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Syriac 1

The Centre for Patristics and Early Christianity
McMaster Divinity College
Fall term 2023

Tuesday

4:00 pm–5:50 pm

Instructor: Dr. Haitham Issak
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Course Description:

Syriac is a dialect of Aramaic. It is one of the oldest languages in the Middle East. Historically, it has been the language of religion, literature, history, and communication. It was and still is used in many churches as a liturgical and communication language. This course is the first, focusing on learning the Syriac language from the beginning. By the end of the period, students can read, write, and translate classical Syriac with dictionary help.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

Knowing ...

- To know Syriac Christianity and its significance in developing Christian theology and spirituality in the early church.
- One can find many essential writers and appreciate Syriac authors in the early church.

Being ...

- Explore the language for studying the Old and New Testaments in the Peshitta and the texts written by the Syriac authors. Also, to enlarge their understanding to witness the Lord's Word in serving society, glorify the Lord and comprehend the correct meaning of the Scripture.

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And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together and were confused because everyone heard them speak in his own language. (Acts 2:6)

Doing ...

- To develop in each student the ability to read, translate, and understand the texts written in Syriac.
- To make students capable of analyzing these texts written only in Syriac languages by the Syriac authors, e.g., Aphrahat, Ephrem, Jacob of Serug and others.

Required Books:

Dictionary:

- Payne Smith, *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary* (1903).

Grammar:

- George, Kiraz. *The New Syriac Primer*. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2013.

Method:

Instructor's presentation

The class will have a presentation by the instructor, which includes new material: grammar, vocabulary, and readings.

Reading and discussion:

Each student has to be prepared and participate in the class, which is very important whether reading, translation, vocabulary, answering questions and exercises.

Grading:

- Class participation 30%
- Homework exercises 30%
- Midterm test 20%
- Final exam 20%

Academic Honesty

Academic dishonesty is not qualitatively different from other types of dishonesty. It consists of misrepresenting the ownership of written work by deception or by other fraudulent means. In an academic setting this may include any number of forms such as: copying or using unauthorized aids in tests, examinations; plagiarism, i.e., submitting work that is not one's own (regardless of the means of its production) but passing it off as if it is; submitting work for credit in a course for which credit is being or has already been given, unless the previously submitted work was presented as such to the instructor of the second course and has been deemed acceptable for credit by the instructor of that course; aiding and abetting another student's dishonesty; giving false information for the purposes of gaining admission or credit; giving false information for the purposes of obtaining deferred examinations or extension of deadlines; forging or falsifying McMaster University or McMaster Divinity College documents.

AODA

In accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), the content of this course is intended to be accessible to all students who are enrolled in the course, including those with disabilities. If a student requires accommodation to participate fully in this course, that student is to contact SAS at McMaster University, who will then work directly with the McMaster Divinity College Registrar to negotiate reasonably appropriate accommodation for

the student. The MDC Registrar will communicate with faculty regarding necessary accommodations. Please note that an accommodation is not retroactive and must be requested in advance to allow sufficient time for implementation.

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, for example, the following: NRSV (2021), NCV (1991), TEV/GNB/GNT (1992), CEV (1995), NLT (1996), NIV (2011), and the CEB (2011).

Bookstore

All required textbooks for this class are available from the Hurlburt Family Bookstore located beside the entrance to the Nathaniel H. Parker Memorial Chapel of McMaster Divinity College. To purchase in advance, you may contact the bookstore manager, Bernice Quek, by phone at 416.620.2934 or 416.668.3434 (mobile); or by email at books@readon.ca. The Hurlburt Family Bookstore also carries other books and merchandise and is open throughout the academic year during posted hours.

Course Schedule:

September 12 – اِسْمٌ

- Introduction: Syllabus
- The Alphabet: اِسْمٌ وَّ اِسْمٌ

September 19

- Vowels – اِسْمٌ
- Formation of words and sentences

September 26

- Gender – اِسْمٌ وَّ اِسْمٌ
- Gender with verbs
- Gender with adjectives

October 3 – اِسْمٌ وَّ اِسْمٌ

- Gender with body parts
- Gender with numerals
- Gender with pronouns

October 9–13: Reading Week–No class

October 17

- Numbers: ܘܚܘܨܬܐ
- Numbers with verbs
- Number and adjectives

October 24

- Greeting: ܡܘܨܘܪܐ
- Time: ܐܘܪܝܬܐ
- Days of the week: ܘܚܘܨܬܐ ܘܡܘܨܘܪܐ
- The seasons: ܡܘܨܘܪܐ
- the months: ܘܚܘܨܬܐ
- Frequently used verbs: ܘܚܘܨܬܐ ܘܡܘܨܘܪܐ

Midterm Exam

October: 31

- Verbs tense – ܘܚܘܨܬܐ
- The past tense: ܐܘܪܝܬܐ
- The present tense: ܘܚܘܨܬܐ ܘܡܘܨܘܪܐ
- The future tense: ܘܚܘܨܬܐ ܘܡܘܨܘܪܐ
- Imperative: ܘܚܘܨܬܐ

November 7 – ܘܚܘܨܬܐ ܘܡܘܨܘܪܐ

- Verbs: Conjugation

November 14

- Verbs: Conjugation

November 21

- Prefixes and Suffixes
- Possessive suffixes
- Objects pronouns suffixes

November 28

- Pronouns: ܘܚܘܨܬܐ
- Conjugation: Feminine pronouns: ܘܚܘܨܬܐ ܘܡܘܨܘܪܐ
- Conjugation: Masculine pronouns: ܘܚܘܨܬܐ ܘܡܘܨܘܪܐ

December 5 – ܘܚܘܨܬܐ ܘܡܘܨܘܪܐ

- Conjugation of ܘܚܘܨܬܐ and ܘܡܘܨܘܪܐ
- Estrangelo & East Syriac
- Final Exam

Note: 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 the class.

Other Syriac Resources:

Dictionaries:

- Sebastian P. Brock, and George A. Kiraz. *Syriac-English Dictionary*. Gorgias Press, 2017.
- Costaz, Louis. *Syriac-English Dictionary*. Beyrouth: Dar El-Machreq, 1963.

Grammars:

- John F. Healey. *Leshono Suryoyo: First Studies in Syriac*. Gorgias Press, 2005.
- J.F. Coakley, *Robinson's Paradigms and Exercises in Syriac Grammar* (6th ed.) (2013).

Website:

- <https://www.syriacdictionary.net>