



Syracuse University
Fall, 2016

REL 301

Ancient Near Eastern Religions & Cultures

Time: 3:30-4:50 on
Tuesdays & Thursdays

Place: Hall of Languages 211



Instructor: [Jim Watts](#) (PhD)
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Teaching Assistant:
Office: HL 514
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Course Description: The ancient Near East produced the oldest written texts in the world, along with much art and other artifacts. They provide a window into the ways of life, rituals, beliefs, hopes and fears of people living 2,500 to 5,000 years ago and illustrate the interplay between religion and human culture in all its various forms. This course will explore the interaction of culture and religion by examining the social contexts of ancient religious ideas and practices through close readings of texts from ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia, Syria, Palestine and Israel.

Audience: Students interested in ancient history, culture, and religion and wanting to fill Humanities and Writing Intensive core requirements, as well as majors and minors in Religion, Jewish Studies, History, Literature and Art History.

Prerequisites/Co-requisites: None.

This course meets the *Writing Intensive requirement* of the Liberal Arts Core.

Goals: Through this course, students will:

1. use the context of ancient Near Eastern cultures to think both critically and imaginatively about the nature of religion as a basic response to and expression of the human condition;
2. recognize and appreciate the difficulties and possibilities in undertaking a coherent, disciplined study of ancient religion, and to become aware of the diversity of perspectives within that study;
3. come to a distinct yet corrigible conception of "religion," and to be able to recognize its appearance not only within ancient religious institutions of diverse cultures, but also in other

social/cultural forms;

4. develop an understanding of ancient Near Eastern cultures as key instances in the diversity of human religious phenomena, and become fluent in interpreting and describing them.
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Course Requirements:

The course consists of class discussions, lectures, student projects, and, most of all, readings. This course is a **reading** course, and students' completion of all reading assignments is essential for their success. Assignments, discussions, lectures and tests all presuppose that students have read carefully and on schedule the assigned readings. Questions to guide students' reading can be found by clicking the **topic** headings in the schedule below.

Attendance and participation in discussions is expected of all students and will influence evaluation of their work (5%), which will also be based on their performance on daily quizzes (15% total), and four research [papers](#) (20% each). The grades of late papers will be reduced by one grade level (e.g. B to B-). Missed quizzes cannot be made up, but the lowest five quiz grades will be dropped from the total.

The grading scale is: A+ = 100, A = 95, A- = 92, B+ = 88, B = 85, B- = 82, etc. Students may check their grades online through the [Blackboard Learning System](#). Incidents of plagiarism or cheating result in no credit (0) for the test or assignment and may result in further disciplinary action (see academic integrity statement below).

Academic Integrity:

The Syracuse University Academic Integrity Policy holds students accountable for the integrity of the work they submit. Students should be familiar with the Policy and know that it is their responsibility to learn about instructor and general academic expectations with regard to proper citation of sources in written work. The policy also governs the integrity of work submitted in exams and assignments as well as the veracity of signatures on attendance sheets and other verifications of participation in class activities. Serious sanctions can result from academic dishonesty of any sort. In this course, students found cheating on a test or assignment will receive zero (0) credit for that test or assignment. For more information and the complete policy, see <http://academicintegrity.syr.edu>.

Class-room Behavior: A successful learning experience depends on students' behavior in class, as much as on the quality of their work and on the teacher's presentations.

- We encourage energetic discussion of relevant topics and expect different opinions among class members, but always express your ideas with respect for those who might disagree with you.
 - Arrive on time. If you must be late, enter quietly. Do not leave during class except for medical emergency.
 - Turn off cell phones, laptops, and tablets. If you wish to use an electronic device for class work (notes, assignments), you *must sit in the front row* of the class. Texting, e-mailing or web browsing during class are grounds for dismissal from that day's class.
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Religious Observances Policy:

[SU's religious observances policy](#) recognizes the diversity of faiths represented among the campus community and protects the rights of students, faculty, and staff to observe religious holidays according to their tradition. Under the policy, students are provided an opportunity to make up any examination, study, or work requirements that may be missed due to are religious observance provided they notify

their instructors before the end of the second week of classes. For fall and spring semesters, an online notification process is available through MySlice/StudentServices/Enrollment/MyReligiousObservances from the first day of class until the end of the second week of class.

Disability-Related Accommodations:

Students who are in need of disability-related academic accommodations must register with the Office of Disability Services (ODS), 804 University Avenue, Room 309, 315-443-4498. Students with authorized disability-related accommodations should provide a current Accommodation Authorization Letter from ODS to the instructor and review those accommodations with the instructor. Accommodations, such as exam administration, are not provided retroactively; therefore, planning for accommodations as early as possible is necessary. For further information, see the ODS website, Office of Disability Services <http://disabilityservices.syr.edu/>.

Textbooks (available at the campus bookstore in Schine Student Center):

- Required:
- Coogan, Michael D. *Stories from Ancient Canaan*. 1st or 2nd ed. Westminster, 1978, 2012. (=SFAC)
 - Foster, Benjamin R. *From Distant Days: Myths, Tales, and Poetry of Ancient Mesopotamia*. Bethesda: CDL, 1995 (=FDD)
 - Foster, John L. *Ancient Egyptian Literature: An Anthology*. Austin: U. of Texas, 2001. (=AEL)
 - Holland, Glenn. *Gods in the Desert*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2009. (= Gods)
- Recommended:
- *The Jewish Study Bible: Tanakh* (New Jewish Publication Society Version)
 - or *New Oxford Annotated Bible* (New Revised Standard Version)

Topics & Assignments: Readings from the textbooks appear by abbreviated title and page numbers; readings from biblical books are marked BIBLE and appear as book title (*italics*) and chapters; readings marked HANDOUT appear on Blackboard under the "Documents" tab; and assignments on the internet are underlined in blue (click the active link). Further resources on ancient Near Eastern history, religion and culture may be found by at <http://web.syr.edu/~jwwatts/UsefulLinks.htm>.

Topic	Date	Assignment (due by class on date listed)
Introductions	T Aug 30	
Origins of writing in BIRD!	Th Sep 1	<i>Gods</i> xxiii-xxx; <i>AEL</i> xi-xxi; <i>FDD</i> 1-8; <i>SFAC</i> 1-23 (meeting on the 6th floor of BIRD LIBRARY in the LEMKE ROOM)
History & Religion: Mesopotamia	T Sep 6	<i>Gods</i> 99-109, 131-136; Mesopotamian Kings <i>FDD</i> 165-211; "Royal Prayers" <i>FDD</i> 272-87; Amarna letters ; Letter of Ashurballit ;
	Th Sep 8	<i>Gods</i> 111-118; "Creation Epic" <i>FDD</i> 9-51.
History & Religion: Egypt and Paper Workshop (Sep 15)	T Sep 13	<i>Gods</i> 3-14; "Longing for Memphis" <i>AEL</i> 44-47; "Testament of Amenemhat" <i>AEL</i> 85-88; "Instruction of Merikare" <i>AEL</i> 191-204; "Prophecy of Neferty" <i>AEL</i> 76-84; Cultural Chronology of Ancient Egypt (skim all pages, but see pictures at left)
	Th Sep 15	<i>Gods</i> 15-23, 37-55; "Senusert" and "Ramses" <i>AEL</i> 94-99; "Hymn to Osiris" <i>AEL</i> 102-109;

History & Religion: Syria-Palestine	T Sep 20	<i>Gods</i> 191-198, 219-25 ; “Kirta” <i>SFAC</i> 52-74; Letter about Abdu-Heba ; Letter from Abdu-Heba of Jerusalem ; Bible: <i>2 Samuel</i> 6-7; <i>2 Kings</i> 18-20; 24-25; <i>Ezra</i> 1, 3, 6-7;
	Th Sep 22	<i>Gods</i> 199-212, 228-237; “Baal” <i>SFAC</i> 75-115; Bible: <i>Psalms</i> 82; Exodus 1-3; <i>Isaiah</i> 45; Mark Smith, "Israel's Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts" ;
Humanity and Creation	T Sep 27	Paper # 1 due (paper topics)
	Th Sep 29	“Dialogue” <i>FDD</i> 295-97; “Who has not sinned?” <i>FDD</i> 326-27, “Piteous Sufferer” <i>FDD</i> 328; "Lament to Amun" <i>AEL</i> 123; “Tale of Sinuhe” <i>AEL</i> 124-48; Bible: <i>Genesis</i> 12-14; <i>Psalms</i> 42-43.
	T Oct 4	<i>Gods</i> 26-36, 122-129; 212-218; “Shipwrecked Sailor” <i>AEL</i> 8-16; “Hymns to Re & Amun” <i>AEL</i> 118-21; “Hymn to Shamash” <i>FDD</i> 254-61; Bible: <i>Genesis</i> 1-3; <i>Psalms</i> 8
Prophets & History	Th Oct 6	<i>Gods</i> 226-228, 264-273; “Prophecies” <i>FDD</i> 213-20: Bible: <i>Exodus</i> 6-8, 19; <i>Deuteronomy</i> 5; <i>1 Kings</i> 17-19; <i>Micah</i> 6; Zoroaster , Yasna 12
	T Oct 11	“Aqhat” <i>SFAC</i> 27-47; “Erra” <i>FDD</i> 132-63; “Lament for a City” <i>FDD</i> 324-25; Bible: <i>Deuteronomy</i> 28; <i>Lamentations</i> 1; <i>Nehemiah</i> 9
Justice	Th Oct 13	Hammurabi's Law (read selections); Law & Order ; “Eloquent Peasant” <i>AEL</i> 183-85, “Poor Man of Nippur” <i>FDD</i> 357-62, “Land for the Birds” <i>FDD</i> 375-76; “Righteous Sufferer,” “Babylonian Theodicy” <i>FDD</i> 298-323; BIBLE: <i>Exodus</i> 20-22
Music	T Oct 18	Music ; Hurrian Song from Ugarit ; Theatre Paper # 2 due (paper topics).
Economics	Th Oct 20	“Little Pepi” <i>AEL</i> 32-43; “At the Cleaners” <i>FDD</i> 355-56; Slavery ; "Wages and Prices" ; "Food" ; "Market Scene" ; "Grim Secret" ; HANDOUT on exchange, gift, & tribute; “Hymn to the Nile” <i>AEL</i> 110-17; “Hymns and Prayers” <i>FDD</i> 221-28; Bible: <i>Leviticus</i> 25
Education	T Oct 25	<i>Gods</i> 182-84; “Dissipated Scribe” and “Minna’s Lament” <i>AEL</i> 48-54; “Ptahhotep” <i>AEL</i> 186-89; “Ashurbanipal” <i>FDD</i> 282; “Why do you curse me?” <i>FDD</i> 363-64; <i>Psalms</i> 1
	Th Oct 27	<i>Gods</i> 86-91; “Wisdom of Amenemopet” <i>AEL</i> 206-228; “Anzu” <i>FDD</i> 115-131; “Hymn of Akhenaton” <i>AEL</i> 1-7; “Leiden Hymns” <i>AEL</i> 149-168; Bible: <i>Proverbs</i> 8,
Gender & Sex	T Nov 1	“Portrait of the Queen” <i>AEL</i> 100-101; Man and Woman ; Hatshepsut slide show ; HANDOUTS “Queen's Rights” and “Exaltation of Innana” by Enheduanna; “Counsels of Wisdom” <i>FDD</i> 377-80; Letter from Kadeshman ; Genesis 16, 21; Proverbs 31; “Egyptian Love Songs” <i>AEL</i> 17-31, “Love spells” <i>AEL</i> 90, <i>FDD</i> 331-43, 351-54; Bible: <i>Song of Songs</i> 3-4
	Th Nov 3	<i>Gods</i> 23-26, 47-49, 118-122; “Hymns to Gula & Ishtar” <i>FDD</i> 229-246; Divine lovers <i>FDD</i> 344-50; Hosea 2; HANDOUT on cult prostitution & sacred marriage
Magic, Prayer and Ritual	T Nov 8	<i>Gods</i> 85-86. 177-182 “Magic & Divination” <i>FDD</i> 228, 252-53, 262-65, 393-432; Bible: <i>Deuteronomy</i> 18:9-22; <i>1 Samuel</i> 28
	Th Nov 10	<i>Gods</i> 77-85; 167-175, 257-264, 273-276; “Prayer to Marduk” <i>FDD</i> 247-48, “Hymns and Prayers” <i>FDD</i> 221-26, “Personal gods” <i>FDD</i> 267-71; “Letter

		Prayers” <i>FDD</i> 293-94; Bible: <i>Psalms</i> 6, 11; <i>Isaiah</i> 38; <i>Exodus</i> 40; <i>Leviticus</i> 1
Architecture & Art	T Nov 15	Temple models Paper # 3 due (paper topics).
	Th Nov 17	Stonework ; Portraiture ; HANDOUT Jacobsen, “Graven Image”; Louvre tour of Egyptian art .
Thanksgiving Break	Nov 19-27	No Classes
Death 1	T Nov 29	<i>Gods</i> 57-65; HANDOUT "Autobiography of Harkhuf"; Valley of the Kings ; Mummification ; Middle Class tomb ; <i>Gods</i> 149-153, 239-242; “Elegy for a Woman” <i>FDD</i> 329; “Flood Story” <i>FDD</i> 52-77; Bible: <i>Genesis</i> 6-8; “Family Ghosts” <i>FDD</i> 227; “Prayer to Nabu” <i>FDD</i> 249-51; Syria's Cult of the Dead
	Th Dec 1	Gilgamesh (all); <i>Gods</i> 136-148, 153-154, 184-188;
Death 2, and Influences & Survivals	T Dec 6	<i>Gods</i> 65-75, 91-96, 242-244; “King Unis” <i>AEL</i> 64-69; “Pyramid Texts” <i>AEL</i> 70-75; “Power From the Four Winds” <i>AEL</i> 91-93; “Pahery” <i>AEL</i> 169-177; “Harpers Songs” <i>AEL</i> 178-82; "Man vs. Soul” <i>AEL</i> 55-6; <i>Ecclesiastes</i> 6
	Th Dec 8	<i>Gods</i> 154-165, 245-256, 277-284; “Stories of Ishtar, Nergal, & Adapa” <i>FDD</i> 78-101; Osiris Cult ; Bible: <i>Isaiah</i> 24-25; HANDOUT on <i>Mummy worship</i>
Final Paper Due	T Dec 13, 5 pm	Paper #4 due (paper topics).