



CLAS 157a — 2026

Ancient Egypt on the Silver Screen

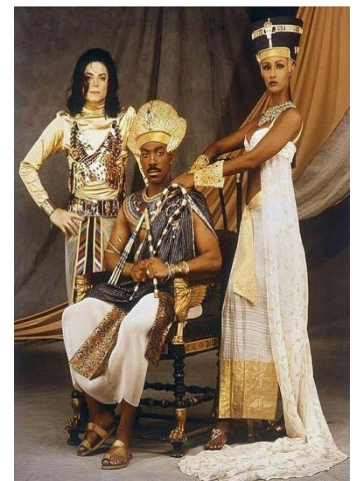
Summer 2025 ASYNCHRONOUS CLASS—10 Weeks June 1–August 6, 2026

Prof. Darlene L. Brooks Hedstrom Email: brookshedstrom@brandeis.edu

NOTE: 10-week online asynchronous courses must include a minimum of 18 hours of class-related engagement each week. *** You will have deadlines every two weeks to complete the assigned work before moving to the next section.

From the *Ten Commandments* to *The Mummy* to Michael Jackson's *Remember the Time*, Ancient Egypt has captivated audiences with images of powerful pharaohs from Ramesses to Cleopatra and a divine pantheon featuring Isis, Horus, and Anubis. The archaeological discoveries of ancient Egypt in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries fueled the global imagination of a world of gold riches, mummified bodies, and palace intrigue. From silent films to modern music videos, directors, writers, and set designers have used ancient history and the history of modern archaeology to present Egypt's past for entertainment.

In this course, students will view films and read scholarship on historical dramas related to ancient and modern Egypt, primarily through the eyes of English-language films. When possible, we will view Arabic, French, and Italian films that offer counter-narratives to the Anglophone film tradition. Such films as *The Mummy* (1932), *El-Momya/The Night of Counting the Years* (1969), and *Sphinx* (1981) present windows into the history of archaeology, the antiquities market, and the protection of Egyptian cultural heritage. With this foundation, we turn to Egypt in silent films such as Cecil B DeMille's 1923 *The Ten Commandments*, Michael Curtiz's 1924 *Moon of Israel*, and Theda Bara in *Cleopatra* (1917). With color cinema, we will see Ancient Egypt now with vivid set designs and the racialization and elitism of ancient Egyptian rulers as white, in contrast to enslaved Egyptians (*Valley of the Kings*; *Land of the Egyptians*; *Cleopatra*). We will discuss the race, ethnicity, and sexuality of powerful leaders such as Moses, Joseph, Queen Nefertiti, Pharaoh Akhenaten, and Queen Cleopatra and how their portrayal in film compares to the historical evidence from Egypt. The course will conclude by comparing recent films (*Cleopatra*-1999, *Agora*2009, *Gods of Egypt*-2016, *The Mummy*-2017) with animated representations (*Prince of Egypt*-1998, *La Reine Soleil*-2007; *Mummies*-2023). Students will read scholarship examining enslavement, colonial archaeology, and Egyptian history to assess the historical value of the films.



Learning Goals:

By the end of this course, you should be able to:

- articulate the complexity and richness of Egyptian history as represented in films and set designs
- Identify the racial and ethnic coding present in primarily American & British films relating to Egyptians, Nubians, and colonial archaeology
- identify differences between Egyptian Arabic and French presentations of ancient Egypt and modern archaeology with the American and British
- develop an understanding of how moderns have rewritten and reinterpreted ancient and modern Egypt, considering national and ethnic differences
- develop critical skills in reading and critiquing the integrity of cinematic representations;
- refine your capacity to examine critically and comparatively the past and present

You will watch lectures I have recorded, use VoiceThread to discuss the films in their historical context, outline major archaeological elements of the film related to set designs, identify the racialization of ancient and modern Egypt for primarily white American and British viewers, and trace how ancient Egypt has evolved as a subject from silent films to epic films to modern music videos. Most films will be in English, with some in Arabic, French, Italian, and German, and all with English subtitles.

Assessment:

The Department of Education's standard states that the combined total of class related engagement must equal 18 hours per week for a ten-week, four-credit summer course. Please consider how you will divide your time over the 10 weeks to abide by this, including viewing lectures, viewing films, recording VoiceThread responses, and readings.

- 20 % VoiceThread Video Responses per film (5-6 slides) — usually four films for each unit
- 10 % Perusall Comments (3-1=4 comments)
- 20 % Weekly Notes at StoryMap (Participation) — using your StoryMap, you'll take notes on lectures, films, and Perusall readings and this will be a basis for your formal Unit assessment of the assigned films every two weeks. The notes will also help you with gathering responses for your Video Recording at Voicethreads
- 50 % Film Journal (Commonplace Book) at StoryMap—read historical reviews provided at Moodle and respond to the prompt for each unit, addressing the reviews and your own assessment of the historical elements of the films, 5 times—once per unit, 10% each.

Academic Integrity at Brandeis and AI Use in CLAS 157: You are expected to be honest in all of your academic work in this summer course. Do not use AI to generate responses to your posts or summaries—this would be a violation of preparing your work for this class and will have adverse consequences. Copying and pasting from other sources is tracked in Perusall, VoiceThread, and Moodle and if text is pasted in, it will be flagged as not generated by you and you'll not earn credit for the submission. I do not grant permission for my lectures to be uploaded into any AI platform—the lectures are my intellectual property and provided only for students to view during the class.

If your work for this class is suspected of AI use, a case will be submitted, with your work, the rationale for the evidence of suspected AI use, and it will go through the process and a panel review at Brandeis. The easiest way to avoid this is to simply do the work. The assignments for this class require you to reflect and engage with the lectures and the films.

Please let me know if you wish to discuss the AI policy to ensure you understand the limits in this class, please let me you by emailing me at brookshedstrm@brandeis.edu

Please consult [Brandeis University's Rights and Responsibilities](#) for all policies and procedures related to academic integrity. Allegations of academic dishonesty will be forwarded to the director of academic integrity. Sanctions for academic dishonesty can include failing grades and/or suspension from the university. [Citation and research assistance](#) can be found on the [university library website](#).

Brandeis seeks to create a learning environment that is welcoming and inclusive of all students, and I want to support you in your learning. If you think you may require disability accommodations, you will need to work with Student Accessibility Support (SAS). You can contact them at 781-736-3470, email them at access@brandeis.edu, or visit the [Student Accessibility Support](#) home page. You can find helpful student FAQs and other resources on the SAS website, including guidance on how to know whether you might be eligible for support from SAS. If you already have an accommodation letter from SAS, please provide me with a copy as soon as you can so that I can ensure effective implementation of accommodations for this class. In order to coordinate exam accommodations, ideally you should provide the accommodation letter at least 48 hours before an exam.

Grade rubric for CLAS 157

A	100-94	C	75.9-73
A-	90-93.9	C-	72.9-70
B+	89.9-86	D+	69.9-66
B	85.9-83	D	65.9-63
B-	82.9-80	D-	62.9-60
C+	79.9-76	F	59.9 and below

WORKFLOW for class

1. 🎥 Lecture viewing & 📌 Notes at StoryMap Commonplace Book
2. 🎥 Film questions—review in advance for taking notes at StoryMap and preparing your voice reflection
3. 🎥 Film viewing & 📌 take notes & record timestamps/take screenshots/notes at StoryMap
4. 🗣️ Record VoiceThread response video response for each film
5. 📖 Read and respond to Perusall texts for the unit
6. 📌 Write three formal Unit Entry responses at StoryMap Commonplace Book

UNIT 1 Weeks 1 & 2 Archaeological Discovery of Egypt in the Modern Period

Week 1— Beginning June 1



- 👁 Watch Introduction Videos 1, 2 (VoiceThread Instructions), and 3 (Perusall Instructions)
- 👁 Watch Lecture 1 on The Mummy, 1932
- 👉 Notes at StoryMap Commonplace Book
- 🎬 Watch FILM: The Mummy, 1932
- 🗣 POST to VoiceThread Response to The Mummy, 1932



- 👁 Watch Lecture 2 on The Mummy's Hand, 1940
- 🎬 Watch FILM: The Mummy's Hand, 1940 ([Internet Archive](#))
- 👉 Notes at StoryMap Commonplace Book
- 🗣 POST to VoiceThread Response to The Mummy's Hand, 1940


Week 2 Beginning June 9



- 👁 Watch Lecture 3 on Valley of the Kings, 1954
- 🎬 Watch FILM: Valley of the Kings, 1954
- 👉 Notes at StoryMap Commonplace Book
- 🗣 POST to VoiceThread Response to Valley of the Kings, 1954



 **WATCH** Lecture 3 on Al-Mumya’/The Night of Counting the Years, 1969, Arabic—Egypt (2 hours) w/English subtitles

 **WATCH FILM:** Al-Mumya’/The Night of Counting the Years, 1969

 **POST** to VoiceThread Responses to Al-Mumya’/The Night of Counting the Years, 1969

 **LISTEN:** [Podcast about Shadi Abdel Salam’s other film, “The Eloquent Peasant” and “The Mummy”](#)

END OF UNIT WRITING & VOICETHREADS — Due Sunday June 14th midnight



COMMENT **Perusall** Doris V. Sutherland, *The Mummy* (2019) Excerpt “The Egypt of the Mummy” (15 pages)

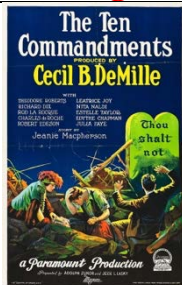



COMMENT **Perusall** Walid El Khachab, “The Cinema of the Pharaohs: Film, Archaeology, and Sub-Imperialism,” in *Dialogues artistiques avec les passés de l’Égypte: Une perspective transnationale et transmédiiale* (2017) (12 pages)


 **WRITE** Unit 1 responses at StoryMap Commonplace Book


UNIT 2 Weeks 3 & 4 Egypt in Biblical Epics: Silent Films to Animation

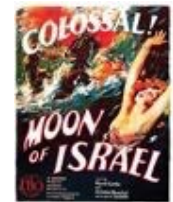
Week 3 Beginning June 15

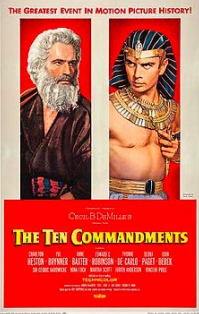





 Watch Lecture on Ten Commandments 1923 & Moon of Israel 1924 (NOTE: Two B&W films)

 Watch FILM: Ten Commandments 1923 (only til 50:00 mark) & Moon of Israel 1924

 **POST** to VoiceThread Responses to Ten Commandments 1923 (only til 50:00 mark) & Moon of Israel 1924








-  Watch Lecture on Ten Commandments 1956
-  Watch FILM: Ten Commandments 1956
-  POST to VoiceThread Responses to Ten Commandments 1956

Week 4 Beginning June 23



-  Watch Lecture 3 on Al-Mohager 1994
-  Watch FILM: Al-Mohager 1994 (Egyptian Arabic)
-  POST to VoiceThread Responses to Al-Mohager 1994



-  Watch Lecture on Prince of Egypt, 1998
-  Watch FILM: Prince of Egypt, 1998 (animation)
-  POST to VoiceThread Responses to Prince of Egypt, 1998

END OF UNIT WRITING & VOICETHREADS — Due Sunday June 29th midnight



COMMENT Perusall Nuno Simões Rodrigues, “Josephus as Source of the Egyptian Sequences in Cecil B. DeMille’s *The Ten Commandments* (1956),” in *How Pharaohs Became Media Stars*, (2023), 110-135. (25 pages)



COMMENT Perusall Russell, James. “FOUNDATION MYTHS: DreamWorks SKG, *The Prince of Egypt* (1998) and the Historical Epic Film.” *New Review of Film and Television Studies* 2 (2004): 233–55. (20 pages)

👉 **WRITE** Unit 2 responses at StoryMap Commonplace Book

UNIT 3 Weeks 5 & 6 Ancient Egyptian Pharaohs, Drama, and Religion

Week 5 Beginning June 30



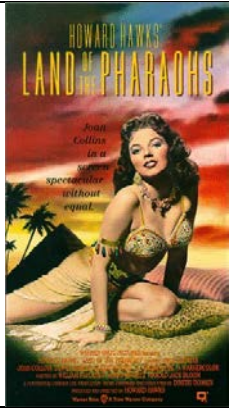
Watch Lecture on The Egyptian 1954



Watch FILM: The Egyptian 1954



POST to VoiceThread Responses to The Egyptian 1954



- 👁 Watch Lecture on Land of the Pharaohs 1955
- 🎬 Watch FILM: Land of the Pharaohs 1955
- 🎙 POST to VoiceThread Responses to Land of the Pharaohs 1955

Week 6 Beginning July 7



NEFERTITI

- 👁 Watch Lecture on Nefertiti: Queen of the Nile, 1961
- 🎬 Watch FILM: Nefertiti: Queen of the Nile, 1961
- 🎙 POST to VoiceThread Responses to Nefertiti: Queen of the Nile, 1961



- 👁 Watch Lecture on La Reine Soleil, 2007
- 🎬 Watch FILM: La Reine Soleil, 2007 (animation)
- 🎙 POST to VoiceThread Responses to La Reine Soleil, 2007

END OF UNIT WRITING & VOICETHREADS — Due Sunday July 13th midnight



COMMENT Perusall Guillermo Juberías Gracia, “From Alma-Tadema to Cecil B. DeMille: The Influence of Nineteenth-Century Painting on Classical Hollywood Films Set in Ancient Egypt,” in *How Pharaohs Became Media Stars*, (2023), 136-161. (25 pages)



COMMENT Perusall D. Montserrat, *Akhenaten: History, Fantasy and Ancient Egypt* (Routledge, 2000), 55-94. (24 pages)

WRITE Unit 3 responses at StoryMap Commonplace Book

UNIT 4 Weeks 7 & 8 Anglo-American Cleopatras

Week 7 Beginning July 14



Watch Lecture on Cleopatra 1934

Watch FILM: Cleopatra 1934 (1 hour 40 min.)

POST to VoiceThread Responses to Cleopatra 1934



Watch Lecture on Caesar and Cleopatra 1945

Watch FILM: Caesar and Cleopatra 1945 (George Bernard Shaw) (2 hours)

POST to VoiceThread Responses to Caesar and Cleopatra 1945

Week 8 Beginning July 21



👁 Watch Lecture on Cleopatra, 1963

🎬 Watch FILM: Cleopatra, 1963(it is over three hours, so divide it into the two films—there's an intermission)

🎤 POST to VoiceThread Responses to Cleopatra, 1963

END OF UNIT WRITING & VOICETHREADS — Due Sunday July 27th midnight



COMMENT Perusall

Marie Wyke and Dominic Montserrat, “Glamour Girls: Cleomania in Mass Culture,” Margaret M. Mills, ed., “Cleopatra in Egypt, Europe, and New York: An Introduction,” in *Cleopatra: A Sphinx Revisited* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), Chapter 8. (16 pages)



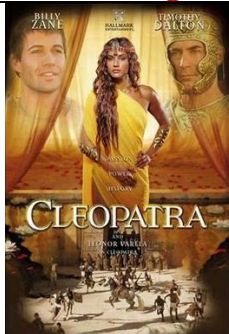
COMMENT Perusall

Francesca Royster, “Egyptian Scandals: Elizabeth Taylor’s *Cleopatra* and the White Grotesque,” from *Becoming Cleopatra: The Shifting Image of an Icon*, (2016): 93-120. (33 pages)

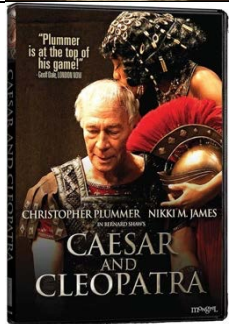
👉 **WRITE** Unit 4 responses at StoryMap Commonplace Book

UNIT 5 Weeks 9 & 10 Cleopatra Restored

Week 9 Beginning July 28

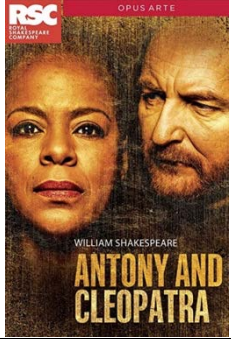



- 👁 Watch Lecture on Cleopatra 1999
- 🎬 Watch FILM: Cleopatra 1999
- 🎤 POST to VoiceThread Responses to Cleopatra 1999



- 👁 Watch Lecture 3 on Caesar and Cleopatra 2008 (George Bernard Shaw)
- 🎬 Watch FILM: Caesar and Cleopatra 2008
- 🎤 POST to VoiceThread Responses to Caesar and Cleopatra 2008


Week 10 Beginning August 4



 Watch Lecture on Antony and Cleopatra, 2017 Shakespeare

 Watch FILM: Antony and Cleopatra, 2017 Shakespeare

 POST to VoiceThread Responses to Antony and Cleopatra, 2017 Shakespeare

 WATCH: “Antony and Cleopatra with Kim Cantrell”
<https://video.alexanderstreet.com/p/ywDKmVKPV>

FINAL CLASS WRITING — Due Thursday August 6th at NOON



COMMENT Perusall Simon Ryle, “Body Space: The Sublime Cleopatra,” in *Shakespeare, Cinema and Desire: Adaptation and Other Futures of Shakespeare’s Language* (New York: Palgrave 2014) (18 pages)



COMMENT Perusall Vivian Yee “Whose Queen? Netflix and Egypt Spar Over an African Cleopatra.” *New York Times* May 10, 2023 (3 pages)



COMMENT Perusall Islam Issa, “Cleopatra was Egyptian — whether Black or Brown Matters Less,” *Al Jazeera* May 1, 2023 (2 pages)

 **WRITE** Unit 5 responses at StoryMap Commonplace Book