

Ph.D./M.A. Seminar: Critical Studies on Exile and Restoration
OT 6R1050

McMaster Divinity College
Winter Semester 2025
Tuesday 9:00am-10:50am

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I. Description

This course focuses attention on recent research on the historical context and literary corpus related to the period traditionally understood as “Exile and Restoration,” that is, the 6th and 5th Centuries B.C. This period has received considerable attention within academic research over the past few decades providing new insights into the experience and literary production of the Jewish community which was marked by the experience of destruction and forced migration as well as the significant transition from independent kingdom to imperial province. 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 the history, sociology, literature, and theology associated with the exile and restoration of Judah in the 6th and 5th Centuries B.C.; to understand the key methodologies which have been used for study of this era and literature.

B. Being: To gain a deeper appreciation for the challenges of the period of exile and restoration and how this informs the identity of Christian believers.

C. Doing: To be able to access the best resources for the study of this period of history; to employ recent methodologies for the study of this era and its associated literature;

III. Reading Resources

Lipschits, Oded. *The Fall and Rise of Jerusalem*. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2005.

Smith-Christopher, Daniel L. *A Biblical Theology of Exile*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002.

All required and recommended books 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.

IV. Course Internet Resources: Avenue 2 Learn

This semester we will be sharing material and responding to one another's work in Avenue 2 Learn. This will be used for distributing course materials and papers. Papers will not be distributed in paper form, but only digitally.

V. Schedule

A. Phase 1: Orientation to the History of “Exile and Restoration”

The first phase will focus on reading and discussion of the historical resources for reconstructing the experience of the Jewish communities during the Babylonian and Persian periods. This phase will end with a review of papers written on key historical issues related to Israel/Judah during this period.

B. Phase 2: Orientation to the Sociology of “Exile and Restoration”

The second phase will focus on reading and discussion of recent sociological approaches to the experience of Jewish communities during the Babylonian and Persian periods. This phase will end with a review of papers employing sociological approaches to the study of this period and its communities.

C. Phase 3: Reflection on Exile and Restoration and Biblical Theology

The final phase of this course encourages reflection on the impact of the study of Exile and Restoration on the broader witness of Biblical Theology.

January

7 Orientation

14 Class: History of Exile and Restoration

21 Class: History of Exile and Restoration

28 Class: History of Exile and Restoration

February

4 Class: History of Exile and Restoration

Historical Papers due by Sat, Feb 8, 11:59 pm on Avenue 2 Learn (discussion, assignment hand in)

11 Class: Historical Paper Presentations

18 No Class: Reading Week

25 Class: Historical Papers Presentations

March

4 Class: Sociology of Exile and Restoration

11 Class: Sociology of Exile and Restoration

18 Class: Sociology of Exile and Restoration

Historical Papers due by Sat, Mar 15, 11:59 pm on Avenue 2 Learn (discussion, assignment hand in)

25 Class: Sociology Paper Presentations

April

1 Class: Sociology Paper Presentations

8 Class: Biblical Theology of Exile and Restoration

Historical Papers due by Wed, Apr 9, 11:59 pm on Avenue 2 Learn (discussion, assignment hand in)

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, but also that they will assume responsibility for contributing to and learning from the experience. This means that readings will be completed prior to arrival in 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. Students are graded on their level of preparation and contribution. It is expected that students will provide written reviews of reading and papers which are taken up in class. These written reviews (1-2 pages) should be posted to A2L.

Value: 15%

Submission: PDF in A2L

B. Historical Paper

For this paper the student will take an historical issue related to 6th-5th Century BCE context of Israel/Judah and drawing on the best and most recent historical data and analysis offer an accurate account of the historical issue (if an 8th-7th Century BCE issue related to the exile of the Northern Kingdom is of interest that can be pursued).

Value: 30%

Due: 8 February at 11:59 p.m.

Submission: PDF in A2L (discussion forum and assignment hand in)

C. Sociological Paper

For this paper the student will write on either exile or restoration engaging a particular text in the Old Testament (hopefully relevant to their doctoral work) utilizing a methodology or insights arising from recent sociological approaches. Students must not merely rely on past methodologies within biblical studies related to sociology but either find a new sociological approach from the field of sociology (recent) or update a sociological approach that has been used by attending to recent developments in sociological approaches. Papers are due in .pdf format by 10 November 2018, 11:59 p.m. (send to professor by email) to be posted on the course web site. All members of the class will provide a written review of each of their classmates' papers to be posted to A2L within 15 minutes of the end of class.

Value: 40%

Due: 15 March at 11:59 p.m.

Submission: PDF in A2L (discussion forum and assignment hand in)

D. Biblical Theological Reflection

In a final written reflection (minimum 5 pages) the student will provide reflection on the biblical theological significance of the themes and the books related to exile and restoration in the Old Testament, drawing on the insights of Smith-Christopher and at least one New Testament scholar (e.g., N. T. Wright/Scot McKnight/Michael Fuller).

Value: 15%

Due: 9 April, 11:59 p.m.

Submission: PDF in A2L (discussion forum and assignment hand in)

VII. Format and Evaluation

So I can properly evaluate your work the following guide is to be used for papers in this class.

- **Medium for Submission:** All material in this class is to be submitted in .pdf format to Avenue 2 Learn.
- **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, for example, the following: NRSVue (2022), TEV/GNB/GNT (1976), CEV (1995), NLT (1996), NIV (2011), and the CEB (2011). See further: <http://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/programs/rules-regulations>.
- **Citations:** You must cite the source of your material very carefully, not only when quoting from a section, but also when drawing from it as a resource. Quotations should be kept to a minimum as I favour summary and integration of secondary literature (footnoted).
- **Statement on 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, including AI) 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.
 - 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.

A special note about AI: You are expected to do your own thinking and to write your own papers, etc., and not to have AI do this work for you. There may be value in using an AI tool to help you locate and collate resources or to help you “tidy up” your English grammar, usage, and mechanics, especially if English is not your native language. However, using AI to create content for you and then submitting that content as if you created it is considered plagiarism (i.e., submitting work that is not one’s own as if it is one’s own) and is a violation of the academic honesty policy. 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/>

- **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.
- **Rubric for Papers:**
 - **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. People will need to read the various submissions and once the schedule is set there is no room to switch dates. For that reason 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 session following the tardy as well as a coffee for the professor.

Rule of the Timbits (הלכה התמבטים): 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, בְּיַד רָמָה, 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 (מִנְחָה) no later than the next class meeting plus a Tim Hortons coffee (קֶסֶם) for the professor (cream, no sugar). This מִנְחָה and קֶסֶם will function simultaneously as both a sin offering (הֲטָאת, Leviticus 4) atoning for the accidental sin of the offender and a peace offering (שְׁלָמִים, 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 התמבטים.

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

חַגְרוּ וְסַפְדוּ הַכֹּהֲנִים	Gird yourselves <i>with sackcloth</i>
הִילֵלוּ מִשְׁרְתֵי מִזְבֵּחַ	And lament, O priests;
בָּאוּ לֵינוּ בְּשֻׁקִים 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 יֵשׁוּב 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?

Preliminary Bibliography

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