

Moses and the Origin of Monotheism

From Philo to Freud, the richly varied afterlife of the biblical Moses figure and story of monotheism's Egyptian origins, considered as an abiding preoccupation of Western religions, theology, literary and visual art, and secular thought.

Prospective graduate students: please contact the instructor for information on the graduate section.

MWT 2-3 CAS324

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Course books

Bible (OT and NT). Recommended edition: *New Oxford Annotated Bible* (Oxford University Press)
Gregory of Nyssa: *Life of Moses* (Paulist Press 1978)
Jan Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998)
Sigmund Freud, *Moses and Monotheism* (Vintage Books, 1967)
Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Freud's Moses* (New Haven: Yale U Press, 1991)
Bluma Goldstein, *Reinscribing Moses* (Cambridge: HUP, 1992)
S. David Sperling, *The Original Torah* (Albany/NY: NYU Press, 2003)
Thomas Mann, *The Tables of the Law* (out of print; available as pdf on courseinfo and multiple copies in library)
Zora Neal Hurston, *Moses, Man of the Mountain* (HarperCollins)

Other readings are available on the courseinfo.bu.edu site for this course or on reserve.

Assignments and grading

This is a course for mature students who do the necessary work, keep up with the readings, attend classes regularly and participate actively and intelligently in the discussions. Participation will therefore make up an important part of your grade (30%). The remaining 70% of your course grade you earn by keeping a reading log where you record your thoughts and responses to the assigned readings and discussions (25%) and by writing a term paper on a topic approved by the instructor (45%). It is important that your term paper cover material from more than one unit of the course and that it includes a close reading of relevant texts. Particular merit points can be earned by showing evidence of significant research and recourse to material not covered in the course. Reading log entries must be presented (via email) at the beginning of every week.

General rules

Attendance and active participation are essential. Readings must be completed ahead of time. The BU Code of Academic Conduct applies. (See <http://www.cs.bu.edu/ugradprogram/conduct.html>).

Course schedule and reading assignments

Unit I: Moses in the Torah

Week One (Sept 3-5)

Sept 3: Why Moses?

Sept 5: Moses and the Exodus

Exodus 1-15.

Week Two (Sept 8-12) Sinai, sojourn in the desert, and the death of Moses

Sept 8 Exodus 16-34

Sept 10 Numbers 10:11-27, 33-34, 36

Sept 12 Deuteronomy 1-34

Unit II: Late Antiquity. Moses as Prototypical King and *homo divinus*

Week Three (Sept 15-19)

Philo, *Vita Mosis*

Week Four (Sept 22-26)

Xenophon, *The Education of Cyrus* (selection; pdf on courseinfo)

Josephus, *Antiquitates* (selections; pdf on courseinfo)

Josephus, *Contra Apionem*, Book I, 13-16, 25-31 (pdf on courseinfo)

Unit III: The Revealed Traditions. Moses as Prophet, Teacher, and Saint

Week Five (Sept 29-Oct 3)

Meeks, *Prophet-King* (chapters on Johannine tradition, Samaritans, non-rabbinic Jewish; see pdf on courseinfo)

Eusebius, *Life of Constantine* (selections; pdf on courseinfo)

Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Moses*

Weeks Six (Oct 6-10)

Moses in Rabbinic Midrash (Readings from Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews* on courseinfo)

Nebi Musa in the Qur'an (Readings: find an edition of the Holy Qur'an and look up passages on Moses, using the index)

Unit IV: Medieval Moses--Mystagogue

Weeks Seven (Oct 14-17)

Ruth Mellinkoff, *The Horned Moses in Medieval Art and Thought* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: UCal Press, 1970). On reserve.

Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed* III, 25ff (pdf on courseinfo)

Unit V: Early Modern Moses--Purveyor of Secrets

Week Eight (Oct 20-24)

Week Nine (Oct 27-31)

Jan Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian*, ch 3 and 4

Unit VI: The Return of the Man Moses

Week Ten (Nov 3-7): Historicization

Benjamin Uffenheimer, *Early Prophecy in Israel*, Chapter Two: Moses (pp. 89-205; pdf on courseinfo).

Sperling, *The Original Torah*, pp. 1-60 and pp. 121-34.

Week Eleven (Nov 10-14): Psychologization

Sigmund Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Freud's Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable*, Jan Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian*, ch. 5 (pp. 144-167).

Otto Rank, *The Myth of the Birth of the Hero* (on reserve)

Week Twelve (Nov 17-21): Aestheticization

Thomas Mann, *The Tables of the Law* (New York, A.A. Knopf, 1945),

Zora Neal Hurston, *Moses, Man of the Mountain*

Week Thirteen (Nov 24)

Arnold Schoenberg, "Moses and Aaron" (opera)

Week Fourteen (Dec 1-5): Moses and the Modern Jew

Bluma Goldstein, *Reinscribing Moses* (Cambridge, Mass.: HU Press, 1992)

Week Fifteen (Dec 8-10): Moses goes to Hollywood

"The Ten Commandments" (Cecil B. Demilles, 1956)

"Prince of Egypt" (Simon Wells and Steve Hickner, 1998)

On Demilles: Henry S. Noerdlinger, *Moses and Egypt. The Documentation to the Motion Picture The Ten Commandments* Los Angeles: UCal Press, 1956; on reserve.

