

ENDOWING COPTIC STUDIES AT THE DEPARTMENT OF NEAR & MIDDLE EASTERN CIVILIZATIONS

COPTIC STUDIES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

With roots in the Pharoanic period, Coptic Christianity was the major religion in Egypt from the fourth to sixth centuries. Today, it remains the faith of an important minority community in Egypt and in diasporic communities around the world. North America is home to the largest Coptic diaspora outside Africa, and the largest concentration of Canadian Copts resides in and around Toronto, which is the site of the first Coptic Orthodox Church established on the continent. With heightened internecine tensions in Egypt, both during and in the aftermath of the 2010-11 Arab Spring, increasing understanding of the region and its constituencies residing both at home and abroad has never been more critical.

This is where the University of Toronto, as Canada's leading university situated in the Canadian heart of the Coptic diasporic community, has a major role to play. At U of T's Department of Near & Middle Eastern Civilizations, professors and students explore the development of complex societies and civilizations that have played transformative roles in human history, from Neolithic up until modern times. Courses in languages, literatures, art, archaeology, history and thought offer exciting entry points into a fascinating world that is at the geographical origin of three of the world's major religions—Christianity, Judaism and Islam—and that represents a strategically and culturally important region.

Egyptology is one of the oldest academic programs at this university and the department is one of the foremost centres for the study of Ancient Egypt—not only in North America, but also internationally. To complement the continuity of Egyptology, we continue enrich the scholarly field of Coptic Studies.

Since 2006, courses in Coptic literature, culture, history, monasticism, languages, art and archaeology have been an integral part of the curriculum, thanks to generous donations from St. Mark's Coptic Orthodox Church, the Coptic Churches of Southern Ontario and private donors.

This is support for which we and our students are truly grateful!

Moreover, aspects of Coptic culture and religion are treated in courses on Egypt in the Islamic period. These studies complement the study of Syriac Christianity, another area of expertise in the department.

Given the opportunity to enhance the academic discipline of Coptic studies at the University of Toronto, students will have the opportunity to vast topics such as Coptic language (Sahidic), literature, history, monasticism, hagiography, archaeology and culture and art.

COPTIC STUDIES COURSES THAT HAVE BEEN OFFERED AT U OF T

- NMC230H Elementary Coptic I
- NMC231H Elementary Coptic II
- NMC202H Introduction to Coptic Studies
- NMC342H History & Sources of Egyptian Monasticism
- NMC367H Archaeology of Egyptian Monasticism
- NMC368H Coptic Art & Archaeology



UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
FACULTY OF ARTS & SCIENCE

THE OPPORTUNITY: CREATING A LASTING LEGACY

The University of Toronto is committed to building upon and maintaining a strong and flourishing program in Coptic studies. We are seeking support to create a permanent endowment that will fund regular core courses.

The Department of Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations aims to allow students to enrich their degree with some concentration on this Christian faith and accompanying languages and culture that continue to be important today. When offered, culture courses attract 30-40 students, while the language courses typically enrol up to 10-20 students from across the Faculty of Arts & Science and from a variety of backgrounds and faith.

THE IMPACT

Coptic studies, which this initiative will make a permanent area of study at U of T, represents continuity in Egyptian and Christian history and the development of Coptic civilization. Moreover, and equally importantly, this initiative will play a critical role in promoting dialogue among cultures and elevating Canadians' understanding of diverse traditions, cultures, languages and religions within and beyond their borders.

THE NEED

- An endowment of \$1.125 million will provide for 2.5 full-time course equivalents annually.
- An endowment of \$450,000 will provide for 1 full-time course equivalent annually.

(Note: The cost to mount one full-year language course is approximately \$18,000 per annum.)

All pledges may be paid in monthly or annual installments.

RECOGNITION

The University of Toronto is committed to building an enduring partnership with our benefactors.

All donors receive a charitable receipt for the full value of their gift to the University of Toronto.

Various recognition opportunities, including naming*, are available depending on the level of the gift (*subject to approval in accordance with U of T's Policy on Naming). The University will work with our donors to craft a tailored recognition and accountability program that reflects the spirit and impact of the gift.

Every gift at every level can make a big difference to the Coptic Studies Program! Thank you for your commitment and support!

FROM THE STUDENTS

- “The two Coptic courses I took were invaluable to my spiritual life as my church uses the Coptic language during services.”
- “As a student and a Copt in Canada, the Coptic courses I've taken at U of T have provided me with a sense of identity, history and culture.”
- “The History of Coptic Christianity has enriched my understanding of the place of the Coptic Church in Church history. It allowed me to appreciate its Apostolic beginnings, its unique cultural heritage and its relationship with its sister churches and with other Orthodox jurisdictions. This has been by far one of the most fascinating and enriching courses which I have ever taken during all my years at U of T.”
- “I hope that the impact of the Desert Fathers alone would grant Coptic Studies a permanent home at the Department of Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations.”

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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