



OT APOLOGETICS

Essential Answers to Difficult Questions

אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁאַחֲזוּ וְנִפְץ אֶת-עֲלִילָיוֹ.

OT 3XA3

וַיִּתֵּן אֶת-הַכִּנְעָנִי וַיַּחֲרֵם אֹתָהֶם

This course runs Jan 8–Apr 5, 2024

Professor: Dr. Paul S. Evans

Phone: (905) 525-9140 Ext. 24718

E-mail: pevans@mcmaster.ca

Course Description:

This course provides essential responses to ethical challenges to Old Testament texts and theology, answering questions such as: Can we trust the text of the Bible or has it been distorted over time? Is the God of the Old Testament different than God in the New Testament? What is the character of God like according to the Old Testament? Is the History in the Old Testament Bad History? Is the Bible scientifically accurate? Is the Old Testament misogynistic or patriarchal? What about the so-called genocidal conquest of Canaan? Why all the harsh punishments in Old Testament law? Are biblical laws immoral? What about Psalms that call for vengeance or even the murder of babies? This course will consider various Christian responses to these challenges and critically assesses their value for defending the authority and theological importance of the OT scriptures in both their ancient context and for the Church today.

Specializations: Biblical Studies, Pastoral Studies



Knowing
the word of God



Being
transformed into
Christ's image



Doing
the work of ministry

Course Objectives:

Knowing

- To gain an awareness of the basic issues relating to contemporary intellectual challenges to the morality and authority of the Old Testament
- To gain an understanding of the diverse Christian responses to these intellectual challenges to the Old Testament
- To gain a deeper understanding of the nature and significance of so-called problem texts in the Old Testament
- To be familiar with Christian resources available for further study in this area

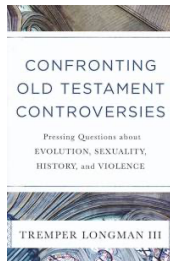
Being

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

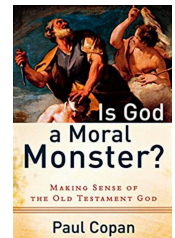
Doing

- To be able to interpret Old Testament texts in their original contexts
- To be able to recognize and critique intellectual challenges to the Old Testament
- To be able to explain reasons for confidence and faith in Old Testament scriptures, drawing on theological, historical, and exegetical arguments
- To be able to articulate personal responses to such challenges to the Old Testament

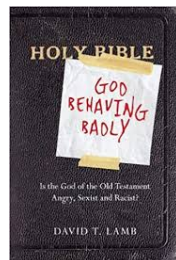
Required Texts



Tremper Longman. *Confronting Old Testament Controversies*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2018.



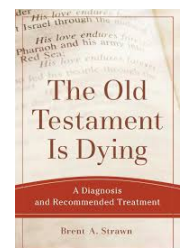
Paul Copan. *Is God a Moral Monster? Making Sense Of The Old Testament God*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011.



Lamb, David T., *God Behaving Badly: Is the God of the Old Testament Angry, Sexist, and Racist?* Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Books, 2011.

Recommended Texts

Brent C. Strawn. *The Old Testament is Dying: A Diagnosis and Recommended Treatment*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2017.



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 Evaluation

The assignments and their weights are as follows:

1. 20% - Readings

Each week of the course has specific readings from the textbooks assigned (see reading schedule below). Each student must keep up with the readings in a timely manner in order to participate in online discussions.

- Students will submit a detailed list of the reading that they have completed in the assigned textbooks (including page spreads for partial reading) and assigned articles available through A2L.
- Students will upload their accomplished reading list assignment to the appropriate Assignment Box on A2L before the last day of class (Apr 5)

2. 20% - Class Participation:

Due to this being an online course, class participation will all occur online.

Avenue to Learn Discussion threads:

Class discussion will occur online on the Avenue to Learn course website. Students must actively participate in the online discussion and post minimum **two** discussion topics at the beginning of a week (Sun-Tues). Student posts must be in regard to the posted lectures / assigned readings that week as noted in the weekly announcement that will contain links to the lecture video(s). As well, to further the online discussion all students must respond to minimum **two posts** every week. Since initial posts will be online in the first part of the week, there will be adequate time for all students to respond to posts in a timely manner.

3. 20% - Creative Presentation Due: Feb 10. Answering a popular criticism of/challenge to the OT designed for a specific cultural context. (Church, Youth Group, Public Forum). This creative presentation will be submitted to the professor then shared with fellow students who will discuss on an A2L discussion thread during the week of Feb 11–17. *Students must email the professor beforehand to receive approval for their chosen topic.*

This Creative Presentation could take various forms.

- i. Video presentation (posted to [YouTube](#) or [Vimeo](#)). Students will send link to the video to professor who will upload it to Avenue to Learn for the rest of the students to view and hear
- ii. Digital presentation (PowerPoint, Keynote, Prezi, Google Slides etc.) with audio recorded or a pdf handout.
- iii. a Podcast (audio only) uploaded online. Students will send link to the video to professor who will upload it to Avenue to Learn for the rest of the students to hear

4. 5% - Reflective Paper: 4 Pages. Due: Apr 5.

For this paper students write a reflection on implications of the issues and research covered in the course for a student's view of the OT as scripture and other implications for their faith.

5. 35%- Major Assignment: 12-15 Pages. Due Mar 22.

All Major Assignments must be double-spaced, 12pt Times New Roman font (footnotes should be 10pt Times New Roman font and single spaced). The bibliography must contain 12 items of secondary sources (commentaries, theological dictionaries, monographs and at least 3 academic articles). Each item must be drawn on and cited in the paper. Students may supplement these 12 sources with 2 internet sources. Cf. "Assignment Evaluation" below.

A. Major Assignments for Biblical Studies Specializations:

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

- 1. 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 that you wish to write on). The topic of this research must be related to a difficult question(s) about the Old Testament and approved by the professor.
- 2. Exegetical Paper: 12–15 pages** Students will write an exegetical paper on a difficult text from the Old Testament that has led some to question the morality of the Old Testament (your chosen text must be approved by your professor).

B. Major Assignments for Pastoral Studies Specializations:

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

- 1. Exegetical Paper: 12–15 pages** Students will write an exegetical paper on a difficult text from the Old Testament that has led some to question the morality of the Old Testament (your chosen text must be approved by your professor).

2. Sermon on the character of God in the OT (oral presentation). 25–30 minute video-taped sermon submitted on CD/DVD/USB drive or uploaded to YouTube or Vimeo.

Beginning with the Old Testament text this sermon will reflect on the characteristics of God in the Old Testament with an aim to communicate it to the contemporary context. The sermon will draw on biblical descriptions and self-descriptions of God and stories about God from the Old Testament. 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. The bibliography must contain 12 items of secondary sources (commentaries, theological dictionaries, monographs and at least 3 academic articles). Each item must be drawn on and cited in the paper. Students may supplement these 12 sources with 2 internet resources. See “Assignment Evaluation” below.

3. Sermon on the character of God in the OT (written). 10–12 pages. Beginning with the Old Testament text this sermon will reflect on the characteristics of God in the Old Testament with an aim to communicate it to the contemporary context. The sermon will draw on biblical descriptions and self-descriptions of God and stories about God from the Old Testament.

The sermon will be an original written composition but written with an aim to oral delivery. The submitted text should include an outline. 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 endnotes—not footnotes). The bibliography must contain 12 items of secondary sources (commentaries, theological dictionaries, monographs and at least 3 academic articles). Each item must be drawn on and cited in the paper. Students may supplement these 12 sources with 2 internet resources. See “Assignment Evaluation” below.

Class Schedule

Week	Topic	Assignment	Longman	Copan	Lamb
Jan 8–13	A. Introduction B. Do science and the OT disagree?	Introduce yourself on A2L thread	Intro pp. 1–24	pp. 11–26	Ch. 1
Jan 14–20	A. Interpreting creation narratives B. Science and faith	A2L Discussions	pp. 25–47	--	--
Jan 21–27	A. Is the OT bad history? B. The genre of OT historiography	A2L Discussions	pp. 48–76	--	--
Jan 28–Feb 3	A. The Exodus B. The Judges C. The Monarchy	A2L Discussions	pp. 79–102	--	--
Feb 4–10	A. Does the OT condone violence? B. Understanding <i>herem</i> texts in Deuteronomy and Joshua	*Creative Presentation due Feb 10	pp. 103–122	pp. 158–168	Ch. 4
Feb 11–17	A. Is God violent? B. Should we always imitate God?	A2L Discussions will focus on Peer's Creative presentation	pp. 123–143	pp. 168–185	Ch. 5
Feb 18–24	NO CLASS DUE TO READING WEEK		pp. 144–171	pp. 186–208	Ch. 7
Feb 25–Mar 9	A. Do the Psalms teach us to curse our enemies? B. Imprecatory psalms in their ancient context	A2L Discussions	pp. 172–194	pp. 57–77	Ch. 8
Mar 10–16	A. Is Biblical Law immoral? B. Interpreting Biblical law in its ancient context	A2L Discussions	pp. 195–206	pp. 78–100	Ch. 6
Mar 17–23	A. Is the OT misogynist? B. Stories of women C. Laws about women D. Prophetic portrayals	A2L Discussions *Major Assignment due Mar 22	pp. 207–234	pp. 101–123	Ch. 3
Mar 24–30	A. The OT and sexuality B. The OT and slavery	A2L Discussions	pp. 235–250	pp. 124–157	Ch. 2
Mar 31–Apr 5	A. Is Yahweh egotistical? B. The Morality of praise and worship	A2L Discussions *Reflective paper due Apr 5 *Reading List due Apr 5	pp. 250–270	pp. 27–56	Epilogue

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.

ASSIGNMENT EVALUATION

I. The following 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"/> Cite secondary resources correctly/consistently |

III. Comments

Bibliography

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- Wright, Christopher J. H., *The God I Don't Understand: Reflections on Tough Questions of Faith*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2008.