ABL 23

ABL 385

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ABL 355

ABL 629

10. Neo Babylonian (Literary letters) (4/21.2-4/28: 1.5 sessions)
  - CTMMA II, 44 (Letter of Sin-šarru-iškun to Nabopolassar)
  - STT I, 40–42 (Gilgamesh Letter)