

iMovie Assignment Guide for Societies of the World 38





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Pyramid Schemes: The Archaeological History of Ancient Egypt

General Introduction to the Course



This course surveys ancient Egyptian pharaonic civilization (about 3,000–332 B.C.) as an example of ancient complex society. It emphasizes Egyptian material culture — pyramids, temples, tombs, settlements and cities, art masterpieces and objects of daily life. We will explore major developmental themes that defined the Egyptian state — the geographical landscape, kingship, social stratification, and religion. Our chronological path includes excursions into Egyptian art, history, politics, religion, literature, and language (hieroglyphs). We will also touch on contemporary issues of object repatriation, archaeology and cultural nationalism, and the evolution of modern Egyptology. Includes field trips to

the Egyptian collections of the Peabody Museum and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, along with immersive 3D computer model viewing of the Giza Pyramids in Harvard’s Visualization Center. Students will come away with an appreciation for a remote ancient Egyptian belief system that produced outstanding monuments and intellectual traditions. Critical thinking will help debunk many popular myths about ancient Egypt, and highlight Egyptian perspectives that contrast with modern approaches to state, society and material culture. Students need no prior experience with Egyptology. The course will cater to those “just passing through” ancient Egypt, but will also lay the groundwork for potential concentrators in the subject and related archaeological/historical fields.

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introduction

iMovie Assignments

In addition to your final research paper, this course includes two iMovie assignments. The first iMovie will be a visual study guide that helps you prepare for the midterm exam; the second will help you form a research question for your final paper. These assignments are meant to demonstrate scholarly content in visual form, and more broadly, they are designed to encourage the creative translation of that scholarly content into interactive multimedia presentations. Here are five goals of the iMovie assignments:

1. to allow you to think very concisely about a specific Egyptological problem and present it in an engaging way;
2. to combine a well-thought out “script” with a chance to take advantage of ancient Egypt’s rich visual heritage;
3. to help you prepare for essay questions on the midterm exam;
4. to provide a “teaser” or “test run” method for exploring aspects of your final research paper;
5. to channel your inner Martin Scorsese, learn a new skill, impress your friends and have fun!

You could think of these iMovie assignments as mini-paper topics, and many of them will contain a story-arc relating to a specific Egyptological problem. The challenge will be to capture that problem in a two- or three-minute movie. This guide will help you approach these assignments so you can develop deep concepts in just a few short minutes of video. One way to organize your video might take this form:

- a) an introduction: grab the viewer’s attention with a mystery, or a more formal thesis statement;
- b) a middle or descriptive section: summarize the evidence, the state of the problem, perhaps different theories;
- c) a conclusion: your own take on the situation, your solution (or is there no solution?), and where we should go from here.

In order to take full advantage of the iMovie assignment, it is important to think a bit about the special things that the medium of video allows you to accomplish — things that can’t be accomplished in text alone.

In a written essay, you are providing your readers with a single stream of information (the words); in the videos you produce for this class, you are providing your audience with at least two such streams (perhaps voice-over narration, images, even music). Ideally, the audio and visual streams will enhance each other instead of clashing: your narration should frame our experience of the images; the images should enhance our understanding of your narration. Above all, the two streams shouldn’t compete with each other: an overly busy or cluttered slide or video clip may distract your audience from the content of your voice-over.

One other thing to bear in mind is the fact that when you write, you are writing for readers who will control the rate at which they will absorb your words, so the “pace” of your writing may be something you’ve not thought of. If you terminate a

iMovie



paragraph with a particularly stunning idea, or italicize a key term or phrase, you can count on the reader to take the time necessary to grasp the idea. This isn't the case in video. When you create a movie, you determine the rate at which viewers will have to absorb the information you offer them. So you have to build in the "thinking time" your viewers require by offering them a little bit of space and silence at certain key moments (perhaps a fade to black to punctuate a key idea, perhaps a longer shot of a key image without any narration, perhaps some text against a black screen that lingers a bit, etc.).

Ideally, the visual components of your film will ensure that your iMovie is accomplishing more than an oral presentation of similar length. So one key tactic to deploy as you revise is to continually ask yourself whether the images you add are augmenting your argument and deepening your ideas.

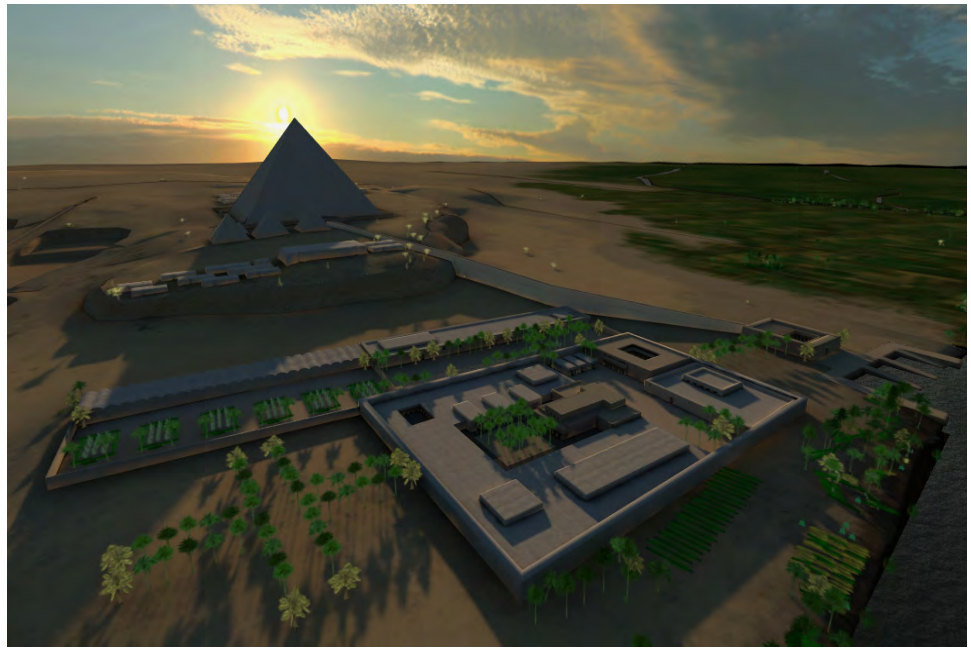
A. iMovie is Easy...

iMovie is an easy-to-use video editing software program that runs on Macs and iPads. Those who prefer to are welcome to work on a PC in MovieMaker or other video

editing software. Computers, scanners, video and audio equipment are available in the Lamont Media Lab. BUT—before you start to feel overwhelmed, remember: iMovie is pretty easy. You don't need a video camera or any other professional equipment; just a computer, some still images (or video clips if you prefer), and your music from your iTunes library. Images dropped into iMovie gently pan and zoom, giving you the feel of animation. Drop a music file in and you have an instant background soundtrack.

There are excellent short tutorial videos by Apple that will get you up and running in no time (<http://www.apple.com/ilife/video-showcase/>) and the course iSite has links to additional sources of images, music, and tutorial help. We also have scheduled workshops in the Lamont Media Lab, and the media are experts there ready to help you almost 24/7.

You are welcome to make your movie as simple or complex as you wish: background music, voice-over narration, text-only subtitles, fancy cinematic effects, historic footage, Hollywood clips, "Ken Burns-effect" pans/zooms on still images, scans from books. You may even "repurpose" any of the instructor's lecture slides, which are always posted on the course iSite. Keep a list of the sources of your material, and integrate this list in the screen credits at the end of your movie. The screen credits



don't count as part of your official time allotment (just as your works cited page doesn't count toward your page limit in your research paper).

Videos will be posted on the course iSite, accessible only to the class (this restriction will help us avoid copyright issues for images and music.) TFs will assess the best videos and if time allows will play them in section meetings. A selection of winners will be sent on to the professor's chosen iMovie committee, which will meet in a secluded underground bunker to choose the very best videos. The best of the best will be shown before the entire class.

B. iMovie Assignment 1 (2 minutes): Midterm Preparation

The goal of iMovie assignment 1 is to help you ace the midterm, and to get you comfortable with the basics of iMovie, which you'll be using to present your research topic later in the term. Your video, as well as those of your classmates, will be posted on the course iSite ahead of the midterm.

One part of the midterm will consist of five or six essay questions. You will be given the list of questions in advance, and you will only have to answer two of the essays on the test. Your first iMovie assignment is to choose *one* of the essay questions and present your response in the form of a two-minute video.

To help you prepare for the second essay question on the midterm, just watch the videos of your classmates which, like your video, will be posted on the course iSite ahead of the test. Chances are there will be videos for all the possible essay questions.

A brief note on structuring your video: "structure" in movieland implies time. So before you even begin, think about how much time you'll give to each of the following components. If you were to write a two-page response paper, how much space would you give each of these?

- **An introduction:** this should give your audience some background to the topic you are addressing before you transition into the specific question you are responding to. And like a paper, the introduction should present a clearly identifiable thesis statement.

Don't be afraid to use text scrolling across the screen that says something like "Here's my point..." In fact, it's not a bad idea to include on-screen text that goes "meta" on what you're doing and why. In other words, you don't have to "say" everything in an iMovie. You can use the visual format here to get more into your two minutes.

- **Argumentation:** the main section of the movie should visually represent and then analyze data from lecture and course readings. Make sure you tie your data and analysis back to your thesis.

- **Challenges:** however short, you always want to consider relevant counter-arguments to your thesis—and what you might say back to those challenges.

Two minutes is more than you think! You could consider using text on the screen to bring up counterarguments as you analyze data, or you could think of presenting the counterarguments as a twenty-second "sidebar" in the movie. Remember: this two-minute iMovie is meant to capture the big picture. Think of it as a guide for your peers as they prepare for the midterm.

- **A conclusion:** you'll want to review the information you have gathered and the argument you've made, but it can also be helpful to indicate how your topic fits in a larger context, whether that context is historical, archaeological, or even literary.

A word to the wise: it's a good idea to get a head start on your iMovie as soon as the midterm essay questions are distributed. While the first iMovie will be due about a week before the midterm, you don't want to be struggling with technology at the eleventh hour when you could be studying for the test!

C. iMovie Assignment 2 (3–4 minutes): Explore your Final Paper Topic

About three-quarters of the way through the semester, you will choose your research paper topic. A long list of possible topics is available on the course iSite, but you are not limited





to these. This second iMovie assignment will let you explore your final paper topic. Think of it as a research proposal in a visual format, as a “teaser” or “trailer” video, since you may not have completed all your research yet. You can lay out the issues and investigate different theories. You can capture a current debate. You can take us through some history that clarifies our understanding of an issue or question.

You’ll want to think visually again for this iMovie. Imagine a map that helps to lay out those issues or theories. Imagine a split screen that helps to visualize a current debate. Imagine letting us see a time line that animates your argument. Imagine “annotating” a visual artifact so we can literally see what you are interpreting. In other words, use the visual format of a movie to help you make your case.

The point here is this: after seeing your iMovie, viewers should be aching to read your paper to learn more about your topic, and about your conclusions. And the way you’re going to make them ache to read your paper is to help them “see” what is prompting your final paper. We don’t need to know what your entire argument is in that final paper, but we should have a clear sense of what it could be.

The structure here will likely follow the structure of your first iMovie: introduction, argumentation, counterargument, and conclusion. This time around, however, you’ll have 3-4 minutes to make your case, set up your context for your argument, or explore an unresolved debate. Think of minutes the way you think of pages: if you were writing a four-page paper, how much would you devote to an introduction? How much would you devote to counterarguments?

This longer time frame will give you a chance to use all those cool features you didn't have time for with iMovie assignment 1, and to dive deeper into the scholarship of your chosen topic. We expect the production values to soar and the (friendly) cinematic competition to be fierce. This is your moment to shine under Re, the sun-god. Your video could be played before the entire class; you could be famous.

If you are especially proud of your creation, you may want to submit a version of your video to the "Harvard Shorts" Film Festival contest; see <http://shorts.harvard.edu>. The best videos earn prize money and other awards.

D. Tips for Constructing your iMovies

You can choose to approach the production of your iMovie any way you want, but here is a helpful four-step guide: planning, pre-production, production, post-production.

Planning

Pick a genre, purpose and message for your iMovie. You might also choose a working title for your project.

Pre-Production

There are two approaches you can take in pre-production. You can either choose to write a script and illustrate it with pictures and video, or you can choose the images and create your script around them, clarifying and describing the visuals with your narration. Remember, there is no need to use actual video footage; a series of still images, using the "Ken Burns" effect (gentle pans and zooms across the picture that iMovie provides automatically), and effective transitions between images, is perfectly acceptable.

Whichever approach you choose, it is wise to create an outline. In movieland, this is called a "storyboard" that structures your narration, dialogue, and images. This step will allow you to be concise and focused, concentrating on the most interesting facts.

You will have to decide how best to organize your video. A beginning, a middle, and an end, should work well in most cases:

1. Introduction: grab the viewer's attention with a mystery (see the example below), or a more formal thesis statement;

2. Middle or descriptive section: summarize the evidence, the state of the problem, perhaps different theories;

3. Conclusion: your own take on the situation, your solution (or is there no solution, and if not, why not?), and where we should go from here.

Example:

a) For over 4 millennia the riddle persists: how was the Great Pyramid constructed?

- b) Theories abound: travelers, engineers, Egyptologists, masons, crackpots...
- c) At long last [your name here] plans to prove: the Pyramid must have been built by [insert aliens of choice here].

Production

In this stage, you should gather all the images and/or video and music (if desired) for your iMovie. Most likely at this point, you will assemble more material than you need or can fit, but later you will be able to edit it down to two minutes.

When looking for images—either on the web or through one of the library’s collections—be sure to be as careful in your choice of search terms as you would be when performing research for a “traditional” assignment. Just as typing “Egypt” alone into HOLLIS would yield far too lengthy a list of hits, typing overly general search terms into images.google.com will undoubtedly yield relatively bland (and possibly irrelevant) images that may not help you advance your argument.

Post-Production

Post-production is where you will use all of your magical visual and audio editing skills to get your movie down to the required length of time. You can add your favorite songs from iTunes and even do a voice-over narration (iMovie fades the music in the background, so as not to drown out the spoken words).

Uploading your iMovie

Videos should be uploaded directly to the course iSite, most likely to the page reserved for your TF and section. Make the movie as large in size as possible, so that your text and images will be clear and readable on small screens. You should avoid the smallest size (iPhone), and the largest size (HD). Common and acceptable



formats: mp4, mov (Quicktime), wmv. The videos will remain posted on the course iSite, accessible only to the class.

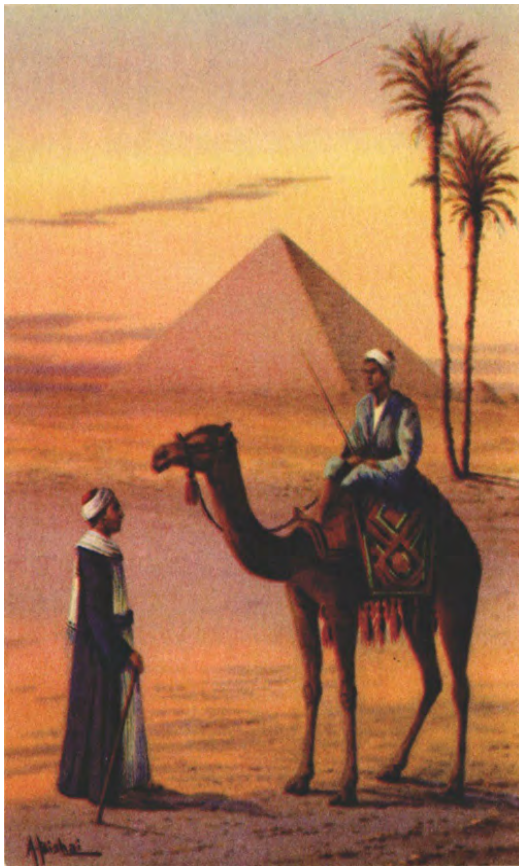
E. iMovie Grading

Grades will be based on your demonstrated comprehension of the subject matter, the effectiveness of your argument and use of scholarly sources, your ability to interest and engage the viewer, and your use of iMovie's tools. While these iMovies are first and foremost exercises in concise argumentation and clear organization, they also present a new medium for effective communication. In this case, that communication has a significant visual component.

Don't hesitate to excite and entertain your audience, but remember to use these audio and video tools in the service of your Egyptological presentation. Do they provide punch to your point? Do they help you make for a dramatic and visually engaging presentation? Don't just throw every fancy iMovie effect into the video simply because you can! The quality of your work will be evaluated by the following criteria:

- (1) Does the video meet the objectives stated in the assignment?
- (2) Is the video accurate? Did you comprehend the material and accurately present it to the viewer? Did you present a sound argument?
- (3) Did the video capture the audience's attention and communicate well?
- (4) Was the film technically proficient? Is your text large enough to read? Does it stay on screen long enough? Is your audio clear or did you talk too fast? Does your narration sync well with the images you have chosen?

For an actual breakdown of grading points, see the grading rubric on the next page:



grading

iMovie Grading Rubric

Student Name: _____

Stated Objectives met? (35 pts.)

- ___ Uses logical structure
- ___ Quality of introduction, argumentation, and conclusion

Comments: _____

_____ /35

Scholarly Accuracy and Ideas (35 pts.)

- ___ Sound argumentation
- ___ Understands the issue(s)
- ___ Good use of scholarly sources
- ___ Shows insight and probes beneath the surface

Comments: _____

_____ /35

Entertaining and Coherent (15 pts.)

- ___ Captures the viewer's attention
- ___ Communicates well?

Comments: _____

_____ /15

Production Values and Technical Proficiency and Coherence (15 pts.)

- ___ Size, pace, clarity
- ___ Clarity of text
- ___ Clarity of audio/narration
- ___ Puts iMovie effects to good use

Comments: _____

_____ /15

Total Score (100 pts.) _____ /100

F. Other Resources

Lamont Library: Multimedia Resources and Computers

<http://hcl.harvard.edu/info/equipment/index.cfm>

iMovie tutorials:

<http://www.apple.com/ilife/tutorials/#imovie>

Copyright and fair use:

http://www.ogc.harvard.edu/copyright_docs/copyright_and_fair_use.php

Copyright-and royalty-free Music Sources:

<http://creativecommons.org/>

<http://www.stonewashed.net/sfx.html>

http://www.archive.org/details/opensource_audio

<http://www.partnersinrhyme.com/>

<http://www.shambles.net/pages/school/SoundE/>

<http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Sound>

Garageband (part of iLife on all Macs):

<http://www.apple.com/ilife/tutorials/#garageband>

resources

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