



From the Beginning: Reading the book of Genesis

OT 5XS5

Dates of class meetings: May 10–June 11

Times of class meetings: Wednesdays at 1:00–2:50pm EST on May 12, 26, June 9

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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.



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.

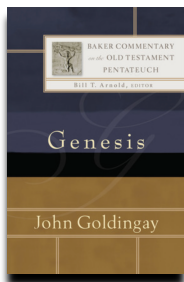
Being

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

Doing

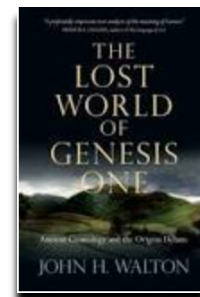
- To be able to discuss the relation of Genesis 1-11 to ancient Near Eastern mythology and modern science
- To be able to interpret Genesis in its original contexts
- To be able to apply the message of Genesis to contemporary audiences

Required Texts:



Goldingay, John. *Genesis*. Baker Commentary on the Old Testament: Pentateuch. Grand Rapids, MI. Baker Academic, 2020.

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 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 Requirements

I. Classroom Experiences

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

A. Synchronous Classroom Experiences (via Zoom conferencing app)

Successful classroom experiences depend on student commitment commensurate as how it would be in a face-to-face experience. Just as in a normal physical classroom experience, students are encouraged to take notes, participate in discussion through asking and answering questions, and wear appropriate attire. As much as is possible students should join the Zoom class in a quiet place where you will not be interrupted. Please have your video turned on whenever possible. It is best practice to mute your microphone except for when you are intending to speak to the class. Students are encouraged to use digital virtual backgrounds if desired. Tasteful backgrounds can help with the issues of privacy, equity, and prevent distractions for others in the class (e.g., in the case of a family member walking in the background of your video).

***A link to participate via Zoom will be posted in an announcement on Avenue to Learn each week we meet.

1. Wednesday May 12 at 1:00–2:50pm EST

Class will meet virtually via Zoom. Our time together will include introductions and an overview of the class.

2. Wednesday May 26: 1:00–2:50pm EST

Class will meet virtually via Zoom. Our time together will consist of some in-class lectures, discussion, and Q&A

3. Wednesday June 9: 1:00–2:50pm EST

Class will meet virtually via Zoom. Our time together will consist of reflecting on our learning throughout the semester and course materials.

B. Asynchronous Classroom Experiences (via Avenue to Learn threaded Discussions)

Much of the class discussion will occur asynchronously online on the Avenue to Learn course website. On weeks noted on the schedule below, 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** per week. Since initial posts will be online in the first part of the week, there will adequate time for all students to respond to posts in a timely manner.



II. Formal Assignments:

All Papers must be double-spaced, using 12pt Times New Roman font throughout (footnotes should be single-spaced 10pt Times New Roman font).

The assignments and their weights are as follows:

A. 20% - Critical Book Review Assignment: Due May 22 (8 pages).

After reading the Walton textbook (*The Lost World of Genesis One*), doctoral students will critically assess the book and reflect on its approach. This review will present its content, provide a critique, and consider implications of the book for communicating the truths of Genesis 1 in contemporary ministry situations. Students' responses should outline both theological, practical, and personal implications of the book and its approach to Genesis 1. See "Book Review Guidelines" below.

B. 25% - Annotated Bibliography: Due May 29

The student will develop an annotated bibliography of approximately 15-20 resources (4000 pages) related to the student's topic (related to Genesis) and write a 100-150 word annotation for each one. The required texts for the course can be included as part of the book list. **This assignment will be approximately 2,000 words.**

C. 15% - Class Presentation. Due June 5.

The student will offer a class presentation of their major assignment and its findings to the class. Presentations may take one of the following formats:

- i. Video presentation (posted to YouTube or Vimeo)
- ii. PowerPoint along with pdf handout which will be uploaded to Avenue to Learn for the rest of the students to view and read.

**Student presentation will form the basis for some of the discussion in our Zoom meeting on June 9*

D. 40% - Major Assignment. Due June 15. Approximately 8,000 words.

The paper should include four key sections. First a brief, but clear explanation of how the paper is rooted in a Practice Led-research approach, second an exploration of the challenges and problems that provoke this study (i.e. why does this ministry practice need to be addressed? What are the problems that you want to identify?) Third, a consideration of a foundational theology of the practice of ministry under consideration in this course and a deep consideration of how new approaches to this practice can be employed in helping to address and improve ministry practice in this area. Fourth some reflection on the application of these ideas to the student's own ministry context (both in terms of the local church and also their ministry beyond the local church).



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/resources-forms/mdc-style-guide/> Failure to observe appropriate form will result in grade reductions.

All papers to be submitted in PDF format only. Upload the PDF file to the appropriate assignments folder on Avenue to Learn. 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 EST).

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. 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 9 in order 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/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.



COURSE SCHEDULE

DATE	Classroom Experiences	Weekly Texts	Assignment due
May 10–15	May 12: Zoom meeting: 1:00–2:50pm A. Introductions B. Class overview	Genesis 1–2 Goldingay: relevant section Walton: Propositions 1–9	--
May 16–22	Avenue to Learn asynchronous discussions of readings and lecture video	Genesis 3–11 Goldingay: relevant section Walton: Propositions 10–18	*Critical Book Review due May 22
May 23–29	May 26: Zoom meeting: 1:00–2:50pm A. Some in-class lectures, discussion, and Q&A	Genesis 12–22 Goldingay: relevant section Beuchner Novel or Diamant novel	* Annotated Bibliography due May 29
May 30–June 5	Avenue to Learn asynchronous discussions of readings and lecture video	Genesis 23–36 Goldingay: relevant section	* Class presentation due June 5
June 6–June 11	June 9: Zoom meeting: 1:00–2:50pm A. Reflection on our learning throughout the semester and course materials.	Genesis 37–50 Goldingay: relevant section	
June 15	--	--	*Major Assignment Due June 15



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
Implications for ministry	1-2 Pages
Personal Reflection	1-2 Pages

Total=*no more* than 8 pages! Pages 9ff *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 |
| <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 |



Selected Bibliography

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