

RELIGIOUS STUDIES 117-01 (MW 2:00-3:15)
PRE-MODERN HISTORY OF RELIGIONS: THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST
COLLEGE OF CHARLESTON
SPRING 2022

Dr. John Huddlestun

Office: 4B Glebe, Rm. 203 (enter building via sidewalk door)

Office Hours: Tuesday 12:30--3:00 (or by appointment)

Office Phone: 953-4996 (leave a voicemail)

E-mail: Huddlestunj@cofc.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this course we explore the religious beliefs and practices of those peoples of the ancient Near East (including Egyptians, Sumerians, Babylonians, Assyrians, Hittites, Canaanites, and Israelites/Judeans). Our examination covers a wide range of material, both geographically and chronologically, spanning a period of roughly 3,000 years, from the Egyptian Pyramid Texts (ca. 2400 - 2100 BCE) down through the Greco-Roman period into Late Antiquity (ca. 7th century CE). Among a wealth of potential topics, we can delve into only a select few, including the gods in their temples (the cult statue as the image of the god), the origins of the gods and the cosmos, the problem of suffering with respect to the gods and how to account for this, concepts of death and afterlife, prophets/prophecy and divinatory techniques to ascertain the will of the gods, magical spells to ward off potential evil and sickness etc., and the emergence of various types of "monotheism." While one does find differences among peoples of this region, over the course of the term we will begin to see some of the broader similarities that point to a larger common ancient Near Eastern religious world view – a world view that ultimately shaped Greco-Roman as well as later Jewish, Christian, and Islamic thought. This course presumes no previous knowledge of religion, ancient or otherwise, nor any knowledge of those modern religious traditions that emerged in the ancient Near Eastern region (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam).

COURSE GOALS

In course readings, written assignments, and exams, students will: (1) acquire the ability to identify and analyze primary sources (ancient texts and images) in their religious, socio-historical, and political contexts; (2) be able to distinguish between a variety of ancient literary and artistic genres and their relevance for interpretation; (3) gain an appreciation of the diversity of religious rituals and beliefs associated with various peoples of the ancient near East; and (4) understand and appreciate the various methods, assumptions, and practices that inform the academic approach to the study of religion in the ancient Near East.

GENERAL EDUCATION STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

This course satisfies the student learning outcomes for the GenEd History requirement:

(1) Students demonstrate knowledge of history and awareness of the historical experience, and (2) Students situate primary historical documents in their context and use sources to construct historical arguments. These outcomes will be assessed by means of a *Primary Source Analysis* assignment (see below).

REQUIRED READINGS

A collection of electronic readings, available on OAKS, which enrolled students can access after they

login to MyCharleston (<http://my.cofc.edu>). Since Oaks does crash from time to time, for convenience sake I strongly suggest that you download these PDF files onto your laptop or a USB drive, so you do not have to access OAKS each time to review or print out a reading. I will announce beforehand (in class or via email) which reading(s) we will discuss in the upcoming class(es). All lectures will be accompanied by a detailed outline that you can follow in class (via a handout or on screen). You should read the assignment before class, which will help you understand the material more easily and follow the lectures (and lecture outlines). In this course, we will pay close attention to primary sources (mainly texts, but also images) so, again, you should read or study these carefully before we discuss and “unpack” their meaning and interpretation in class. While there is a lot of material on Oaks, we will not be reading all of it to the same degree, nor will you be responsible for all of it on the exams. Often I will focus more on a few readings on a given topic and then mention some relevant important points of discussion in the others listed under that topic. Some readings are for reference (e.g., the various list of gods in Mesopotamia and Egypt), which you can consult for additional information. The lecture outlines and exam Study Guides contain what you need to know from the readings (with relevant page references to Oaks). As for the exams, my mantra is if it ain’t on the Study Guide, it ain’t on the exam.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1) *Three Exams (60% total)*. Exams will consist of fill-in-the-blanks, passage identification of primary source texts, and one essay. A detailed study guide will be distributed prior to each exam (see comments above). It is imperative that you notify me **in advance** if you are unable to take the exam in class. You should email or call me prior to the exam (953-4996; leave a voice mail if I do not pick up). Make-up exams will be permitted only for those who present what I deem to be a valid written excuse explaining the reason for missing the exam.

2) *Primary Source Analysis (20%)*. Due April 20 (in class). This written assignment requires a close and critical reading of a previously unseen primary source text. Your reading situates that text within its larger religious, socio-historical, and/or political contexts, as determined by comparison with similar class material presented over the course of the term.

3) *Weekly Quizzes (15%)*. I will give weekly quizzes (a total of 12) over the readings (announced beforehand and given at the start of class), and an occasional writing assignment. I drop the two lowest quiz scores, so if you miss a quiz or two you need not provide an excuse or ask for a make-up. Barring exceptional circumstances, there are no make-up quizzes, although I may offer one or two extra-credit quiz assignments toward the end of term.

4) *Attendance/Participation (10%)*. Given this is a face-to-face class, in-person attendance is required. I expect you to come to class prepared, having done the required readings and assignments (especially if there is a quiz). Although this is primarily a lecture class, I will routinely ask you questions about the readings or an assignment and expect you, in turn, to respond and ask questions informed by the readings. Unless the college were to decide to go online (hopefully an unlikely scenario), I will not be teaching any classes on Zoom (although, if need be, I may record a class or do a Voicethread or two down the road). **You are permitted a total of THREE absences, for whatever reason, over the course of the term (you need not provide documentation for these)**. Barring exceptional circumstances (see below), any number greater than this will result in a lowered or failing final grade; **8 or more absences will result in a failing grade for the course**. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to obtain notes on

material covered that day or any relevant assignment due the next class (so make friends in class!). Please do not ask me via e-mail to update you on everything we talked about in class. I will, however, be happy to meet with you in person or via Zoom (during office hours or by appointment) to discuss class and summarize the salient points of lecture and/readings.

COVID-19 POLICY

In light of the continuing presence of Covid-19, and especially the recent emergence of the highly transmissible Omicron variant in those fully vaccinated and boosted, wearing a mask is vital. So please follow the College directive and wear a mask while in class. If you must miss class due to quarantine or isolation, please inform me in an email and provide the dates you will not be in class. During that period, you should arrange to get notes on the class lecture (beyond my provided lecture outlines and other handouts, posted on Oaks), plus, as I noted above, I will be happy to meet with you (in my office or via zoom) to discuss the lecture and readings. Only students quarantining or in isolation (due to a positive Covid test or close contact) will be allowed absences beyond the three classes mentioned above (although this may apply as well to other urgent or serious personal or family situations). At present (as noted above) I will not be offering live Zoom classes. However, should absences become excessive for this class, that policy may be altered to include some limited use of Zoom (recording classes) or going fully online should the college mandate such. Regardless, I will do my best to keep you informed. Citing the words of our eloquently challenged former president's foreign policy mantra, "We'll see what happens."

ELECTRONICS (NOT) IN THE CLASSROOM

Use of laptops, tablets, phones, and other electronic equipment is prohibited in the classroom. Exceptions are permitted only if you present a valid reason for access to a laptop, iPad, or Tablet during class; please come and speak to me about your situation (not via email). I will announce beforehand (in class and in a follow-up email) what readings will be discussed in the following class(es). Smart phone use is strictly prohibited; all phones should be set on silent (not vibrate) or turned off, and completely out of view (not on your desk, seat, or within view in your book bag where the cunning cyber Satan can tempt you). If I observe you in violation of this policy in class, I will ask you to put away your phone or close your laptop. In addition, such actions will adversely affect your attendance/participation grade for the class. If you are dealing with a family matter or other urgent situation where you need to check your phone during class, please inform me of this beforehand.

OFFICE HOURS AND COMMUNICATION

During my posted office hours (T 12:30–3:00), I will be available to chat in my office or to talk via phone or Zoom. If you have a logistical question about the course (e.g., When is this assignment due? or where can I find that reading?), you should first consult the syllabus, class emails, or Oaks before asking me. Email is my preferred means of communication, so make sure you check yours daily. Please include "RELS 117" in the subject line of any email you send to me (please do not send an email with no subject; chances are I will probably ignore it). I try to respond to emails within 24 hours on weekdays. I usually do check email on weekends, but may take longer to reply, depending on the nature of your question or concern. Also, if you have the time, you may speak with me immediately after class.

GRADING SCALE

Letter grades are determined in accordance with the following scale:

A = 100-94	C = 75-73
A- = 93-90	C- = 72-70
B+ = 89-86	D+ = 69-66
B = 85-83	D = 65-62
B- = 82-80	D- = 61-59
C+ 79-76	F = 58 -

Honor Code and Academic Integrity. Lying, cheating, attempted cheating, and plagiarism are violations of our Honor Code, which, when suspected, are investigated. This applies also to unauthorized collaboration (working together without permission), which is a form of cheating. Unless the instructor specifies that students can work together on an assignment (which I will not do in this class), no collaboration is permitted. Other forms of cheating include possessing or using an unauthorized study aid (e.g., accessing a phone in the classroom), copying from others' exams, or giving unauthorized assistance. Each incident will be examined to determine the degree of deception involved. Incidents where the student's actions appear to be due more to misunderstanding or confusion will be handled by me as the instructor. Cases of suspected academic dishonesty will be reported to the Dean of Students. If the Honor Board determines that you have violated the code, you will receive a grade of XXF in the course, indicating failure of the course due to academic dishonesty. This status indicator (XX) will appear on your transcript for two years, after which time you may petition for it to be removed. The grade of F is permanent. If you are unfamiliar with the Honor Code or what plagiarism is, see the the Student handbook at: <http://deanofstudents.cofc.edu/honor-system/studenthandbook/index.php>

Academic Support Services: The Center for Student Learning. I encourage you to utilize the academic support services offered by the Center for Student Learning (CSL) and the Writing Lab for assistance in study strategies and essay writing consultation. The Center offers a wide variety of tutoring and other academic resources that support many courses offered at the College (including walk-in or by appointment tutoring, study strategies appointments, Peer Academic Coaching, and Supplemental Instruction). Students of all abilities have become more successful using these programs throughout their academic careers and the services are available to you at no cost. For more information on the Center and its many services, go to the CSL website (<http://csl.cofc.edu>), or call 843.953.5635.

Universal Learning and SNAP program. I am committed to the principle of universal learning. This means that our classroom, our virtual spaces, our practices and our interactions should be as inclusive as possible. Mutual respect, civility, and the ability to listen carefully are crucial to universal learning. If you are eligible for and require any type of accommodation because of a documented disability, please speak with me during the first two weeks of class so that reasonable accommodations can be made. You are responsible for notifying me at least one week before accommodation is needed, and must provide any relevant documentation. For more information on the SNAP program, see: <http://disabilityservices.cofc.edu> or call 843.953.1431.

Religious Observances and Accommodation. The College of Charleston community is enriched by students of many faiths with various religious observances, practices, and beliefs. Religious observances will be accommodated. If you need to be absent for any given class for a specific observance, please

notify me by the end of the second week of class.

LECTURE SCHEDULE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

Topics and dates are subject to revision.

January 10

I. Setting the Stage: Geography, History, Sources, and Chronology

Readings:

- Liverani, "The Ancient Near East as a Historical Problem" (Oaks #1) and "Geography of the Ancient Near East" (Oaks #1a; note especially pp. 30-33 on Ideologies)
- De Mieroop, "Introductory Concerns" (Oaks #2)
- Handouts (maps, chronologies, etc.; Oaks #3)
- Hrůša, "The Periodisation of Mesopotamian History" (Oaks #3a)

January 12 – February 7

II. The Gods and their Temples

A. The Divine Pantheons

Readings:

- Schneider, "The Gods" (Oaks #4)
- Bottero, "Religious Sentiment" (Oaks #5)
- Silverman, "Divinity and Deity in Ancient Egypt" (Oaks #6-6a)

Resources:

- Glossary of Gods/Goddesses for ancient Egypt (Oaks #7)
- Kaelin, "Gods in Ancient Egypt" (online link)
- Dalley, Glossary of Deities etc. (Mesopotamia - Oaks #8)
- "Ancient Mesopotamian Gods and Goddesses" (AMGG - online link)

*****Jan. 17 - No Class on Martin Luther King Day*****

B. Temples, Houses for the Gods

Readings:

- Schneider, "The Temples" (Mesopotamian) (#9)
- Assmann, "The Temple" (Egypt) (#10)
- David, "The Temple Priesthood" (Egypt) (#11)
- Hundley, "Introduction to Divine Presence in Ancient Near Eastern Temples" and "Divine Presence: Synthesis" (#12)

C. The Maintenance of the Gods: The Daily Temple Cult and Cult Statue

Readings (Mesopotamia):

- Schneider, "Religious Personnel" and "Rituals" (Oaks #13 and 13a)
- Berlejung, "Washing the Mouth: The Consecration of Divine Images in Mesopotamia" (#14)
- Walker/Dick, "The Mesopotamian *mīs pî* Ritual" (selections; #15)

Readings (Egypt):

Assmann, "Image and Cult" (#16)

Teeter, "Temple Cults" (#17)

DIGITAL KARNAK: "The Daily Ritual" (#18)

Ritner, "Daily Ritual of the Temple of Amun-Re at Karnak," and David, "The Daily Temple Ritual" (from Abydos) (#18a)

February 2

D. The Jerusalem Temple, its Sacrificial Cult, and Aniconism (no images)

Readings:

Hebrew Bible: 1 Kings 3-10 (on Solomon and the temple); Isaiah 40:18-20, 41:6-7, 44:6-20, and Jeremiah 10:1-16 (on making temple cult statues)

Isserlin, "Religion" (Oaks #19)

Fritz, "Solomon's Temple" (#20)

Monson, "The New 'Ain Dara Temple: Closest Solomonic Parallel" (#21)

Niehr, "In Search of YHWH's Cult Statute in the First Temple" (#22)

Dick, "Worshiping Idols: What Isaiah Didn't Know" (#23)

February 7

E. Rituals for Temple Purification and Yom Kippur

Readings:

Hebrew Bible: Leviticus 16 (Yom Kippur)

Wright, "The Scapegoat" (Azazel) and "Parallels to the Biblical Scapegoat Ritual" (Hittite) (#24-24a)

*****Exam #1 - February 9*****

February 14–March 2

III. Creation, Cosmos, and the King

A. Creation and Cosmos

Readings (Mesopotamia):

Schneider, "Myths" (#25)

"Atrahasis" (Dalley translation; #26)

"Enuma Elish" (Dalley translation; #27)

Seri, "The Role of Creation in Enūma eliš" (#28)

Lambert (trans.), "A Unilingual/Bilingual Account of Creation" and "The Founding of Eridu" (#29)

"Adapa and the South Wind" (Foster translation; #30)

Readings (Egypt):

Pinch, "Mythical Time Lines" (#31)

Allen, "The Egyptian Universe," "The Elements of Creation," "The Process of Creation" etc. (#32a-b), and Three Egyptian Texts (32c)

The Shabaqa Stone (#33)

"The Book of the Heavenly Cow" (#34)

Readings (Canaanite tradition and the Hebrew Bible):

Smith, "Myth and Mythmaking in Canaan and Ancient Israel" (#35)
Hurowitz, "From Storm God to Abstract Being" (#36)

Readings (creation in Genesis and elsewhere):

Bible: Genesis 1-11; Psalm 82 (plus handout w/ other relevant biblical texts)
Habel, "Discovering Literary Sources" (#37)
Blenkinsopp, "Humanity: The First Phase" (#38)
Robbins, "The Snake" and "On the Characters and their Motivation" (#39)

March 2

B. Kingship: Political Religion

Readings:

Schneider, "Kingship, Religion, and the Gods" (#40)
Silverman in Oaks #6a, pp. 58-73
Parkinson, "The King" (#41)
Inscriptions relating to the king (Mesopotamia and Egypt) (#42a-c)
Divine Selection of (Egyptian kings) Thutmose III and Aspelta (#43)

*****Spring Break - March 7-9*****

*****Exam #2 - March 14*****

March 16-23

IV. Concepts of Death and Afterlife in Ancient Egypt and the Hebrew Bible

Readings (Egypt):

Hornung, "Body and Soul" (#44)
Allen, "Funerary Texts and their Meanings" (#45)
Te Velde, "Funerary Mythology" (#46)
Some Egyptian Funerary Texts (#47a-b)
Letters to the Dead and to Gods (#48)

Readings (Hebrew Bible): 1 Samuel 28 (with handout)

Grabbe in Oaks #56, pp. 123-124, 141-145
Lewis, "Abode of the Dead" and "Cult of the Dead" (#49)

March 28 – April 4

V. Divination, Prophecy, and Magic

Readings (Mesopotamia):

Van der Toorn, "From the Oral to the Written...Old Babylonian Prophecy" (#50)
Queries to the Sun-God Shamash (extispicy) (#51-51a)
Letters from Mari Prophets (#52-52a)
Protective Spells relating to demons, sickness, miscarriage, etc. (#53)

Readings (Egypt):

Kruchten, "Oracles," and Černý, "Egyptian Oracles" (#54-54a)

Dream omens and protective spells for sickness, evil, snakes/scorpions, beer (#55)

Readings (Hebrew Bible and later Jewish/Christian tradition)

Grabbe, "Diviners, Healers, and Others" (#56)

The Story of Balaam (#57)

Hebrew Bible:

Story of Balaam (Numbers 22-24)

Dreams/Visions (Genesis 15, 37, 39-41, 46:1-4)

Teraphim (Genesis 31:19, 34-35; 1 Samuel 19:11-17; Hosea 3:4)

Urim/Thummim (Deuteronomy 33:8; Numbers 27:18-23; 1 Samuel 14:36-42;
and Ezra 2:62-63)

The Priestly Ephod (Exodus 28:15-30; Leviticus 8:5-9)

Trial of suspected adulteress (Numbers 5:11-31)

Jewish and Christian Incantations and Magic Spells (#58-58a)

April 6-18

VI. The Problem of Suffering and Evil, and Personal Religion

Readings (Mesopotamia):

"The Babylonian Theodicy"; "The Poem of the Righteous Sufferer"; "To Any God";

"The Dialogue of Pessimism"; "Dialogue between Man and his God"; "A Sufferer's
Salvation"; "Eulogy for a Woman Dead in Childbirth" (#59)

Readings (Egypt):

"The Dialogue of a Man and his Soul (Ba)" (Parkinson translation) (#60)

Penitential hymns from Deir el-Medina (#61)

Harpers's Songs (#62)

Readings (Hebrew Bible):

Book of Job (read Job, chapters 1-14, 19, 22-23, and 27-42; skim the rest)

Book of Ecclesiastes (all)

*****April 20 - Primary Source Analysis paper due in class*****

April 20-25

VII. From Many Gods to (Mostly) One God: Polytheism, Monotheism, and Other isms

Readings (Egypt's Akhenaten, the "Heretic King"):

Silverman in Oaks 6a, pp. 75-87

Some hymns to the Aten (sundisk) from Amarna (#63)

(Review Bottero in Oaks #5, pp. 41-43, 55-58 on Mesopotamia)

Readings (Hebrew Bible, ancient Israel): Class Handout with biblical passages

*****Exam #3 - Friday, April 29 from 3:30--5:30pm*****