



OT APOLOGETICS

Essential Answers to Difficult Questions

אֲשֶׁרִי שְׂיֵאחֶזוּ וְנִפְּץ אֶת-עַלְלֵיךָ.

OT 3XA3

וַיִּתֵּן אֶת-הַכְּנֻעַי וַיִּחְרַם אֶתְהֶם.

This course begins online on April 29

Class meets in person: Wednesday May 13: 9:30am-5:00pm; **Thursday May 14:** 9:30am-1:30pm

Course continues online until conclusion on June 1

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Due to the uncertainty of the extent of the ongoing COVID-19 situation, McMaster Divinity College is transferring all Spring 2020 courses ONLINE. Current syllabi will be modified regarding delivery model and timelines. However, you can consult the syllabi for content. Updated, revised ONLINE syllabi will be posted as soon as possible. We will notify students when the final syllabi have been posted. Your patience is greatly appreciated.

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 assess them and their value for defending the authority and theological importance of the Old Testament scriptures in both their ancient context and for the modern Church today.

Specializations: Biblical Studies, Pastoral Studies, Church and Culture, and Christian Worldview



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

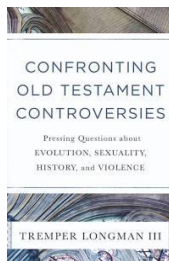
Being

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

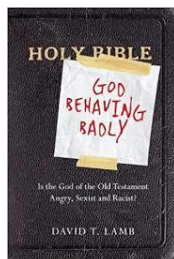
Doing

- 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 their personal responses to such challenges to the Old Testament

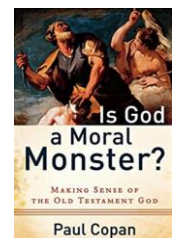
Required Texts



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

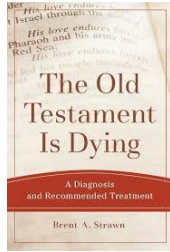


Paul Copan. *God a Moral Monster?: Making Sense Of The Old Testament God*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011.



Lamb, David T., *God Behaving Badly: Is the God of the Old Testament Angry, Sexist, and Racist?* Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Books, 2011.

Recommended Texts



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 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, 5 International Blvd, Etobicoke, Ontario M9W 6H3: phone 416.620.2934; fax 416.622.2308; email books@readon.ca. Other book services may also carry the texts.

Course Evaluation

The assignments and their weights are as follows:

1. 10% - 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 class discussions.

2. Pre-class Discussions (April 29 – May 12): Online

Due to this being a hybrid course, much of the 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 well, to further the online discussion all students must respond to minimum **two 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.

Participation in online discussion is an assumed foundation for this course (like class attendance) if a student fails to participate every week their final mark will be reduced by one full letter grade (so A becomes B, A- becomes B-).

3. 20% - Position Paper Length: 6-8 pages. Due: May 12:

In this assignment students will write a critical review and comparison of different Christian approaches to the topic taking into account the views of the textbooks and other posted readings on the subject. The paper should conclude outlining what the student believes to be the best approach and articulate their own view.

Option 1: The Character of God in the OT vs. the NT

Option 2: The Destruction of the Canaanites

4. In-Class Component (May 13–14): At McMaster Divinity College

The on-campus Modules will consist of some in-class lectures, Q&A, presentations, and student presentations. Attendance is mandatory.

5. 20% - *Student Led discussion*

As part of the on-campus modules, each student will lead the class in a 30-minute discussion of an assigned research topic. In preparation for the discussion the student will conduct independent research including the textbooks and other sources.

*A 2–3 page report showing your research and discussion notes must be handed in following the seminar.

6. Post-Class Component (May 15–June 1): Online

A. *Online Discussion*

In the post-class component students must continue to actively participate in the online discussion but now only need to post one discussion topic at the beginning of a week (Sun-Tues) and respond to one other post each week.

Participation in online discussion is an assumed foundation for this course (like class attendance) if a student fails to participate every week their final mark will be reduced by one full letter grade (so A becomes B, A- becomes B-).

7. 10% - Reflective Paper: Due: June 1: Length: 4 pages

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.

6. 40%- Major Assignment: 12-15 Pages. Due June 1.

All Major Assignments must be double-spaced, 12pt Times New Roman font (footnotes should be 10pt Times New Roman font and single spaced). The bibliography must contain 12 items of secondary sources (commentaries, theological dictionaries, monographs and at least 3 academic articles). Each item must be drawn on and cited in the paper. Students may supplement these 12 sources with 2 internet sources. Cf. "Paper Evaluation" below.

A. Major Assignments for Biblical Studies Specializations:

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

1. **Research Paper: 12–15 pages** 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 difficult questions about the Old Testament and approved by the professor.

2. **Exegetical Paper: 12–15 pages** Students will write an exegetical paper on a difficult text from the Old Testament that has led some to question the morality of the Old Testament (your chosen text must be approved by your professor).

B. Major Assignments for Pastoral Studies Specializations:

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

1. **Exegetical Paper: 12–15 pages** Students will write an exegetical paper on a difficult text from the Old Testament that has led some to question the morality of the Old Testament (your chosen text must be approved by your professor).
2. **Sermon on the character of God in the OT (oral presentation). 25-30 minute video-taped sermon** submitted on CD/DVD/USB drive or uploaded to YouTube or Vimeo.

Beginning with the Old Testament text this sermon will reflect on the characteristics of God in the Old Testament with an aim to communicate it to the contemporary context. The sermon will draw on biblical descriptions and self-descriptions of God and stories about God from the Old Testament. 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. The bibliography must contain 12 items of secondary sources (commentaries, theological dictionaries, monographs and at least 3 academic articles). Each item must be drawn on and cited in the paper. Students may supplement these 12 sources with 2 internet resources. See “Assignment Evaluation” below.

3. **Sermon on the character of God in the OT (written). 10-12 pages.**

Beginning with the Old Testament text this sermon will reflect on the characteristics of God in the Old Testament with an aim to communicate it to the contemporary context. The sermon will draw on biblical descriptions and self-descriptions of God and stories about God from the Old Testament.

The sermon will be an original written composition but written with an aim to oral delivery. The submitted text should include an outline. 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 endnotes—not footnotes). The bibliography must contain 12 items of secondary sources (commentaries, theological dictionaries, monographs and at least 3 academic articles). Each item must be drawn on and cited in the paper. Students may supplement these 12 sources with 2 internet resources. See “Paper Evaluation” below.

C. Major Assignments for Church and Culture Specializations:

There are two (2) options for Church and Culture studies: Choose only one (1) of the following:

- 1. Research Paper: 12–15 pages.** The topic of this research must be related to difficult questions raised about the Old Testament in contemporary culture. The research in this paper will conclude with a proposal for a culturally sensitive approach to communicating God’s word in the Old Testament. Topics must be approved by your Professor.
- 2. Creative Presentation** Answering a popular criticism of/challenge to the OT designed for a specific cultural context. (Church, Youth Group, Public Forum). This Presentation could take various forms. A videotaped Lecture, a Podcast, an edited Video uploaded to YouTube (or similar platform), etc. Form of assignment must be approved by your Professor.

D. Major Assignments for Christian Worldview Specializations:

There are three (3) options for Christian Worldview: Choose only one (1) of the following:

- 1. Research Paper: 12–15 pages.** The topic of this research must be related to difficult questions raised about the Old Testament in contemporary culture. The research in this paper will conclude with a proposal for a culturally sensitive and applicable approach to communicating God’s word in the Old Testament. Topics must be approved by your Professor.
- 2. Comparing Underlying Worldviews in the God debate: 12–15 pages.** This paper will critically assess the underlying worldviews evinced in the following additional readings:
 - 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 **Worldview paper guidelines** posted on Avenue to Learn.

- 3. Creative Presentation** Answering a popular criticism of/challenge to the OT designed for a specific cultural context. (Church, Youth Group, Public Forum). This Presentation could take various forms. A videotaped Lecture, a Podcast, an edited Video uploaded to YouTube (or similar platform), etc. Form of assignment must be approved by your Professor.

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 <http://mcmasterdivinity.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/mdcstyleguide.pdf>

Failure to observe appropriate form will result in grade reductions.

All papers to be submitted in electronic format only (a pdf file)—no hardcopies! Email to 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 on which they are due. 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 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 the last day of class (June 1) 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 ~ <https://mcmasterdivinity.ca/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).

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.

ASSIGNMENT EVALUATION

I. The following 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

- | | |
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| <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"/> Cite secondary resources correctly/consistently |

III. Comments

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.
- Craig, William Lane. *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics* (3rd edition). Wheaton: Crossway,
- 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.
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- Lamb, David T. *God Behaving Badly: Is the God of the Old Testament Angry, Sexist, and Racist?* Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP, 2011.
- Longman, Tremper, *Confronting Old Testament Controversies: Pressing Questions About Evolution, Sexuality, History, and Violence*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2019.

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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.

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.