

Syriac Language ܟܘܪܝܝܢܐ ܟܘܪܝܝܝܢܐ
Syriac 1
CH 3P1071/ TH 3P1101/ OT 3P1111/ NT 3P1151

The Centre for Patristics and Early Christianity
McMaster Divinity College
Fall term 2024

Tuesday 4–5:50 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 help from a dictionary.

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 to study 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 each student's 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 instructor will present new material, including grammar, vocabulary, and readings, to the class.

Reading and discussion:

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

Grading:

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

Course Schedule:

September 10 – ܐܘܘܨܐ

- Introduction: Syllabus
- The Alphabet: ܐܘܘܨܐ ܐܘܘܨܐ

September 17

- Vowels – ܐܘܘܨܐ
- Formation of words and sentences

September 24

- Gender – ܐܘܘܨܐ ܐܘܘܨܐ
- Gender with verbs
- Gender with adjectives

October 1 – ܐܘܘܨܐ ܐܘܘܨܐ

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

October 8

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

October 14–18: Reading Week–No class

October 22

- Greeting: مَسَلَامٌ
- Time: أَوَّلٌ
- Days of the week: يَوْمٌ، وَبَعْدَهُ
- The seasons: مَوَاسِمٌ
- the months: أَشْهُارٌ
- Frequently used verbs: كَتَبَ، قَرَأَ، سَمِعَ

Midterm Exam

October: 29

- Verbs tense – كَتَبَ
- The past tense: كَتَبَ، كَتَبْتَ
- The present tense: كَتَبُ، كَتَبِينَ
- The future tense: كَتَبُ، كَتَبِينَ
- Imperative: كَتِبْ، كَتِبِي

November 5 – أَهْمٌ، أَسْرٌ

- Verbs: Conjugation

November 12

- Verbs: Conjugation

November 19

- Prefixes and Suffixes
- Possessive suffixes
- Objects pronouns suffixes

November 26

- Pronouns: أَنَا، أَنْتَ
- Conjugation: Feminine pronouns: أَنْتِ، أَنْتِ
- Conjugation: Masculine pronouns: أَنْتَ، أَنْتَ

December 3 – كَتَبَ، كَتَبْتَ

- Conjugation of كَتَبَ and كَتَبْتَ

- Estrangelo & East Syriac

December 10

- Final Exam

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>

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.

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.

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: NRSVue (2022), TEV/GNB/GNT (1976), CEV (1995), NLT (1996), NIV (2011), and the CEB (2011).

Bookstore

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.

Highly Recommended for Online (Asynchronous) Courses

– Presence and Meaningful Participation

Presence and participation in this course are expected. Faculty know from many years of experience that a student's level of presence and participation in the course will impact how well she or he will score in the course. Although there are exceptions to this rule of thumb, low levels of presence and participation tend to translate to low grades; mediocre presence and participation tend to translate to mediocre grades; and high levels of presence and participation tend to translate to higher grades.

A word needs to be said about what constitutes “presence” (attendance) and “participation” in an asynchronous course. Students must establish a record of participation in academically related activities to meet the expected level of attendance and meaningful participation. Be aware that merely logging into the online class is not, by itself, sufficient as a demonstration of attendance and participation by the student. “Academically related activities” certainly includes participation in and completion of the course requirements that are described below. Additionally, just as students are expected to engage with the course content/materials throughout the week outside of the learning management system (A2L), so also students are expected to engage one another in formative dialogue “outside of class.” This is an important part of belonging to and maintaining a community of learning and is a staple ingredient in what constitutes “presence.”

– Online Etiquette

It is critical in any MDC class that students show respect for classmates and the instructor. This is even truer in the online environment because many of the non-verbal cues that we use to interpret what a person is communicating to us are not present online (except, perhaps in video posts). Therefore, it is especially critical that we be mindful of how our words will be interpreted by those who are reading them. As the instructor of the course, it is my responsibility to monitor communications to ensure that all students feel comfortable expressing their views in a respectful manner. Most if not all courses at MDC are devoted to the interpretation of Scripture. Invariably there will be disagreements; these disagreements must be discussed and negotiated in a respectful manner. This applies to individual and group communications involving the instructor and the others enrolled in the course. The instructor will expect that you will give some thought to your postings. Excessive postings are also frowned upon because these amount to dominating the discussion. Please limit your postings to less than 200 words. Instructors reserve the right to ask students to take a step back to allow others discussion time if she or he feels that an individual is dominating the discussion. In your responses, please try to be clear which point your response refers to. Students who violate these guidelines may be dismissed from class.

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.