



From the Beginning: Reading the book of Genesis

OT3XG3

Saturdays @ 9:00am-4:00pm

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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 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.

Specializations: Biblical Studies and Pastoral Studies



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

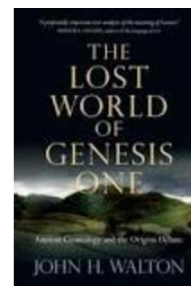
- To be able to discuss the relation of Genesis 1-11 to ancient Near Eastern mythology and modern science
- To be able to interpret Genesis in its original contexts
- To be able to apply the message of Genesis to contemporary audiences

Required Texts:



Bruce Waltke and Cathi J. Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2001.

- 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, 5 International Blvd, Etobicoke, ON M9W 6H3: phone 416-620-2934; fax 416-622-2308; e-mail books@readon.ca. Other book services may also carry the texts.



Course Evaluation

The assignments and their weights are as follows:

10% - Readings: Students are required to read the textbooks and other assigned readings in full and report on them via an email to the professor by April 10, 2019.

20% - Response Papers: Students will write two 3-4 page papers (10% per paper) responding to both lectures and assigned readings on the following topics:

1. The Documentary Hypothesis: due **January 26, 2019**
2. Creation in Genesis and Science: due **February 23, 2019**

30% - Critical Book Review Assignment (6 pages). After reading the Walton textbook (*The Lost World of Genesis One*), students will critically review the work in one paper. This review will present its content, provide a critique and finally give a response that outlines both theological and personal implications. Due **March 16, 2019**. No extensions will be given. See "Book Review Guidelines" below.

40% - Major Assignment. All major assignment papers must be double-spaced, 12pt Times New Roman font (footnotes should be 10pt). The bibliography must contain 12 items of secondary sources (commentaries, theological dictionaries, monographs, and at least 3 academic articles) each drawn on and cited in the paper. Students may supplement these 12 sources with 2 internet resources. See "Paper Evaluation" below.

A. Biblical Studies Specializations:

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

1. Research Paper (12-15 pages) Due April 6, 2019. No extensions will be given. 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 the book of Genesis and approved by the professor. See 'Paper Evaluation' below

2. Exegetical Paper: 12–15 pages. In this option students will choose one passage from the book of Genesis and write an exegesis paper. The chosen text should be between 10-20 verses. This paper will:

- Take into account the genre of the chosen text
- Take into account the historical context of the chosen text
- Provide a close reading of the text, noting key words, phrases, and literary features
- Identify different interpretive options and consider the validity of each and argue for the chosen interpretation.
- Elucidate the theological message of the chosen text
- Explain the applicability of the text for today for believers

**B. Pastoral Specializations:**

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

- 1. Exegetical Paper: 12–15 pages.** Students will write an exegetical paper on a chosen text from Genesis (your chosen text must be approved by your professor). See “Paper Evaluation” below.
- 2. Sermon on a passage from Genesis (oral presentation).** 20-25 minute video-taped sermon submitted on CD/DVD/USB drive or uploaded to YouTube or Vimeo. Beginning with your chosen text, this sermon will expound a passage, applying it to the contemporary context. 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.
- 3. Sermon on a passage from Genesis (written).** 10 pages double-spaced. Beginning with the text of Genesis this sermon will expound a passage, applying it to the contemporary context. The sermon will be an original written composition but written with an aim to oral delivery. The submitted text should include an outline of the sermon at the beginning. 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 footnotes).

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/sites/default/files/documents/mdcstyleguide.pdf>

Failure to observe appropriate form will result in grade reductions.

All assignments must be in electronic format only (PDF format) —no hardcopies— and emailed to the professor at pevans@mcmaster.ca. Include your last name in the file name of your attachment (e.g., [evans.researchpaper.pdf](#)). To avoid late marks papers must be received by 11:59pm of the calendar day on which they are due.

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 any request 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 April 10, 2019 in order to avoid a failing grade in the class. Late assignments receive no critical feedback.



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>

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 the following: NRSV (1989), NCV (1991), TEV/GNB/GNT (1992), CEV (1995), NLT (1996), TNIV (2005), and the Common English Bible (CEB 2011).

**For journal articles to assist paper preparation and research, do a subject search of the [ATLA Religion database](#)

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.



Paper Evaluation

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



Critical Book Review Guideline

I. The Book Review of John Walton *The Lost World of Genesis One* should roughly follow this format:

Summary of Content: 2-3 Pages

Critique of Content 1-2 Pages

Personal Reflection 1-2 Pages

Total=*no more* than 6 pages! Pages 7ff *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

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Use inclusive language | <input type="checkbox"/> The paper is too long/too short |
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