

# **CLE223 Ancient Egyptian Religious Beliefs and Practices**

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Swansea University, Wales, UK  
Semester 2, 2012-13  
Undergraduate level 2



## Introduction

This module will provide an overview of Ancient Egyptian religious beliefs and practices. Students will explore the intellectual thought as well as the manifestation of those beliefs in the practices of the royal, elite, and non-elite of Ancient Egypt. The students will also learn how to overcome the particular problems inherent in studying an ancient civilisation with no living witnesses.

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Office Hrs: Wednesdays 10-12

### Class Times:

Tues., 2-3:45, KH 248  
Fri., 1-1:50, KH 248

## Formal Assessment (see separate information on Blackboard for details)

Week 5:	40% Group Project
Exams Period:	60% Research Paper

## Dynamics

There are four main textbooks that you must read in their entirety. These will be supplemented by Egyptian texts in translation, and other secondary literature that will be provided mostly on Blackboard. It is important that you do the readings **BEFORE** the class session so that we can discuss them, and ask any questions you might have concerning them. This will not simply be a lecture class—your active participation in discussion groups during the class-time is expected. The Egyptians were dynamic, lively, and complex individuals and so too should you be. By the end of the module you will have learned how to approach Egyptian religion in a scholarly yet sensitive way.

Readings and assignments will be posted on Blackboard.

## Required Bibliography (you should purchase)

- Hornung, E. (1996), *Conceptions of God in ancient Egypt: The one and the many*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press. [B141 HOR]
- Pinch, G. (2004), *Egyptian Myth: A very short introduction* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Stein, R. L., & Stein, P. L. (2011). *The Anthropology of Religion, Magic, and Witchcraft* (3rd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall.
- Teeter, E. (2011). *Religion and Ritual in Ancient Egypt*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

# Ancient Egyptian Religious Beliefs & Practices

## Highly Recommended to Read

- Assmann, J. (2001), *The Search for God in Ancient Egypt*, trans. David Lorton (1st English-language, with revisions and additions. edn.; Ithaca: Cornell University Press). **If you wish to continue studying Egyptian Religion, this book is required reading, as all scholars who discuss religion will reference this book.**
- Hornung, E. (1992), *Idea into Image: Essays on Ancient Egyptian Thought*, trans. Elizabeth Bredeck New York: Timken Publishers, Inc..
- Insoll, T. (2004), *Archaeology; Ritual, Religion*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Pinch, G. (1994), *Magic in Ancient Egypt*. London: British Museum Press. [BF1591 PIN]
- Quirke, S. (1992), *Ancient Egyptian Religion*. New York: Dover Publications. [BL2441.2 QUI]
- Quirke, S. (2001), *The Cult of Ra: Sun-Worship in Ancient Egypt*. London: Thames & Hudson. [BL2450.R2 QUI]
- Ritner, R. K. (1993), *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice*. SAOC, 54; Chicago: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.
- For reference only (these are insufficient as research texts) you should also have either Pinch, G. (2002), *Egyptian Mythology: A guide to the gods, goddesses, and traditions of Ancient Egypt*. Oxford: Oxford University Press **OR** Wilkinson, R. H. (2003), *The Complete Gods and Goddesses of Ancient Egypt*. London: Thames and Hudson.

## Readings & Assignments

Required readings are noted below in the syllabus. Each week has its own folder on Blackboard > Course Documents. You are expected to check here. Along with the texts listed in the syllabus you are encouraged to read Assmann's *The Search for God in Ancient Egypt* in its entirety by the end of the semester. You **must** also read Pinch's *Egyptian Myth: A very short introduction* (this is a tiny book, and should only take a couple of hours) and Hornung's *Conceptions of God*.

**READING QUESTIONS & ASSIGNMENTS:** Questions relevant to the readings and weekly assignments will be posted on Blackboard. We will discuss these in class. You are also encouraged to bring your own questions, or better yet, post them onto Blackboard. Blackboard = {BB}.

# Ancient Egyptian Religious Beliefs & Practices

## Syllabus

### Week 1 Introduction & How We Study Religion:

- Szpakowska, K. (2010), 'Religion in Pharaonic Society', in A. B. Lloyd (ed.), *The Blackwell Companion to Ancient Egypt* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell), 507-25. {BB & available as an e-book through iFind}
- Chapter 1 in Teeter (2011).
- Chapter 1 in Stein, & Stein (2011).
- Pinch, G. (2004), *Egyptian Myth: A very short introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

#### Exercise (submit via blackboard by Thursday, 6pm)

- Think back to a ritual that you have attended—a wedding ceremony, for example. Write three brief descriptions in outline format from each of the following viewpoints: analytic, functional, and essentialist.

### Week 2 Priests and Intermediaries

- Chapter 2 in Teeter (2011).
- Chapter 6 in Stein, & Stein (2011).
- Spencer, N. (2010), 'Priests and Temples: Pharaonic', in A. B. Lloyd (ed.), *A companion to ancient Egypt* (Blackwell companions to the ancient world, I; Chichester, West Sussex, U.K.; Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell), 255-90. {BB}

### Week 3 Temples & Symbols

- Chapter 3 in Teeter (2011).
- Chapter 3 in Stein, & Stein (2011).
- Stevens, A. (2011), 'Egypt', in Timothy Insoll (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of the Archaeology of Ritual and Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 722-44. {BB}
- The Art of Counting

### Week 4 Festivals, Myths & Ritual

- Chapter 4 in Teeter (2011).
- Chapter 4 & 2 in Stein, & Stein (2011).

### Week 5 Contacting the Gods

- Chapter 5 in Teeter (2011).
- Finnestad, R. B. (1999), 'Enjoying the pleasures of sensation: reflections on a significant feature of Egyptian religion', in E. Teeter and J. A. Larson (eds.), *Gold of Praise: Studies on Ancient Egypt in honor of Edward F. Wente* (Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization 58; Chicago: Oriental Institute Publications), 111-29. {BB} <http://oi.uchicago.edu/pdf/saoc58.pdf>

### Week 6 Human - Divine Communication

- Chapter 6 in Teeter (2011).
- Chapter 5 in Stein, & Stein (2011).

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- Ray, J. D. (1981), 'Ancient Egypt', in M. Loewe and C. Blacker (eds.), *Divination and Oracles* (London: George Allen & Unwin), 174-90.

## Week 7 Death & Funerary Rites

- Chapter 7 in Teeter (2011).
- Chapter 8 in Stein, & Stein (2011).
- Hays, H. M. (2010), 'Funerary Rituals (Pharaonic Period)', in W. Wendrich and J. Dieleman (ed.), *UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology*. <<http://escholarship.org/uc/item/1r32g9zn>>.

## Week 8 Communicating with the Dead

- Chapter 8 in Teeter (2011).
- Chapter 9 in Stein, & Stein (2011).
- Stevens, A. (2009), 'Domestic religious practices', in W. Wendrich and J. Dieleman (ed.), *UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology*. <<http://www.escholarship.org/uc/item/7s07628w>>.

## Week 9 Magic

- Chapter 9 in Teeter (2011).
- Chapter 7 & 10 in Stein, & Stein (2011).
- Ritner, R. K. (1995), 'The Religious, Social, and Legal Parameters of Traditional Egyptian Magic', in M. Meyer and P. Mirecki (eds.), *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power* (Religions in the Graeco-Roman World; Leiden, New York, Köln: E.J. Brill), 43-60. {BB}

## Week 10 Amarna & Survivals

- Chapter 10 in Teeter (2011).
- Chapter 11 in Stein, & Stein (2011).
- DuQuesne, T. (2003), 'Ancient Egyptian religion and its relevance in today's world', *DE*, 56, 11-24. {BB}
- Naguib, S.-A. (2008), 'Survivals of Pharaonic Religious Practices in Contemporary Coptic Christianity', in J. Dieleman and W. Wendrich (eds.), *UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology* (Los Angeles: UCLA), <<http://repositories.cdlib.org/nelc/uee/1008/>>.

# Outline & Reconstruction (Group Project)

## Objective

Plan, outline, and create a virtual reconstruction of a spell, ritual, or prayer.

- Learn by creating
- Practice developing a detailed and organised outline
- Track down surviving examples of physical evidence
- Use museum databases and archives
- Analyse texts in translation
- Explain concepts or terms to others
- Demonstrated your knowledge of Egyptian deities and myths
- Evaluate and critically review scholarly interpretations of specific texts and artefacts
- Apply a critical use of the internet (including discriminating frivolous sites from those that are useful) and integrate them in your research
- Practice and improve your action planning, prioritising and ability to manage time efficiently
- Work in a team
- Create web-content
- Engage in critical self- and peer-review

## Description

For this project you will create a virtual reconstruction of a religious activity. The end result will include a detailed outline and a WebFolio. It will be centred on primary evidence: translations of texts, objects (physical and images of them), representations, and, wherever possible, excavation reports. Be creative. Be collaborative. BUT, be critical and scholarly. Try to integrate all aspects of the ritual that it might include—incantation, objects, gestures, mythological background. Keep the context in mind (this includes the time period, location, etc...).

## Procedures

- Sign up for a group (3 people)
- Select the primary text (each text will have 2 groups working on it). This semester you can choose from
  - a Prayer
  - 2 spells
  - a Warning to Evildoer on a tomb
  - a Funerary Text
  - a Letter to the Dead
- By the end of week 3, Check-in via Blackboard > Syllabus & Assessments > Reconstruction & Outline Project > Midway Check-in (view the blog)
- Consider the following:
  - Who might have recited or performed it? Priests/laypeople? Who was it for? Be as specific as possible. You may wish to use names perhaps, but then ensure they are known ones from the time-period in question.
  - What was done? What was said? What was used?
  - When? Was it something that was done repeatedly or a one-off?
  - Where would it have taken place? Think carefully here, be specific as possible, and use excavation reports as much as possible thinking of the limitations of space.

- How might it have been enacted?
- What is the mythological background?
- Use the following as support:
  - See if any artefacts or materials survive in museum collections.
    - Note these in your outline
    - Include links whenever possible in your reconstruction
  - Check tomb paintings, temple reliefs, stela, papyri or ostraka to see if any part of it might be represented
  - Use a glossary or some other means to explain any deities or supernatural entities (or other terms) that are mentioned
  - Provide an overview of the mythological background in which this occurs
- What should you use for the reconstruction? Whatever tools you can! If you need visual, audio, or video recording equipment—we can lend it to you. The publication will, in the end, be digital (so even if you wish to re-enact, you will need to video it...).
- You will need a webspace space to include links and upload your files to make a cohesive whole. For this, you will use PebblePad's collaborative webspace. This has the added benefit that you can choose to make the site public later, and show off to employers, friends, and fans!
- You will need to supply a bibliography. There must be evidence for what you do, or it must be based on a reasonable hypothesis.
- To ensure that all who work hard, and all those who don't, get the grades they deserve, there will be one grade for the group project. However, individuals will receive the group grade modified by the feedback from peer assessment (for this you will use WebPA: don't worry, a link will be available on Blackboard). Further instructions and links are on Blackboard.
- **NOTE: It is NOT the job of the Egypt Centre or any other Collection to do your research for you!** If you wish to see any information that they may have on the artefacts other than what is available on the MODES database, please make an appointment to see them, and let them know no later than the end of week 3.
- As always, be sure to reference your work, and cite data and examples. You must acknowledge your sources with in-text citations (or footnotes), and include a list of properly formatted references at the end. If you do not, then you are plagiarising. At the least, the essay will not pass. At the worst, you can be required to withdraw from the university and it will remain on your record. Do the Plagiarism exercise on Blackboard to be sure you understand.

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## Final output

- 30% of the grade will be based on your Outline
  - This should be as detailed as possible
- 70% of the grade will be based on your WebFolio
  - Ideally this will include a Glossary of relevant terms

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## Bibliography Details

- Reminder: Your sources must consist of **10 scholarly publications**, **not** including the textbooks, coffee-table glossy publications meant for the general public, general dictionaries nor encyclopaedia articles. Scholarly sources **DO** include journal articles, chapters in edited books, monographs, and catalogues (print and online).
  - ★ Do NOT use Budge.
  - ★ Do NOT use internet sources for information (unless it is an online museum catalogue website, authorised by me in advance).
  - ★ DO use specific evidence to support your case.
  - ★ Be sure your final submission follows correct academic grammar and style.

- ★Part of the compulsory skills that you need to demonstrate in this module is that you are able to compose in grammatically correct English.
- ★DO proofread your work before submission.
- ★DO make an appointment with the Literary Fund Fellows if you need to and have them look over your work (KH217).
- ★DO enjoy this! It usually ends up being a fun project!

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## Reminder

- The submission should be up to 2500 words
  - The outline should be handed in to the college office by the due date & time
  - The reconstruction must be on Pebble Pad by the due date & time (it will be frozen)
- Counts for 40% of the total grade for the module
- Due Week 5

# Research Project

## Objective

Write a research paper focussing on 3-5 artefacts (textual and non-textual) that best exemplify a religious practice, ritual, or belief of a specific period of your choice. Some examples of topics might be Ramesside Personal Piety, Cursing Evildoers in the First Intermediate Period to Middle Kingdom, the Rise of the Cult of Osiris in the Middle Kingdom, Divination in the Late Ramesside to Third Intermediate Period...

By doing this you should:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the social and historical context of Egyptian religion of a specified time period
- Show a knowledge of the main sources of evidence, both textual and non-textual for religious practices from a particular time period and location
- Discuss the interpretive issues associated with dealing with fragmentary and incomplete evidence
- Show that you can analyse the the primary data to develop a meaningful interpretation
- Evaluate and critically review scholarly interpretations of specific texts and artefacts
- Apply a critical use of the internet (including discriminating frivolous sites from those that are useful) and integrate them in your research
- Demonstrate your ability to think critically and formulate a logical argument based on the evidence
- Practice and improve your action planning, prioritising and ability to manage time efficiently
- Demonstrate your ability to write in grammatically correct university-level prose.

## Procedures

- Please select **three to five pieces of evidence** (these must be artefacts and texts), at least one from the Egypt Centre if possible (others may be from other Egyptian collections—there are numerous available online if you check the Blackboard site) **that you think best exemplify a specific Ancient Egyptian practice or belief during ONE of these SPECIFIC time periods (or a transition time from one to another).**
  - Pre-Dynastic
  - Early Dynastic
  - Old Kingdom
  - First Intermediate Period
  - Early Middle Kingdom
  - Late Middle Kingdom
  - Early New Kingdom
  - Amarna Period
  - Ramesside Age
  - Early Third Intermediate Period
  - Nubian Period
  - Saite Period
  - Ptolemaic
  - Roman
  - Coptic
- Discuss:
  - why you chose those specific pieces of evidence and what they reveal concerning the topic and the people who used them.

- **NOTE: It is NOT the job of the Egypt Centre or any other Collection to do your research for you!** If you wish to see any information that they may have on the artefacts other than what is available on the MODES database, please make an appointment to see them, and let them know no later than the end of week 3.
- **YOU WILL NOT BE HANDLING THESE ARTEFACTS SO DO NOT ASK THE EGYPT CENTRE TO ALLOW YOU ACCESS.**
- You may choose any of the artefacts that are on display or in their catalogue which is now accessible at the Egypt Centre or online through their website.
- For your text(s) you may choose your translation, but it must be recent and by a reputable scholar (acceptable translations include those in the edited volumes by Lichtheim, Simpson, Parkinson, McDowell, Strudwick). Ideally look at different versions.
- You should ALSO be using catalogues and parallels to help you find more information on these types of artefacts.
- Include a separate page with the a brief catalogue entries for any artefacts (these do not count toward the word count and should be attached to the end).
- Include the images and/or a translation of the texts as an appendix. Texts in translation do NOT count towards the wordcount.
- This IS a research paper, so you need to have a proper introduction and conclusion, etc... All the normal rules apply!
- Your thesis is basically that X is a religious practice or belief that is representative of Time Period Z (you can narrow this down by location and class as well), & that artefacts a-e best exemplify it (explain why).
- As always, be sure to reference your work, and cite data and examples. You must acknowledge your sources with in-text citations (or footnotes), and include a list of properly formatted references at the end. If you do not, then you are plagiarising. At the least, the essay will not pass. At the worst, you can be required to withdraw from the university and it will remain on your record. Do the Plagiarism exercise on Blackboard to be sure you understand.

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## Details

- **Reminder:** Your sources must include **at least 10 scholarly publications**, **not** including the textbooks, coffee-table glossy publications meant for the general public, general dictionaries nor encyclopaedia articles. Scholarly sources **DO** include journal articles, chapters in edited books, monographs, and catalogues (print and online).
  - ★ Do NOT use Budge.
  - ★ Do NOT use internet sources for information (unless it is an online museum catalogue website, authorised by me in advance).
  - ★ DO use specific evidence to support your case.
  - ★ Be sure your final draft that you submit follows correct academic grammar and style.
  - ★ Part of the compulsory skills that you need to demonstrate in this module is that you are able to compose in grammatically correct English.
  - ★ DO proofread your work before submission.
  - ★ DO make an appointment with the Literary Fund Fellows if you need to
  - ★ DO enjoy this! It usually ends up being a fun project!
- **Before you submit your paper**, use the “Paper-Writing Checklist” on Blackboard > Egyptology Tips > Content > Tips for Writing Essays, Papers, Research Projects and ATTACH to the end of your submission
- The submission should be up to 3000 words
- Counts for 60% of the grade for the module

- Due Exams Week