

Ph.D./M.A. Seminar: Critical Studies in Prayer
PhD - CHTH G105 - C01 MA - OT 6ZC6
McMaster Divinity College
Hybrid Format: Online (Sept-Dec)
Intensive (Oct 26 9:00am-5:30pm; Oct 27 9:00am-1:00pm)

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I. Description

This course focuses attention on recent research on prayer in the Old Testament and its associated communities. 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 critical studies on the history, sociology, literature, and theology associated with prayer texts in the Old Testament; to understand the key methodologies which have been used for study of these texts in the Old Testament and ancient Israel and Judah.

B. Being: To gain a deeper appreciation for the theological potential of prayer texts for Christian believers; to be challenged to deeper personal faith in God by these prayer texts and their message.

C. Doing: To be able to access the best resources for the study of prayer in the Old Testament; to employ recent methodologies for the study of prayer and its associated literature; to continue to increase Hebrew translation skills; to hone the ability to critically review literature and written papers in an oral setting

III. Reading Resources

Balentine, Samuel E. *Prayer in the Hebrew Bible: The Drama of Divine–Human Dialogue*. Overtures to Biblical Theology. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993.

Millar, J. G. *Calling on the Name of the Lord: A Biblical Theology of Prayer*. New Studies in Biblical Theology 38. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2016.

Readings made available in A2L

IV. Schedule

September

14 Orientation

- **Critical Studies: Defining OT Prayer**
- **Assigned Reading: Sent prior to class**

21 Class (Zoom, 1-2pm Eastern time)

- **Primary Text: Neh 1:5-11**
- **Critical Studies: OT Prayer and Form Criticism**
- **Scholar: Boda**
- **Assigned Reading: List in A2L**

28 Class (Zoom, 1-2pm Eastern time)

- **Primary Text: Ps 51:12-21 (Hebrew)**
- **Critical Studies: OT Prayer at Qumran**
- **Guest Scholar: Daniel Falk, Pennsylvania State University**
- **Assigned Reading: List in A2L**

October

5 Class (Zoom, 1-2pm Eastern time)

- **Primary Text: 2 Kgs 19:15-19**
- **Critical Studies: OT Prayer and Literary Criticism**
- **Guest Scholar: Samuel Balentine, Union Presbyterian Seminary**
- **Assigned Reading: List in A2L**

13 Class (Zoom, 1-2pm Eastern time): Tues, because of Cdn Thanksgiving

- **Primary Text: 2 Chron 20:6-12**
- **Critical Studies: OT Prayer and the ancient Near East**
- **Guest Scholar: Shalom Holtz, Yeshiva University**
- **Assigned Reading: List in A2L**

19 No Class: Hybrid modules (for some students)

21 Critical Studies in Prayer Paper due

26 Critical Studies in Prayer Paper review due

26-27: On Campus Class

- **Oct 26 9:00am-5:30pm: Paper presentations and responses**
- **Oct 26 evening: Dinner out (if you can afford/spare the time)**
- **Oct 27 9:00am-1:00pm: Special Presentations**

November

2 No Class: Hybrid modules (for some students)

9 Class (Zoom, 1-2pm Eastern time)

- Primary Text: Dan 9:13-20
- Critical Studies: OT Prayer and Religious Experience
- Guest Scholar: Rodney Werline, Barton College
- Assigned Reading: List in A2L

16 Class (Zoom, 1-2pm Eastern time)

- Primary Text: Ps 137
- Critical Studies: OT Prayer and Memory
- Guest Scholar: Megan Daffern, Diocese of Ely, UK
- Assigned Reading: List in A2L

23 No Class: SBL

30 Class (Zoom, 1-2pm Eastern time)

- Primary Text: Ps 55:13-20 (Hebrew)
- Critical Studies: OT Prayer and Social Function
- Guest Scholar: Derek Suderman, University of Waterloo
- Assigned Reading: List in A2L

December

7 Final Class: (Zoom, 1-3pm Eastern time)

- Share about Biblical Theology of Prayer Paper

9 Biblical Theology of Prayer Paper due

V. Course Internet Resources

This semester we will be using Avenue 2 Learn 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 (whether online or in person) and participate in discussions (whether online or in person), but also that they will assume responsibility for contributing to and learning from the experience. This means that readings will be completed prior to 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.

Value: 10%

B. Seminar Preparation Notes

1. Translation: Each week students will translate the assigned portions in the Hebrew Bible (BHS). Each person in the class will provide a basic translation of their own with justification in footnotes of difficult elements: text critical, lexical, syntactical and discursive.

2. Reading: Each week students will prepare for the seminar meeting by reading assigned secondary readings. Prior to the sessions with scholars students will post a response to the A2L discussion which includes leading questions and critical interaction with the scholar's work for that week, then after the seminar responding with critical interaction and leading questions to at least two fellow students' reviews which includes leading questions and critical interaction with the reviews and scholars' work. The first response must be to someone who has not yet had a response (if none left then you can respond to anyone).

Value: 20%

Due: The eve of the seminar, 11:59pm, then by the end of that week for responses to fellow students.

Submission: PDF for translations to A2L Discussion; Reading response to A2L discussion

C. Critical Studies in Prayer Paper

For this assignment the student will write a minimum 25 page critical paper on prayer text(s)/themes in the Old Testament (hopefully but not necessarily relevant to their doctoral work) engaging the best in recent scholarship while showing awareness of the classic works in the field. These papers should provide a new perspective on the field, such as would be expected in a journal article. The hope is that this paper will be useful for conference presentations in the near future. Papers are due in .pdf format by 21 Oct 2020, 11:59 p.m. (submit to A2L in assignments as well as the discussion for Critical Paper to professor by email) to be posted on the course web site. Each member of the class will provide a 5 page review of one other member of the class. The paper will be presented in a 10 minute overview during our class time together on October 26th and will be followed by a review by the assigned colleague and then by discussion by the entire class. The 5 page review is to be posted to the discussion in A2L immediately following the session. Papers can be revised after this session and are due in their final form

Value: 40% for paper, 10% for student paper reviews

Due: Paper: 21 Oct 2020 at 11:59 p.m.; Review: 26 Oct 2020 orally in session and written after session

Submission: PDF to A2L in Assignments and Discussion

D. Biblical Theology of Prayer Paper

After reading Millar's *Calling on the Name of the Lord* and Balentine's *Prayer in the Hebrew Bible* students will submit a final 15 page paper which provides insight into their own articulation of a biblical theology of prayer, identifying in the end the potential for these insights to shape the life of believers and church communities. Interaction with scholarship should begin with the works of Millar and Balentine and then draw in others as necessary.

Value: 20%

Due: According to the schedule, eve of the seminar, 11:59pm

Submission: PDF to A2L in Assignments and Discussion

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 Avenue 2 Learn. Please use .pdf format and ensure that what you send is what you want me to read.
- **Style:** 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/>. Failure to observe appropriate form will result in grade reductions. Title page, footnoting where appropriate and bibliography are not included in the length required. Material 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.
- **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).
- **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. Please refer to the Divinity College Statement on Academic Honesty ~ <https://mcmasterdivinity.ca/rules-regulations/>

***this is a special issue for those pursuing second and third degrees in theology. It is understood that students will be building 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. 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 soonest in person session following the 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, ביד רמה, 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 (מנחה) no later than the next in person class meeting plus a Tim Hortons coffee (נסך) for the professor (cream, no sugar). This מנחה and נסך will function simultaneously as both a sin offering (חטאת, Leviticus 4) atoning for the accidental sin of the offender and a peace offering (שלמים, 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.

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.

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

| | |
|---|--|
| חַגְרוּ וְסַפְדוּ הַכֹּהֲנִים | Gird yourselves <i>with sackcloth</i> |
| הַלַּיְלָה מִשְׁרְתֵי מִזְבֵּחַ | And lament, O priests; |
| בָּאוּ לֵינוּ בַשָּׁקִים מִשְׁרְתֵי אֱלֹהֵי | Wail, O ministers of the altar! |
| כִּי נִמְנַע מִבַּיִת אֱלֹהֵיכֶם מִנְחָה וְנִסְדָּ: | 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 יָשׁוּב וְנָחַם | Who knows whether He will turn and relent |
| וְהִשְׁאִיר אַחֲרָיו בְּרָכָה | And leave a blessing behind Him, |
| מִנְחָה וְנִסְדָּ לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם | <u>Even a grain offering and a drink offering</u> |
| | For the LORD your God? |

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