

Ph.D./M.A. Seminar: Critical Studies on Exile and Restoration

PhD – CHTH G105-C04

MA–OT6ZE6

McMaster Divinity College

Winter Semester 2016

Tuesday 10:30am-12:20pm

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I. Description

This course focuses attention on recent research on the historical context and literary corpus related to the period traditionally understood as “Exile and Restoration,” that is, the 6th and 5th Centuries B.C. This period has received considerable attention within academic research over the past few decades providing new insights into the experience and literary production of the Jewish community which was marked by the experience of destruction and forced migration as well as the significant transition from independent kingdom to imperial province. Key streams of research over the past few decades will be investigated with the opportunity for students to engage key passages utilizing new methodologies.

II. Purpose

A. Knowing: To have a thorough knowledge of the history, sociology, literature, and theology associated with the exile and restoration of Judah in the 6th and 5th Centuries B.C.; to understand the key methodologies which have been used for study of this era and literature.

B. Being: To gain a deeper appreciation for the challenges of the period of exile and restoration and how this informs the identity of Christian believers.

C. Doing: To be able to access the best resources for the study of this period of history; to employ recent methodologies for the study of this era and its associated literature;

III. Reading Resources

Lipschits, Oded. *The Fall and Rise of Jerusalem*. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2005.

Smith-Christopher, Daniel L. *A Biblical Theology of Exile*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002.

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 Bookstore, 304 The East Mall, Suite 100, Etobicoke, ON M9B 6E2: phone 416-620-2934; fax 416-622-2308; e-mail books@readon.ca. Other book services may also carry the texts.

IV. Schedule

A. Phase 1: Orientation to the History of “Exile and Restoration”

The first phase will focus on reading and discussion of the historical resources for reconstructing the experience of the Jewish communities during the Babylonian and Persian periods. This phase will end with a review of papers written on key historical issues related to Israel/Judah during this period.

B. Phase 2: Orientation to the Sociology of “Exile and Restoration”

The second phase will focus on reading and discussion of recent sociological approaches to the experience of Jewish communities during the Babylonian and Persian periods. This phase will end with a review of papers employing sociological approaches to the study of this period and its communities.

C. Phase 3: Reflection on Exile and Restoration and Biblical Theology

The final phase of this course encourages reflection on the impact of the study of Exile and Restoration on the broader witness of Biblical Theology.

January

5 Orientation

12 Class: History of Exile and Restoration (Jeremiah 37-44)

- Oded Lipschits (first half)

19 Class: History of Exile and Restoration (Lamentations)

- Oded Lipschits (second half)

26 Class: History of Exile and Restoration (Ezra-Nehemiah)

February

2 Class: Sociology of Exile and Restoration (Jeremiah)

9 Class: Historical Papers

16 No Class: Reading Week

23 Class: Sociology of Exile and Restoration (Lamentations)

March

1 Class: Sociology of Exile and Restoration (Ezra-Nehemiah)

8 Class: Sociology Papers

15 Class: Sociology Papers

22 Class: Sociology Papers

29 Class: Sociology Papers

April

5 Class: Biblical Theology of Exile/Restoration

V. Course Internet Resources

This semester we will be sharing a Dropbox folder for distributing course materials and papers. Papers will not be distributed in paper form, but only digitally.

VI. Learning Experiences

A. Class Experiences

This is a graduate seminar style class of collaborative learning in which professor and students are engaged in active learning together. Learning to critically (in its positive sense) engage material is essential to functioning in a graduate program and is expected of all students in our MA/PhD. It is expected that all students will not only attend these sessions, but also that they will assume responsibility for contributing to and learning from the experience. This means that readings will be completed prior to arrival in class and that student and presenter alike will pursue the acquisition of knowledge in the learning environment. It is expected that ALL members of the class will ask questions and contribute insights whenever opportunity is given, during and following presentations by professor or student alike. Students are graded on their level of preparation and contribution. It is expected that students will provide written reviews of reading and papers which are taken up in class. These written reviews (1-2 pages) should be posted to our Dropbox subfolder.

Value: 15%

Submission: PDF in Dropbox

B. Historical Paper

For this paper the student will take an historical issue related to 6th-5th Century BCE context of Israel/Judah and drawing on the best and most recent historical data and analysis offer an accurate account of the historical issue.

Value: 30%

Due: 3 February at 11:59 p.m.

Submission: PDF via email to professor and placed in Dropbox

C. Sociological Paper

For this paper the student will write on either exile or restoration engaging a particular text in the Old Testament (hopefully relevant to their doctoral work) utilizing a methodology or insights arising from recent sociological approaches. Students must not merely rely on past methodologies within biblical studies related to sociology but either find a new sociological approach from the field of sociology (recent) or update a sociological approach that has been used by attending to recent developments in sociological approaches. Papers are due in .pdf format by 2 March 2016, 11:59 p.m. (send to professor by email) to be posted on the course web site. All members of the class will provide a written review of each of their classmates' papers to be posted to the dropbox within 15 minutes of the end of class.

Value: 40%

Due: 2 March 2016 at 11:59 p.m.

Submission: PDF via email to professor and placed in Dropbox

D. Biblical Theological Reflection

In a final written reflection (minimum 5 pages) the student will provide reflection on the biblical theological significance of the themes and the books related to exile and restoration in the Old Testament, drawing on the insights of Smith-Christopher and at least one New Testament scholar (e.g., N. T. Wright/Scot McKnight/Michael Fuller).

Value: 15%

Due: 2 April 2016, 11:59 p.m.

Submission: PDF via email to professor and placed in Dropbox.

VII. Format and Evaluation

So I can properly evaluate your work the following style guide is to be used for papers in this class.

- **Medium for Submission:** All material in this class is to be submitted in digital format to me via email. Please use .pdf format and ensure that what you send is what you want me to read. If you need a free program for creating .pdfs go to <http://primopdf.com>.
- **Layout:** All material which is submitted should be double spaced with 1" margins utilizing a readable font (10-12 pts). It must have a title page, footnoting where appropriate and bibliography, all of which are not included in the length required. It should be written in excellent modern literary English with proper grammar, spelling, punctuation and rhetoric (including an introduction, conclusion and logical flow of argument). If it helps an outline may accompany the "paper" but this is not included in the length of the "paper." Secondary and Primary sources should be used, cited and footnoted appropriately and the paper should follow the "MDC Writing Style Guide" available at:
<http://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/programs/resources>.
- **Gender 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. For policy see: <http://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/programs/rules-regulations>.
- **Citations:** You must cite the source of your material very carefully using a consistent system, not only when quoting from a section, but also when drawing from it as resource. Quotations should be kept to a minimum as I favour integration of secondary literature (footnoted).
- **Statement on 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. If you are a Divinity College student please refer to the Divinity College Statement on Academic Honesty ~

<http://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/programs/rules-regulations>

^{***}this is a special issue for those pursuing second and third degrees in theology. It is understood that students will be build on earlier ideas and work, but it is expected that students will not hand in material that is merely "warmed over" previous work. If there is reason for concern speak with the professor about this.

So I can properly evaluate your work and help you grow in your biblical and writing skills the following evaluation guide should be kept in mind as you write:

- **Presentation:** Is the spelling correct? Does the grammar/syntax reflect proper English? Is the paper laid out properly?
- **Argumentation:** Is there a good introduction and conclusion? Does the argument flow with ample support? Is the question answered?
- **Content:** Are all the points considered? Is there proper documentation of sources used?

VIII. Accountability

Note on Timeliness of Submissions: Since this is a seminar style course all participants must be timely in their submission of material. People will need to read the various submissions and once the schedule is set there is no room to switch dates. For that reason there are considerable penalties for late materials in this course. Each **DAY** a paper is late will mean the loss of half a letter grade (5%). Take this into account when planning out your semester.

Note on Timeliness of Attendance: From time to time you may find that you are late for class. Late arrivals, hereafter called “tardies,” are unacceptable and will lead to a negative disposition in the professor and your classmates. Such “tardies,” however, can be redeemed at the rate of Timbits for the entire class at the session following the second tardy as well as a coffee for the professor.

Rule of the Timbits (הלכה התמבתיים): Because “tardies” raise the ire of the covenant community (bound by this covenantal syllabus document delivered here at the foot of the “Mountain”), those who are late for class must have a means by which to atone for such “accidental sins” (בשגגה, if they are defiant sins, בְּיַד רָמָה, then the offender will be “cut off” from the community, see Num 15:27-31).¹ which means anyone late for class will need to bring Timbits for the entire class (מִנְחָה) no later than the next class meeting plus a Tim Hortons coffee (נֶסֶד) for the professor (cream, no sugar). This מִנְחָה and נֶסֶד will function simultaneously as both a sin offering (חֲטָאת, Leviticus 4) atoning for the accidental sin of the offender and a peace offering (שְׁלָמִים, Leviticus 3) enhancing the fellowship of the covenant community. See the high professor for further details and any torah-rulings (see Haggai 2:10-14) regarding specific situations.

Especially important is to take seriously the cry of Joel of old in 1:13:

חַגְרוּ וְסַפְדוּ הַכֹּהֲנִים	Gird yourselves <i>with sackcloth</i>
הִילֵלוּ מִשְׁרְתֵי מִזְבֵּחַ	And lament, O priests;
בָּאוּ לֵינוּ בַשָּׂקִים מִשְׁרְתֵי אֱלֹהֵי	Wail, O ministers of the altar!
כִּי נִמְנַע מִבַּיִת אֱלֹהֵיכֶם מִנְחָה וְנֶסֶד:	Come, spend the night in sackcloth
	O ministers of my God,
	For <u>the grain offering and the drink offering</u>
	Are withheld from the house of your God.

And note his promise of a reward to those who repent in 2:14:

מִי יוֹדַע יֵשׁוּב וְנָחַם	Who knows whether He will turn and relent
וְהִשְׁאִיר אַחֲרָיו בְּרָכָה	And leave a blessing behind Him,
מִנְחָה וְנֶסֶד לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם	<u>Even a grain offering and a drink offering</u>
	For the LORD your God?

¹ Of course, see the “definitive” work on this: Mark J. Boda, *A Severe Mercy: Sin and Its Remedy in the Old Testament* (Siphrut: Literature and Theology of the Hebrew Scriptures 1. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2009), 53-54. For specific torah ruling also see the fuller הלכה התמבתיים in our Dropbox.