



From the Beginning: Reading the book of Genesis

OT3XG3 Hebrew Exegesis Option

Times of class meetings: Mondays at 9:00am-10:50am in Fyfe classroom

Professor. Dr. Paul S. Evans

Phone. 905.525.9140 x24718

E-mail. pevans@mcmaster.ca

Office. 236

Course Description:

This course leads students through a detailed reading of the book of Genesis with a view to its theological, historical and literary interpretation and significance. In order to equip students for interpreting this foundational book we will take into account critical matters & methodologies, ancient Near Eastern parallels and the canonical context of the book as the introduction to the Pentateuch and all of Christian Scripture. We will also focus on several questions throughout our study: What does Genesis say about science and the origins of life on earth? What does Genesis teach concerning the nature of humanity? How does an understanding of Genesis impact our worldview? What does Genesis teach us about God's Covenant(s) with humans? In this course we will examine the literary structure, authorial purpose(s) and theological significance of the book of Genesis, in order to underscore its continuing relevance for the church and society today.

Specializations: Biblical Studies, Pastoral Studies, and Christian History and Worldview



Course Objectives:

Knowing

- To have a thorough knowledge of the contents and message of Genesis
- To gain familiarity with the assumptions, methods and conclusions of modern critical scholarship on Genesis
- To gain an introductory knowledge of relevant Ancient Near Eastern Literature: One will read an English translation of the most important extra-biblical documents for a proper understanding of Genesis within its ancient Near Eastern context.
- To increase knowledge of Hebrew grammar

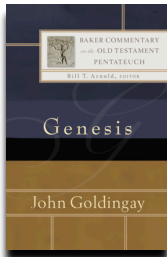
Being

- To embrace the contemporary relevance of Genesis for the Church today
- To grow closer to God through study of Genesis

Doing

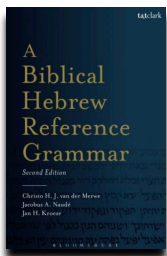
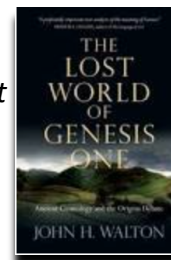
- To be able to discuss the relation of Genesis 1-11 to ancient Near Eastern mythology
- To be able to interpret Genesis in its original contexts
- To be able to apply the message of Genesis to contemporary audiences
- To be able to translate the Hebrew text of Genesis with proficiency

Required Texts:



Goldingay, John. *Genesis*. Baker Commentary on the Old Testament: Pentateuch. Grand Rapids, MI. Baker Academic, 2020.

John Walton. *The Lost World of Genesis One: Ancient Cosmology and the Origins Debate*. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2009.



Christo H. J. van der Merwe, Jackie A. Naudé, and Jan H. Kroeze. *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*. 2nd edition. London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017.

Students must also have a Hebrew lexicon



3. In addition, students must WATCH *His Only Son* (*Angel Studios movie)
Watch for free <https://www.angel.com/watch/his-only-son>



Textbook Purchase:

All required textbooks for this class are available from the Hurlburt Family Bookstore located beside the entrance to the Nathaniel H. Parker Memorial Chapel of McMaster Divinity College. To purchase in advance, you may contact the bookstore manager, Bernice Quek, by phone at 416.620.2934 or 416.668.3434 (mobile); or by email at books@readon.ca. The Hurlburt Family Bookstore also carries other books and merchandise and is open throughout the academic year during posted hours.

Course Requirements

I. Classroom Experiences

Participation in classroom experiences is an assumed foundation for this course, if a student fails to participate their final mark will be reduced by one full letter grade (so A becomes B, A- becomes B-).

II. Formal Assignments:

All Papers must be double-spaced, using 12pt Times New Roman font throughout (footnotes should be single-spaced 10pt Times New Roman font).

The assignments and their weights are as follows:

A. 25% - Critical Book Review Assignment: Due Feb 5 (6 pages).

After reading the Walton textbook (*The Lost World of Genesis One*), students will critically review the work in one paper. This review will present its content, provide a critique and finally give a response that outlines both theological and personal implications. See "Book Review Guidelines" below.

C. 40% - *Hebrew Translations*. (10 passages at 4% each) Due weekly.

Students will provide their own translation of the **selected Hebrew passages** listed below in the **Course Schedule**. This translation should not be based on another English translation but reflect their own understanding of the Hebrew. This translation should parse select verbs as indicated on the weekly A2L announcement for Hebrew exegesis students. Each week the translation, along with required parsing will be uploaded to the appropriate A2L folder on **the Friday of each week**. Late translations receive a late penalty of 2% per day.

D. 35% - Major Assignment. Due Apr 1

All major assignment papers must follow the MDC Style Guide and be double-spaced, with a 12 pt. Times New Roman font (footnotes should be single spaced and 10 pt font). Papers must include a bibliography with at least 12 items of secondary sources (commentaries, theological dictionaries, monographs, and include at least 2 academic articles) each drawn on and cited in the paper. Students may supplement these 12 sources with 2 internet resources. See "Paper Evaluation" below.



1. Biblical Studies Specializations:

There are two (2) options for the major assignment for Pastoral Studies: Choose only one (1) of the following:

a. *Research Paper* (12-15 pages)

This is especially recommended if you are planning to go on to a research degree or write a thesis in OT (or if you have a particular topic in mind on which you wish to write). The topic of this research must be related to the book of Genesis and approved by the professor. See 'Paper Evaluation' below

b. *Exegetical Paper*: 12–15 pages.

In this option students will choose one passage from the book of Genesis and write an exegesis paper. The chosen text should be between 10-20 verses. This paper will:

- Take into account the genre of the chosen text
- Take into account the historical context of the chosen text
- Provide a close reading of the text, noting key words, phrases, and literary features
- Identify different interpretive options and consider the validity of each and argue for the chosen interpretation.
- Elucidate the theological message of the chosen text
- Explain the applicability of the text for today for believers

2. Pastoral Specializations:

There are three (3) options for the major assignment for Pastoral Studies: Choose only one (1) of the following:

a. *Exegetical Paper*: 12–15 pages.

Students will write an exegetical paper on a chosen text from Genesis (your chosen text must be approved by your professor). See "Paper Evaluation" below.

b. *Sermon on a passage from Genesis (oral presentation)*. 20-25 minute video-taped sermon uploaded to YouTube or Vimeo (or other online service).

Beginning with your chosen text, this sermon will expound a passage, applying it to the contemporary context. The sermon will be delivered orally but include a written paper with an outline. The paper may be a combination of sentence, bullets/point form, paragraphs (it need not be a complete essay of the words you preach). This paper should be grammatically correct and include appropriate citation of sources employed.

c. *Sermon on a passage from Genesis (written)*. 10 pages double-spaced.

Beginning with the text of Genesis this sermon will expound a passage, applying it to the contemporary context. The sermon will be an original written composition but written with an aim to oral delivery. The submitted text should include an outline of the sermon at the beginning. The sermon must be written as it would be spoken and must *not* be in point form etc. but be a full written manuscript. It is expected it will conform to MDC



style guide and be grammatically correct and acknowledge its sources appropriately (using footnotes).

3. Christian History & Worldview Specializations:

There are three (3) options for the major assignment for Pastoral Studies: Choose only one (1) of the following:

a. Research Paper (12-15 pages).

This is especially recommended if you are planning to go on to a research degree or write a thesis (or if you have a particular topic in mind that you wish to write on). The topic of this research must be approved by the professor.

b. The Ancestral/Patriarchal Story as History (12-15 pages).

This paper will assess the Ancestral biblical narratives of Gen 12–50 (or a chosen narrative from these chapters) and argue for an appropriate genre designation and consider to what extent they should be viewed as historical. The paper will interact with major scholarly discussion on the question and argue for its own critical position.

c. Genesis 22 in Contemporary Ethical Debates (12-15 pages)

This paper will consider the ethics of the Akedah story (Genesis 22) and assess its use in debates over the morality of the God of the Old Testament. The paper will interact with discussion by atheists and apologists on the question and argue for its own critical position concerning this issue.

College Style for Submission of Written Work

All stylistic considerations (including but not limited to questions of formatting, footnotes, and bibliographic references) must conform to the McMaster Divinity College Style Guidelines for Essays and Theses <https://mcmasterdivinity.ca/resources-forms/mdc-style-guide/>. Failure to observe appropriate form will result in grade reductions.

All papers must be in pdf format only and posted to the appropriate place on A2L. Include your last name in the file name of your paper (e.g., evans.paper.pdf). To avoid late marks papers must be received by 11:59pm on their due date. Late assignments receive no critical feedback.

Policy concerning late papers

Extensions for papers will not be given except in very exceptional circumstances (serious illness, family crises, etc.). Busy-ness, computer problems etc. are not legitimate reasons to grant extensions and in the interests of fairness requests for extensions will take into account the entire class. Late assignments will be docked at the rate of 2% per day for the first 7 days (including weekends) and 4% per day after that. All assignments must be received by the last day of class (April 5) in order to avoid a failing grade in the class. Late assignments receive no critical feedback.



Gender Inclusive language

McMaster Divinity College uses inclusive language for human beings in worship services, student written materials, and all its publications. It is expected that inclusive language will be used in chapel services and all MDC assignments. In reference to biblical texts, the integrity of the original expressions and the names of God should be respected, but you will need to use gender-inclusive language for humans, and you will need to quote from a gender-inclusive version such as, for example, the following: NRSV (2021), NCV (1991), TEV/GNB/GNT (1992), CEV (1995), NLT (1996), NIV (2011), and the CEB (2011).

AODA

In accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), the content of this course is intended to be accessible to all students who are enrolled in the course, including those with disabilities. If a student requires accommodation to participate fully in this course, that student is to contact SAS at McMaster University, who will then work directly with the McMaster Divinity College Registrar to negotiate reasonably appropriate accommodation for the student. The MDC Registrar will communicate with faculty regarding necessary accommodations. Please note that an accommodation is not retroactive and must be requested in advance to allow sufficient time for implementation.

Academic Honesty

Academic dishonesty is not qualitatively different from other types of dishonesty. It consists of misrepresenting the ownership of written work by deception or by other fraudulent means. In an academic setting this may include any number of forms such as: copying or using unauthorized aids in tests, examinations; plagiarism, i.e., submitting work that is not one's own (regardless of the means of its production) but passing it off as if it is; submitting work for credit in a course for which credit is being or has already been given, unless the previously submitted work was presented as such to the instructor of the second course and has been deemed acceptable for credit by the instructor of that course; aiding and abetting another student's dishonesty; giving false information for the purposes of gaining admission or credit; giving false information for the purposes of obtaining deferred examinations or extension of deadlines; forging or falsifying McMaster University or McMaster Divinity College documents.

Disclaimer

This syllabus is the property of the instructor and is prepared with currently available information. The instructor reserves the right to make changes and revisions up to and including the first day of class.

Students are advised to retain this syllabus for their records.



COURSE SCHEDULE

DATE	Classroom Experiences	Biblical Texts	Assignments due	Hebrew translations
Jan 8	A. Introductions B. Class overview C. Introduction to Genesis 1	--	--	--
Jan 15	A. Interpreting Creation Narratives B. The Toledoth of Heaven and Earth	Gen 1–2	--	Gen 2:15–25
Jan 22	A. Cain and Abel B. The Toledoth of Adam C. Interpreting the Genealogies	Gen 3–5	--	Gen 3:1–10
Jan 29	A. The Sons of God and Daughters of <i>haadam</i> B. The Toledoth of Noah C. Understanding the Flood	Gen 6–9	--	Gen 6:1–13
Feb 5	A. The Toledoth of Noah's sons B. The Tower of Babylon C. The Toledoth of Terah	Gen 10–11	*Walton Book Review due Feb 5	Gen 11:1–8
Feb 12	A. The Call of Abraham B. Abraham and Lot C. Abraham and Melchizedek	Genesis 12–14	--	Gen 12:1–8
Feb 19	READING WEEK			
Feb 26	A. Abrahamic Covenant B. Hagar's Story C. Sodom and Gomorrah	Genesis 15–19	--	Gen 15:6–18
Mar 4	A. Birth of Isaac B. The Akedah C. Discussion of <i>His Only Son</i>	Gen 20–24 Watch the Movie <i>His Only Son</i> https://www.angel.com/watch/his-only-son	--	Gen 22:1–14
Mar 11	A. The Toledoth of Isaac B. Buying & Stealing the Blessing C. Stairway to Heaven	Gen 25–28	--	Gen 27:18–29
Mar 18	A. Jacob, Leah, & Rachel B. Wrestling God C. Reunion with Esau	Gen 29–33	--	Gen 32:24–31
Mar 25	A. Rape of Dinah B. Promises to Jacob C. The Toledoth of Jacob	Gen 34–37	--	Gen 34:1–10
Apr 1	A. Joseph's Story B. Genesis as a Whole	Gen 38–50	*Major Assignment Due Apr 1	--



Major Assignment Evaluation

I. The next items are rated according to this scale: 1 = inadequate; 2 = adequate; 3 = good; 4 = very good; 5 = superior.

Bibliographic consciousness	1	2	3	4	5
Range and Use of Sources	1	2	3	4	5
Clarity in Defining Issues			1	2	3 4 5
Strength of Argument	1	2	3	4	5
Awareness of Exegetical Issues			1	2	3 4 5
Accuracy of Data and Assertions			1	2	3 4 5
Analysis /Critical Thinking			1	2	3 4 5
Introduction (Thesis Statement /Clear Issue)	1	2	3	4	5
Development of Thesis (focus)			1	2	3 4 5
Literary Style (awkward, wordy, repetitive)	1	2	3	4	5
Organization/coherence of ideas			1	2	3 4 5
Grammar/Spelling			1	2	3 4 5
Neatness/Presentation			1	2	3 4 5

§ Note: this is a simple evaluation tool to assist in paper assessment. The categories are not weighted equally, and thus are not added together or averaged to calculate your grade.

II. The following need attention if so indicated

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Use inclusive language | <input type="checkbox"/> The paper is too long/too short |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Write a unified essay | <input type="checkbox"/> Edit your paper more thoroughly |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Line spacing, Font size, Margins, Page numbers etc. need attention | <input type="checkbox"/> The paper needs balance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cite primary resources correctly/consistently (e.g., Gen 1:26; Gen 1; etc.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Follow MDC Style guide |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Cite secondary resources correctly/consistently |





Critical Book Review Guideline

I. The Book Review of John Walton *The Lost World of Genesis One* should roughly follow this format:

Summary of Content: 2-3 Pages

Critique of Content 1-2 Pages

Personal Reflection 1-2 Pages

Total=*no more* than 6 pages! Pages 7ff *will not* be read

The following items are rated according to the following scale:

1 = poor/inadequate; 2 = adequate; 3 = good/more than adequate; 4 = very good;

5 = excellent/superior.

Summary of Content (noted key concepts etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
Quality of Critique (evidence of critical thought)	1	2	3	4	5
Reflective Thought (theological depth, sensitivity)	1	2	3	4	5
Literary Style (awkward, wordy, repetitive)	1	2	3	4	5
Grammar/Spelling	1	2	3	4	5
Neatness/Presentation	1	2	3	4	5

§ Note: this is a simple evaluation tool to assist in paper assessment. The categories are not weighted equally, and thus are not added together or averaged to calculate your grade.

II. The following need attention if checked

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Use inclusive language | <input type="checkbox"/> The paper is too long/too short |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Write a unified essay | <input type="checkbox"/> Edit your paper more thoroughly |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Line spacing, Font size, Margins, Page numbers etc. need attention | <input type="checkbox"/> The paper needs balance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cite primary resources correctly/consistently (e.g., Gen 1:26; Gen 1; etc.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Follow MDC Style guide |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Cite secondary resources correctly/consistently |



Selected Bibliography

- Alter, Robert, *Genesis: Translation and Commentary*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1997.
- Athas, George. "Has Lot Lost the Plot? Detail Omission and a Reconsideration of Genesis 19." Pages in *Journal of Hebrew Scriptures*. Volume 16, Article 5 DOI:10.5508/jhs.2016.v16.a5 http://jhsonline.org/Articles/article_217.pdf
- Becking, Bob and Susanne Hennecke, *Out of Paradise: Eve and Adam and Their Interpreters*. Hebrew Bible Monographs 30. Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2011.
- Bird, Chad L. "Typological Interpretation within the Old Testament: Melchizedekian Typology." *Concordia Journal* 26 (2000): 36-52.
- Bird, Phyllis A. "'Male and Female He Created Them': Genesis 1:27b in the Context of the Priestly Account of Creation," Pages 329-361 in *"I Studied Inscriptions before the Flood"*. Edited by Richard S. Hess and David Toshio Tsumura. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994.
- Blenkinsopp, Joseph, *Treasures Old and New: Essays in the Theology of the Pentateuch*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004.
- Blenkinsopp, Joseph, *Creation, Un-Creation, Re-Creation: A Discursive Commentary on Genesis 1-11*. London: T & T Clark, 2011.
- Enns, Peter, *The Evolution of Adam: What the Bible Does and Doesn't Say About Human Origins*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2012.
- Evans, Paul S. "Creation, Progress and Calling: Genesis 1-11 as Social Commentary." *McMaster Journal of Theology and Ministry* 13 (2011): 67-100.
- Gunkel, Hermann, *Genesis*. Translated by Mark E. Biddle. Mercer Library of Biblical Studies. Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1997.
- Hamilton, Victor P., *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17*. New International Commentary on the Old Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990.
- Hamilton, Victor P., *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 18-50*. New International Commentary on the Old Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994.
- Heide, Martin. "The Domestication of the Camel." *Ugarit-Forschungen* 42 (2010): 331-382.
- Kapelrud, Arvid S. "Mythological Features in Genesis Chapter 1 and the Author's Intentions."



Vetus Testamentum 24 (1974): 178-186.

Kidner, Derek, *Genesis : An Introduction and Commentary*. The Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries. Downers Grove, IL.: Inter-Varsity, 1977.

Lambert, Wilfred G. "A New Look at the Babylonian Background of Genesis," Pages 96-113 in *"I Studied Inscriptions before the Flood"*. Edited by Richard S. Hess and David Toshio Tsumura. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994.

Mann, Thomas W. . "'All the Families of the Earth': The Theological Unity of Genesis." *Interpretation* 45 (1991): 341-353.

Moberly, R. W. L., *The Theology of the Book of Genesis*. Old Testament Theology. Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

Pinnock, Clark H. "Climbing out of a Swamp: The Evangelical Struggle to Understand the Creation Texts." *Interpretation* 43 (1989): 143-155.

Skinner, John, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis*. Icc. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1910.

Smith, Gary V. "Structure and Purpose in Genesis 1-11." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 20 (1977): 307-319.

Trible, Phyllis and Valparaiso University., *Genesis 22 : The Sacrifice of Sarah*. Gross Memorial Lecture ; 1989. Valparaiso, IN: Valparaiso University Press, 1990.

Tsumura, David Toshio, *The Earth and the Waters in Genesis 1 and 2: A Linguistic Investigation*. JSOTSup, 83. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1989.

Tsumura, David Toshio. "Genesis and Ancient near Eastern Stories of Creation and Flood: An Introduction," Pages 27-57 in *"I Studied Inscriptions before the Flood"*. Edited by Richard S. Hess and David Toshio Tsumura. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994.

Waltke, Bruce K. and Cathi J. Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001.

Walton, John H., *Genesis*. NIVAC. Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan, 2001.

Walton, John H., *The Lost World of Adam and Eve: Genesis 2-3 and the Human Origins Debate*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2015.

Wenham, Gordon J., *Genesis 1-15*. Word Biblical Commentary 1. Dallas, TX.: Word, 1987.



Wenham, Gordon J. "Method in Pentateuchal Source Criticism." *Vetus Testamentum* 41 (1991): 84-109.

Wenham, Gordon J., *Genesis 16-50*. Word Biblical Commentary ; v. 2. Dallas, TX.: Word, 1994.

Wenham, Gordon J., *Rethinking Genesis 1-11: Gateway to the Bible*. The Didsbury Lectures 2013. Eugene, Oregon: Cascade, 2015.

Worthing, Mark William. "The Length of a Year in the Patriarchal Narratives: A Proposal." *Lutheran Theological Journal* 33 (1999): 117-123.

Youngblood, Ronald F. "The Abrahamic Covenant: Conditional or Unconditional," Pages 31-46 in *Living and Active Word of God: Studies in Honor of Samuel J Schultz*. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1983.