



OT APOLOGETICS

Essential Answers to Difficult Questions

אֲשֶׁרִי שְׂיֵאחֶז וְנִפְץ אֶת-עֲלִלָּיִךְ

OT 6XA6

וַיִּתֵּן אֶת-הַכִּנְעָנִי וַיִּחַרֵם אֶתָּהֶם

This course runs online 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.



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

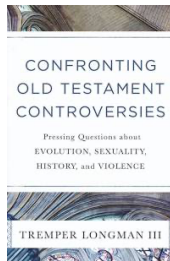
Being

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

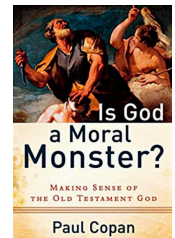
Doing

- 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

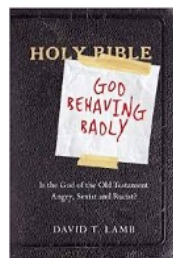
Required Texts



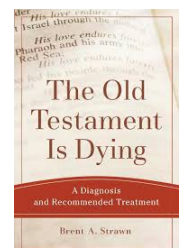
Tremper Longman. *Confronting Old Testament Controversies*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2018.



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.



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. 15% - 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. 15% - 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 **three 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% - Comparing Worldviews in the God debate: 15 pages. Due: Feb 10.

This paper will critically assess the underlying worldviews evinced in the following additional readings (posted on A2L):

- Chris Hedges, "The God Debate," pages 9–43 of *I Don't Believe in Atheists*. New York: Free Press, 2008.
- Richard Dawkins. "The God Hypothesis," pages 29–74 of *The God Delusion*. New York: London: Bantam Press, 2006.

The paper will then compare and contrast these worldviews with the Christian worldview(s) as evinced in the textbooks for this course. See

Ronald Nash has described a worldview as “A set of beliefs about the most important issues in life.” What do these authors appear to believe about the most important issues in life?

Examples of questions to ask of the worldviews.

1. What is real/reality to the authors?
2. What do they perceive is the nature of reality? (metaphysics)
3. How do these authors perceive their environment?
4. What is a human being in the view of these authors?
5. Why can we know anything? (epistemology)
6. How do we know right and wrong? (ethics)
7. What is the meaning of human history?
8. What are the core commitments in this worldview?

Attempts to describe the inherent worldview detected in the readings should **describe the set of presuppositions** held by the authors (as far as can be determined or you see implied). Worldviews’ presuppositions are interlocking and are interconnected and self-supporting. One belief is not in isolation of other beliefs. They will affect each other significantly. **Compare and contrast the way in which these authors view the world**—how they perceive and interpret reality.

This paper may not be able to come up with clear answers to all of these questions and the questions are just a guideline for approaching the delineation of the worldview evinced in the material. The different questions/areas need not be given equal weight or treatment in the paper. The paper may focus on what the student thinks are the most relevant questions for the reading material.

4. 40%- Research Paper: 25 Pages. Due Mar 29.

The topic of this research must be related to a difficult question(s) about the Old Testament and approved by the professor. The bibliography must contain at least 25 items of secondary sources.

5. 10% - Reflective Paper: 8 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.

Class Schedule

Week	Topic	Assignment	Longman	Copan	Wright
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	*Worldview Paper 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	pp. 207–234	pp. 101–123	Ch. 3
Mar 24–30	A. The OT and sexuality B. The OT and slavery	A2L Discussions *Research Paper due Mar 29	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.

Selected Bibliography

Boyd, Gregory A., *The Crucifixion of the Warrior God: Interpreting the Old Testament's Violent Portraits of God in Light of the Cross*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2017.

Copan, Paul, *Is God a Moral Monster? Making Sense of the Old Testament God*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011.

Copan, Paul and William Lane Craig, *Come Let Us Reason: New Essays in Christian Apologetics*. Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2012.

Copan, Paul and William Lane Craig eds. *Contending with Christianity's Critics: Answering New Atheists & Other Objectors*. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2009.

Craig, William Lane and Walter Sinnott-Armstrong. *God? A Debate Between a Christian and an Atheist*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.

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Enns, Peter, *The Bible Tells Me So: Why Defending Scripture Has Made Us Unable to Read It*. New York: HarperOne, 2014.

Evans, C. Stephen. *Why Believe? Reason and Mystery as Pointers to God* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996.

Timothy Keller, *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism*. Riverhead Trade, 2009.

Cowles, C. S., *Show Them No Mercy: Four Views on God and Canaanite Genocide*. Counterpoints. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003.

Ganssle, Greg. *A Reasonable God: Engaging the New Face of Atheism*. Waco: Baylor University Press, 2009.

Hedges, Chris, *I Don't Believe in Atheists*. New York: Free Press, 2008.

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- McGrath, Alister. *The Dawkins Delusion*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2007.
- Moberly, R. W. L., *The Theology of the Book of Genesis*. Old Testament Theology. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- Morley, Brian K. *Mapping Apologetics: Comparing Contemporary Approaches*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015.
- Meister, Chad, and William Lane Craig, eds. *God Is Great, God Is Good: Why Believing in God Is Reasonable and Responsible*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009.
- Ramachandra, Vinoth, *Subverting Global Myths: Theology and the Public Issues Shaping Our World*. Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2008.
- Strawn, Brent A., *The Old Testament Is Dying: A Diagnosis and Recommended Treatment*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2017.
- Walton, John H., *The Lost World of the Israelite Conquest: Covenant, Retribution, and the Fate of the Canaanites*. Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2017.
- Wright, Christopher J. H., *The God I Don't Understand: Reflections on Tough Questions of Faith*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2008.