

MPhil IN ASSYRIOLOGY

Assyriology is a discipline which embraces an entire human civilisation, over a period of more than four thousand years. The cultures and societies of Mesopotamia can be explored through an unrivalled range of interdisciplinary themes and approaches.

Uniquely, our MPhil in Assyriology allows you to focus equally on the ancient languages, archaeology and cultures of Mesopotamia. You will study one or both of the principal written languages of ancient Mesopotamia, Akkadian (i.e. Babylonian and Assyrian) and Sumerian, combining this with learning about Mesopotamian archaeology and culture, from the birth of cities all the way to the Persian empire.

This intensive programme caters for those with previous knowledge of Mesopotamia, and those without. For those who are new to the subject, the programme is self-contained, providing an intensive general introduction to Mesopotamia. It also acts as a conversion course for those who plan to use Mesopotamian textual sources in doctoral research.

As a student of Assyriology you will join a lively community of Ancient Near Eastern scholars, including other postgraduate students, post-doctoral researchers, and permanent members of teaching and research staff.

THEMES

You will acquire detailed knowledge of varied aspects of the culture of Mesopotamia, with a focus on:

- The interpretation of Babylonian, Assyrian and Sumerian written sources
- The archaeology of early urbanism
- The development of early states and empires
- Trade and the creation of value
- Ideology and religion
- Funerary and healing rituals
- The effect of climate change on settlement patterns

STRUCTURE

This eleven-month programme is structured to allow both breadth and specialisation. You take three year-long modules. One of the modules will be a language module (Akkadian or Sumerian at the appropriate level). Other modules typically available include:

- Mesopotamian Culture (Literature and Religion and Scholarship, offered in alternate years)
- Archaeology of Mesopotamia (Early and Later, offered in alternate years)
- Topics in Mesopotamian History and Archaeology

You can also choose any year-long MPhil module (or two term-long modules) from all those on offer in the Department. You also take the Research Skills module and write a dissertation.



TEACHING

Teaching is through a combination of lectures, seminars, small-group sessions and hands-on practicals. The languages are taught at introductory and advanced levels, with initial instruction in grammar followed by reading classes for which you prepare 'set texts'. Set texts may include extracts from the Gilgameš Flood story, Ištar's Descent, and the inscriptions of Sennacherib. Seminars allow you to engage intensively with current debates across a wide range of subjects.

We also hold practical classes, to give you experience in handling Mesopotamian artefacts, and of reading original inscriptions. Our Assyriology Teaching Collection includes high-fidelity replicas of some of the prescribed texts, as well as ceramics and other archaeological materials.

AFTER THE MPhil

By the end of the programme, you should be ready to pursue independent research in the languages, archaeology and culture of Mesopotamia at doctoral level and beyond. Graduates of the MPhil in Assyriology have gone on to a wide range of careers, including research, finance, the arts, and museums.

WHAT ARE WE LOOKING FOR?

In addition to evidence of academic ability, we are looking for evidence of motivation and intellectual curiosity and an aptitude for the study of ancient languages. Reading knowledge of French and/or German is advantageous, but is not essential. Please provide a (non-binding) idea of what topic you would like to pursue in the dissertation.

CONTACT

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We are always happy to hear from prospective applicants.



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