



**McMaster Divinity  
College**

**OT 6R1090**

**THE HISTORY OF ANCIENT ISRAEL**  
**Fall 2025**

**Class Schedule:** Mondays 4:00pm-5:50am in Fyfe classroom

**Professor:** Dr. Paul S. Evans

**E-mail:** pevans@mcmaster.ca

**Office:** 236

**Course Description:**

- A thorough study of the history of Israel with attention to modern historical reconstructions and questions of historiography and historical method. This course will focus on a variety of evidences relevant for critical modern historical reconstructions such as, textual evidence, epigraphic evidence, and archaeological evidence. Areas to be explored include: the role of material evidence; dating archeological evidence, debate over the 'low chronology'; the role of memory in history writing; methods of ancient historiography; the question of verification, and the role of the biblical text in historical reconstruction.

**Course Objectives:**

**Knowing**

- To have a thorough knowledge of the various stages of ancient Israel within the context of ancient Near Eastern culture and context.
- To gain familiarity with the state of the field of research on the historiography of ancient Israel
- To gain an awareness of the various perspectives on Israel's history present in the OT guild today

**Being**

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

**Doing**

- To be able to discuss the relation of biblical historiography to history
- To be able to interpret the OT in its historical context
- To be able to apply knowledge of historical issues in the OT to contemporary audiences

**Required Texts:**

- Bill T. Arnold, and Richard S. Hess eds. *Ancient Israel's History: An Introduction to Issues and Sources*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014
- Brad Kelle and Brent Strawn. *Oxford Handbook of the Historical Books of the Bible*. Oxford University Press, 2020.
- Iain W. Provan, Philips V. Long, and Tremper Longman. *A Biblical History of Israel*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2015.
- Paul S. Evans. *Sennacherib and the War of 1812: Historical Reconstructions of the Assyrian Campaign of 701 BCE in Light of Military History*. Library of Hebrew Bible /Old Testament Studies 736. London: T. & T. Clark, 2023.
- Articles distributed to the class or posted on Avenue to Learn

**Recommended Texts:**

- William G. Dever. *Beyond the Texts: An Archaeological Portrait of Ancient Israel and Judah*. Atlanta: SBL Press, 2017.
- Long, V. Philips, David W. Baker, and Gordon J. Wenham eds. *Windows into Old Testament History: Evidence, Argument, and the Crisis of "Biblical Israel"*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002.

**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](mailto: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:*

**30% - Class Participation:** This course is designed as a graduate seminar.

Classroom experiences will be collaborative, with both students and professor engaged in the learning process together.

**a) Attendance.** Students must attend every class and come prepared to actively contribute to class discussions.

**b) Readings and Reading notes.** Assigned readings and research must be completed before class time in order for both the individual student and the broader class to benefit. Students will prepare at least two pages of review notes on each week's assigned readings with comments and questions. These notes will be posted to Avenue to Learn discussion thread before class time each week.

**c) Presentation.** During the first month of the course students will give a 10-minute presentation to the class (with PowerPoint) on an important piece of extra-biblical evidence often used in historical reconstructions of ancient Israel (presenting Sept 29 and Oct 6). A bibliography to share with the class

will be uploaded to A2L on the day of the presentation.

**30% - Research Paper on chosen historical 'period': 20 pages.** Draft due Oct 20 posted to A2L. On Oct 27 and Nov 3 students will give a brief presentation of their paper (10–15 minutes) which will be followed by a class discussion. Students will then revise their paper in light of the feedback received and submit the final version to the professor by Nov 7.

**Paper (25%)** For this paper students will choose a historical period in the ancient Near East related to their chosen area of research for their dissertation. The paper will provide an overview of the period and identify the main evidences available to support a historical reconstruction. The paper will also identify critical issues and problems for such reconstructions and argue for the best approach to these problems.

**Reviews (5%):** Each student will write a two-page review of the papers in their assigned group and email them to the professor before the class in which the papers will be presented and discussed, and to the student who wrote the paper(s) after the class.

**35% - Research Paper on Chosen Historical 'event.' 25 pages.** Draft due Nov 14, posted to A2L. On Nov 17 and Dec 1 students will give a brief presentation of their paper (10–15 minutes) which will be followed by a class discussion. Students will then revise their paper in light of the feedback received and submit the final version to the professor by Dec 5.

**Paper (30%)** For this paper students will choose a historical event that occurred during the historical period chosen for the first paper. This paper will be more specific than the first paper in assessing critical historical reconstructions and arguing for their own historical reconstruction of the event utilizing all known evidences and outlining their methodology and approach to each piece of evidence, and especially their use of the Bible in their historical reconstruction.

**Reviews (5%):** Each student will write a two-page review of their fellow student's papers and email them to the professor before the class in which the papers will be presented and discussed, and to the student who wrote the paper(s) after the class.

**5% - Reflection Paper on Hermeneutical Implications. 5 pages.** Due Dec 8, posted to A2L. 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 Bible as scripture.

**Class Schedule**

In Class	Kelle et. al	Arnold & Hess	Provan et al.	Assignments due	A2L readings
Sept 8 - Intro to the study of Israel's History	--	--	--	--	--
Sept 15 - Methods for Studying Israel's History	Ch. 1–2	Introduction	Ch. 1, 5	--	--
Sept 22 - Survey of Israel's History * Student Presentations of extra-biblical evidence*	Ch. 3–4	Ch. 1	pp. 155–174	--	--
Sept 29 - Survey of Israel's History * Student Presentations of extra-biblical evidence*	Ch. 5–6	Chs. 2–3	pp. 189–198	--	--
Oct 6 - Survey of Israel's History	Ch. 7–8	Ch. 4–5	Ch. 7	--	--
Oct 13 – READING WEEK • NO CLASS					
Oct 20 - Survey of Israel's History	Ch. 9–10	Ch. 6	Ch. 8	Draft Research Paper on Historical Period due	
Oct 27 - Presentations and discussion of Peer's papers**	Ch. 11–13	Ch. 7–8	Ch. 9	--	--
Nov 3 - Presentations and discussion of Peer's papers**	Ch. 14–17	Chs. 9–10	Ch. 10	Final version of Historical paper due Nov 7	Knauf.pdf Mayer.pdf Na'aman.pdf
Nov 10 - Historical Issues in the reigns of Hezekiah & Manasseh	Ch. 21–22	Chs. 11	Chs. 2–4	Draft Research Paper on Historical 'Event' due Nov 14	Bellis.pdf EvansJHS.pdf Knauf.pdf Kelly.pdf
Nov 17 - Historical Issues in the reigns of Hezekiah & Manasseh	Ch. 23–24	Ch. 12	Ch. 11	--	Davies.pdf Thompson.pdf
Nov 24 – NO CLASS DUE TO SBL					
Dec 1 - Presentations and discussion of Peer's papers ***	Ch. 27–28	Ch. 14	Appendix	Final version of Event paper due Dec 5	Evans.JBL1.pdf Knoppers.pdf
Dec 8 - Evaluating the field and reflection on historical issues and faith				Reflection paper due Dec 8	Person.pdf Evans.JBL2.pdf

\* 10 minute presentation on extra-biblical evidence

- Seminar participants will present with PowerPoint and bibliography on an important piece of extra-biblical evidence often used in historical reconstructions

\*\*10-15 minute presentation of Paper on Historical Period

- Seminar participants will present papers providing an overview of relevant Historical Periods identifying the main evidences available for historical reconstructions

\*\*\*10-15 minute presentation of Paper on Reconstructing of Historical Event. Seminar participants will present papers on their chosen historical event, assessing critical historical reconstructions and arguing for their own historical reconstruction of the event utilizing all known evidences and outlining their methodology and approach to each piece of evidence –especially their use of the Bible in the historical reconstruction

### **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.

**A special note about AI:** You are expected to do your own thinking and to write your own papers, etc., and not to have AI do this work for you. There may be value in using an AI tool to help you locate and collate resources or to help you "tidy up" your English grammar, usage, and mechanics, especially if English is not your native language. However, using AI to create content for you and then submitting that content as if you created it is considered plagiarism (i.e., submitting work that is not one's own as if it is one's own) and is a violation of the academic honesty policy

### **Policy Concerning Inclement Weather**

In the event of inclement weather, students are advised to check the McMaster University website to determine whether the university is open. In the event that the university is closed then McMaster Divinity College will also be closed, the course instructor will adjust the teaching schedule accordingly. NOTE: Assignments that are due on a day the university is closed due to weather are still due on that day.

### **Policy Concerning Illness**

Students are expected to inform the course instructor if they become ill. These students are expected to return to the classroom once they have recovered from their ailment. Students are advised that classes will not be recorded. As a result, students are expected to check A2L for any course handouts and to obtain notes from their peers. NOTE: Unless the student has been granted an illness accommodation by the course instructor, any assignment due on a day the student is ill must be submitted on that day.

### **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.

### Select Bibliography

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