

Sumerian Language and Literature

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Content:

This course will introduce to one of the oldest or even the oldest known language in the world history, its first attestations, its development, its linguistic peculiarities, its grammar and its literary works. Sumerian was a living language during the 3rd millennium BC in Mesopotamia, the Land between the Euphrates and the Tigris, that is today's Iraq. It died out around 2000 BCE, but it was used – similar to Latin in Europe – as a scientific and religious language until the 1st millennium BC in Babylonia and Assyria.



Learning objectives:

In interactive lessons, knowledge about its vehicle, the cuneiform script system, a basic grammar and the most important literary works will be acquired, so that successful participants by aid of the most important scientific tools (grammars, syllabaries, glossars, online resources) will be able to read simple inscriptions (and other texts) from original objects, such as statues and tablets.

Bibliography:

D.O. Edzard, Sumerian Grammar (HdO 71), Leiden, Boston 2003;

K. Volk, A Sumerian Chrestomathy (SILO 5), Wiesbaden 2012;

M.-L. Thomsen, The Sumerian Language. An Introduction to its History and Grammatical Structure (Mesopotamia 10), Copenhagen 1984

A. H. Jagersma, A descriptive grammar of Sumerian

<https://openaccess.leidenuniv.nl/handle/1887/16107>

D. A. Foxvog, Introduction to Sumerian Grammar

https://cdli.ucla.edu/pubs/cdlp/cdlp0002_20160104.pdf



Intended Schedule:

Monday, 9:30–11:00	1) Introduction to Sumerian: Language and Cuneiform Script
Monday, 11:30–12:30	2) Substantives 1: Word Categories, Number, Gender, Possession
Monday, 14:00–15:30	3) Exercises and History of Literature 1
Tuesday, 9:30–11:00	4) Substantives 2: The ten cases in Sumerian
Tuesday, 11:30–12:30	5) Pronouns, Demonstrative Particles and Numbers
Tuesday, 14:00–15:30	6) Exercises and History of Literature 2
Wednesday, 9:30–11:00	7) The Nominal Chain
Wednesday, 11:30–12:30	8) Verb 1 – The Verbal Chain, Verbal Classes, Conjugation and Conjugation Prefixes
Wednesday, 14:00–15:30	9) Exercises and History of Literature 3
Thursday, 9:30–11:00	10) Verb 2 – Case Elements, Modal Prefixes
Thursday, 11:30–12:30	11) Verb 3 – Enclitic Copula, Non-finite Forms, Subordination, me “to be”
Thursday, 14:00–15:30	12) Exercises and History of Literature 4
Friday, 9:30–11:00	13) Reading Sumerian
Friday, 11:30–12:30	14) Reading Sumerian
Friday, 14:00–15:30	15) Conclusion