



AHIX1250

Western Asia and Egypt in Antiquity: An Introduction

Session 2, Online-flexible 2026

School of Humanities

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General Information

Unit convenor and teaching staff

Javier Alvarez-Mon

javier.alvarez-mon@mq.edu.au

Credit points

10

Prerequisites

Corequisites

Co-badged status

Unit description

This unit surveys the ancient states of Western Asia and North Africa from the emergence of writing around 3200 BCE to the rise of the Persian Empire c. 500 BCE. Students explore major political, social, and cultural developments in Mesopotamia, Egypt, the Hittite Empire, and Persia. Emphasis is placed on interpreting primary sources—cuneiform tablets, hieroglyphic inscriptions, law codes, royal annals, and literature—alongside archaeological evidence. A chronological structure highlights both the distinctiveness of each culture and the interactions between them, including diplomacy, warfare, and trade. Key themes include the development of writing, kingship and empire, religion and politics, economic networks, and the role of geography. Students examine how ancient societies recorded power and memory, and how these records shaped imperial ideologies and cultural exchange. Through source analysis, comparative exercises, and a skills logbook, students build foundational historical knowledge and critical thinking skills, while gaining the tools to interpret ancient sources in context.

Important Academic Dates

Information about important academic dates including deadlines for withdrawing from units are available at <https://www.mq.edu.au/study/calendar-of-dates>

Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this unit, you will be able to:

ULO1: Acquire knowledge and skills relating to the analysis, evaluation and interpretation of the ancient Egyptian material world in its Near Eastern context across time and geographical regions.

ULO2: Synthesise primary and secondary sources to develop clear, specific, evidence-based arguments.

ULO3: Compare diverse regional cases to link lessons from the past to solutions for the most urgent issues facing societies today.

ULO4: Engage with contemporary debates, cultural perspectives and practices to contextualise historical and archaeological knowledge.

ULO5: Create content to communicate acquired knowledge & skills to diverse audiences.

General Assessment Information

Research Report

Assessment Type ¹: Written Submission Indicative Time on Task ²: 30 hours Due: **06/11/2026**
Weighting: **40%** Groupwork/Individual: Individual Short extension ³: Yes AI Approach: Open

Students will investigate a key site or topic from Egypt and/or the Near East/West Asia.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Acquire knowledge and skills relating to the analysis, evaluation and interpretation of the ancient Egyptian material world in its Near Eastern context across time and geographical regions.
- Synthesise primary and secondary sources to develop clear, specific, evidence-based arguments.
- Compare diverse regional cases to link lessons from the past to solutions for the most urgent issues facing societies today.
- Engage with contemporary debates, cultural perspectives and practices to contextualise historical and archaeological knowledge.
- Create content to communicate acquired knowledge & skills to diverse audiences.

Problem set

Assessment Type ¹: Problem-based task Indicative Time on Task ²: 20 hours Due: **04/09/2026**
Weighting: **30%** Groupwork/Individual: Individual Short extension ³: No AI Approach: Open

Students will answer a series of questions based on the readings set.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Acquire knowledge and skills relating to the analysis, evaluation and interpretation of the ancient Egyptian material world in its Near Eastern context across time and geographical regions.
- Compare diverse regional cases to link lessons from the past to solutions for the most urgent issues facing societies today.

- Engage with contemporary debates, cultural perspectives and practices to contextualise historical and archaeological knowledge.

Video Presentation

Assessment Type ¹: Presentation task Indicative Time on Task ²: 20 hours Due: **05/10/2026**
Weighting: **30%** Groupwork/Individual: Individual Short extension ³: Yes AI Approach: Open

Students will make a presentation on a topic of significance for the study of Egypt or the Near East/Western Asia

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Acquire knowledge and skills relating to the analysis, evaluation and interpretation of the ancient Egyptian material world in its Near Eastern context across time and geographical regions.
- Synthesise primary and secondary sources to develop clear, specific, evidence-based arguments.
- Compare diverse regional cases to link lessons from the past to solutions for the most urgent issues facing societies today.
- Create content to communicate acquired knowledge & skills to diverse audiences.

¹ If you need help with your assignment, please contact:

- the academic teaching staff in your unit for guidance in understanding or completing this type of assessment
- [Academic Success](#) for academic skills support.

² Indicative time-on-task is an estimate of the time required for completion of the assessment task and is subject to individual variation.

³ An automatic short extension is available for some assessments. Apply through the [Service Connect Portal](#).

Assessment Tasks

Name	Weighting	Hurdle	Due	Groupwork/Individual	Short Extension	AI Approach
Research Report	40%	No	06/11/2026	Individual	Yes	Open
Problem set	30%	No	04/09/2026	Individual	No	Open
Video Presentation	30%	No	05/10/2026	Individual	Yes	Open

Research Report

Assessment Type ¹: Written Submission

Indicative Time on Task ²: 30 hours

Due: **06/11/2026**

Weighting: **40%**

Groupwork/Individual: Individual

Short extension ³: Yes

AI Approach: Open

Students will investigate a key site or topic from Egypt and/or the Near East/West Asia.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Acquire knowledge and skills relating to the analysis, evaluation and interpretation of the ancient Egyptian material world in its Near Eastern context across time and geographical regions.
- Synthesise primary and secondary sources to develop clear, specific, evidence-based arguments.
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- Create content to communicate acquired knowledge & skills to diverse audiences.

Problem set

Assessment Type ¹: Problem-based task

Indicative Time on Task ²: 20 hours

Due: **04/09/2026**

Weighting: **30%**

Groupwork/Individual: Individual

Short extension ³: No

AI Approach: Open

Students will answer a series of questions based on the readings set.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Acquire knowledge and skills relating to the analysis, evaluation and interpretation of the ancient Egyptian material world in its Near Eastern context across time and geographical regions.
- Compare diverse regional cases to link lessons from the past to solutions for the most

urgent issues facing societies today.

- Engage with contemporary debates, cultural perspectives and practices to contextualise historical and archaeological knowledge.

Video Presentation

Assessment Type ¹: Presentation task

Indicative Time on Task ²: 20 hours

Due: **05/10/2026**

Weighting: **30%**

Groupwork/Individual: Individual

Short extension ³: Yes

AI Approach: Open

Students will make a presentation on a topic of significance for the study of Egypt or the Near East/Western Asia

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Acquire knowledge and skills relating to the analysis, evaluation and interpretation of the ancient Egyptian material world in its Near Eastern context across time and geographical regions.
- Synthesise primary and secondary sources to develop clear, specific, evidence-based arguments.
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Delivery and Resources

Western Asia and Egypt in Antiquity: An Introduction

From the first farmers and herders to the rise of the mighty Persian Empire, this unit explores the remarkable cultures and civilizations of Western Asia and North Africa from c. 10,000 to c. 323 BCE. Students trace the transformation of human societies from the domestication of plants and animals and the emergence of the earliest villages to the development of cities, kingdoms, and some of the world's first empires.

The unit examines the major political, social, religious, and cultural developments of ancient Mesopotamia, Egypt, the Hittite Empire, Elam and Persia within a chronological framework that highlights both the distinctive character of each civilization and the dynamic connections between them. Students engage directly with the ancient world through the interpretation of primary sources, including cuneiform tablets, hieroglyphic inscriptions, law codes, royal annals, and literary texts, alongside archaeological and artistic evidence.

Key themes include the archaeology of writing and textual communication; religion in both public and private life; war, diplomacy, power, and social hierarchy; economy, trade, and cross-cultural exchange; and the origins, development, and modern interpretation of the disciplines of Egyptology and Near Eastern Studies. Through the critical analysis of archaeological, textual, and artistic evidence, students develop a strong foundation in the history of the ancient Near East while building the analytical and interpretive skills needed to understand the ancient world in its historical and cultural contexts.

Delivery

Teaching Structure

- 1-2 hours of lectures per week 1 hour tutorial per week

Resources

- There is no textbook for this unit. Required weekly readings are available in iLearn.
- Assessment resources and discipline related resources posted in iLearn
- Centralized platform for Near Eastern Sources: oracc.museum.upenn.edu

Policies and Procedures

Macquarie University policies and procedures are accessible from [Policy Central](https://policies.mq.edu.au) (<https://policies.mq.edu.au>). Students should be aware of the following policies in particular with regard to Learning and Teaching:

- [Academic Appeals Policy](#)
- [Academic Integrity Policy](#)
- [Academic Progression Policy](#)
- [Assessment Policy](#)

- [Fitness to Practice Procedure](#)
- [Assessment Procedure](#)
- [Complaints Resolution Procedure for Students and Members of the Public](#)
- [Special Consideration Policy](#)

Students seeking more policy resources can visit [Student Policies](https://students.mq.edu.au/support/study/policies) (<https://students.mq.edu.au/support/study/policies>). It is your one-stop-shop for the key policies you need to know about throughout your undergraduate student journey.

To find other policies relating to Teaching and Learning, visit [Policy Central](https://policies.mq.edu.au) (<https://policies.mq.edu.au>) and use the [search tool](#).

Student Code of Conduct

Macquarie University students have a responsibility to be familiar with the Student Code of Conduct: <https://students.mq.edu.au/admin/other-resources/student-conduct>

Results

Results published on platform other than [eStudent](#), (eg. iLearn, Coursera etc.) or released directly by your Unit Convenor, are not confirmed as they are subject to final approval by the University. Once approved, final results will be sent to your student email address and will be made available in [eStudent](#). For more information visit connect.mq.edu.au or if you are a Global MBA student contact globalmba.support@mq.edu.au

Academic Integrity

At Macquarie, we believe [academic integrity](#) – honesty, respect, trust, responsibility, fairness and courage – is at the core of learning, teaching and research. We recognise that meeting the expectations required to complete your assessments can be challenging. So, we offer you a range of resources and services to help you reach your potential, including free [online writing and maths support](#), [academic skills development](#) and [wellbeing consultations](#).

Student Support

Macquarie University provides a range of support services for students. For details, visit <http://students.mq.edu.au/support/>

Academic Success

[Academic Success](#) provides resources to develop your English language proficiency, academic writing, and communication skills.

- [Ask a Study Coach](#)
- [Access StudyWISE](#)
- [Upload an assignment to Studiosity](#)
- [Complete the Academic Integrity Module](#)

The Library provides online and face to face support to help you find and use relevant information resources.

- [Subject and Research Guides](#)
- [Ask a Librarian](#)

Student Services and Support

Macquarie University offers a range of [Student Support Services](#) including:

- [IT Support](#)
- [Accessibility and disability support](#) with study
- Mental health [support](#)
- [Safety support](#) to respond to bullying, harassment, sexual harassment and sexual assault
- [Social support including information about finances, tenancy and legal issues](#)
- [Student Advocacy](#) provides independent advice on MQ policies, procedures, and processes

Student Enquiries

Got a question? Ask us via the [Service Connect Portal](#), or contact [Service Connect](#).

IT Help

For help with University computer systems and technology, visit <https://students.mq.edu.au/support/technology/service-desk>.

When using the University's IT, you must adhere to the [Acceptable Use of IT Resources Policy](#). The policy applies to all who connect to the MQ network including students.

Unit information based on version 2026.05 of the [Handbook](#)