



McMaster Divinity  
College

## ***Genesis for Today*** **OT 6XG6**

**Winter Semester 2014** Mondays @ 10:30am-12:20pm

### **Professor:**

Dr. Paul S. Evans  
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### **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 and 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.

### **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.

#### **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 and modern science



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- To be able to interpret Genesis in its original contexts
- To be able to apply the message of Genesis to contemporary audiences

**Required Texts:**

- Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis*. Interpretation. Atlanta: John Knox, 1982.
- John Walton. *Ancient near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament: Introducing the Conceptual World of the Hebrew Bible*; Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Academic, 2006.
- John Walton. *The Lost World of Genesis One: Ancient Cosmology and the Origins Debate*. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2009.

**Textbook Purchase:**

All required textbooks for this class are available from the College's book service, READ On Bookstore, Room 145, McMaster Divinity College. Texts may be purchased on the first day of class. For advance purchase, you may contact READ On Bookstores, 304 The East Mall, Suite 100, Etobicoke, ON M9C 5K1: phone 416-620-2934; fax 416-622-2308; e-mail [books@readon.ca](mailto:books@readon.ca). Other book services may also carry the texts.

**Course Evaluation**

*The assignments and their weights are as follows:*

**15% - Leading the Class:** Each student will take a turn leading the class discussion. This discussion will consist of:

- 1) A presentation of the contents of one chapters of *Ancient near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament* and;
- 2) The facilitation of further discussion on the topic.
  - Dates for presentations will be worked out *in situ*.

**15% - Readings:** As this is an Advanced Degree Course students are required to read a minimum 4,800 pages beyond the textbooks. To this end students will keep track of pages read and report on them using the form on the course website. Reading done for the research paper can fulfill much of this requirement

**30% - Critical Book Review Assignment (12-15 pages).** After reading both of the Walton textbooks (*The Lost World of Genesis One & Ancient near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament*), students will critically review both works in one paper. This review will present their content, relate them together and provide a critique of both. Finally the paper will provide a response to these books outlining implications both theological and personal. Due **Feb 3, 2014**. No extensions will be given. See "Book Review Guidelines" below.

**40% - Major Research Paper (25-30 pages)** due **March 31, 2014**. No extensions will be given. Papers must be double-spaced, using 12pt Times New Roman font throughout (footnotes should be 10pt Times New Roman font). The bibliography must contain at least 18 items of varied secondary sources (commentaries, theological dictionaries, specialized books) including *at least* 5 articles from peer



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reviewed / refereed journals. *By way of supplement* to these 18 sources, a student may use a *maximum* of 2 internet resources. Students are responsible for the quality of the sources chosen. See “Research Paper Evaluation” below. *Research Topic must be approved by your professor.*

## **College Style for Submission of Written Work**

All written work is to be submitted in accordance with the McMaster Divinity College Style Guide for Essays and Theses, available on the McMaster Divinity College website. <http://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/sites/default/files/documents/MDCStyleGuideMarch0413.pdf>

All papers to be submitted in electronic format only (a pdf file)—no hardcopies! Email to pevans@mcmaster.ca. If you need a program for creating pdfs go to <http://primopdf.com> or <http://www.pdf995.com> for a free pdf maker. Include your last name in the file name of your attachment (e.g., evans.researchpaper.pdf). To avoid late marks papers must be received before the end of the calendar day on which they are due (i.e., before midnight Eastern Standard Time).

### **Policy concerning late papers**

Extensions for papers will not be given except in very exceptional circumstances. (serious illness, family crises, etc.). Busy-ness, holidays, computer problems etc. are not legitimate reasons to grant extensions. All assignments must be completed to avoid a failing grade in the class.

### **Academic Honesty.**

Academic dishonesty is a serious offence that may take any number of forms, including plagiarism, the submission of work that is not one’s own or for which previous credit has been obtained, and/or unauthorized collaboration with other students. Academic dishonesty can result in severe consequences, e.g., failure of the assignment, failure of the course, a notation on one’s academic transcript, and/or suspension or expulsion from the College. Students are responsible for understanding what constitutes academic dishonesty. Please refer to the Divinity College Statement on Academic Honesty ~ <http://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/programs/rules-regulations> academic dishonesty.

### **Inclusive language:**

McMaster Divinity College uses inclusive language for human beings in worship services, student written materials, and all of its publications. In reference to biblical texts, the integrity of the original expressions and the names of God should be respected. The NRSV and TNIV are examples of the use of inclusive language for human beings. It is expected that inclusive language will be used in chapel services and all MDC assignments.



### Research Paper Evaluation

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Topic: \_\_\_\_\_

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; Genesis 1; etc) | <input type="checkbox"/> Follow MDC Style guide                          |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> Cite secondary resources correctly/consistently |

### III. Comments



### Critical Book Review Guideline

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

I. The Book Review assignment should roughly follow this format:

Summary of Content: 6-8 Pages

Critique of Content 4-6 Pages

Personal Reflection 4-6 Pages

Total=*no more* than 15 pages! Pages 16ff *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

- Use inclusive language
- Write a unified review
- Line spacing, Font size, Margins, Page numbers etc. need attention
- Cite primary resources correctly/consistently (e.g., Gen 1:26; Genesis 1; etc)
- The paper is too long/too short
- Edit your paper more thoroughly
- The paper needs balance
- Cite secondary resources correctly/consistently

### III. Comments



\*\*For journal articles to assist paper preparation and research, do a subject search of the ATLA Religion database

#### Useful Internet Sites

- *Bible Gateway* (<http://www.biblegateway.com/>). Online Bibles with search engines.
- *itanakh* ([www.itanakh.org.](http://www.itanakh.org/)) Includes links to many full text articles and useful webpages.
- <http://www.sbl-site.org/educational/sitesofinterest.aspx> From the website of the Society of Biblical Literature. Contains links to many useful sites categorized according to subject areas.
- *Dinur Centre for Research in Jewish History* ([http://www.hum.huji.ac.il/dinur/internetresources/historyresources/biblical\\_studies.htm](http://www.hum.huji.ac.il/dinur/internetresources/historyresources/biblical_studies.htm)) Includes links on creation, flood, patriarchs
- *Internet Ancient History Sourcebook* (<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/ancient/asbook.html>). The sections on Human Origins and Mesopotamia include some useful comparative material for Genesis.
- *Links related to Bible & ANE:* (<http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/%7Ehumm/Resources/Texts/index.html>)

#### **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.***