

**RELG 202 – Religion of Ancient Israel**  
Fall 2021

Instructor: Matheus Grillo R. de Carvalho

Office hours: Th 10:30-11:30 or by appointment

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Credits: 3 credits

Time: T & Th 08:35 – 09:55 am.

Place: (McConnell Engineering Building, 3480 Rue University), ENGMC room 204.

**Course Description:** This course introduces the student to several primary sources used to reconstruct life and religious practices in ancient Israel. It examines archaeological surveys, biblical texts and ancient near eastern texts in light of one another to highlight their own limitations, issues and unique perspectives. The topic is particularly relevant given its impact in western history, politics, religion and even pop culture. The course proceeds in reverse chronological order, from the time of the Romans until the debates surrounding Israelite origins. Special attention will be given to the exilic and pre-exilic periods of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah and to the way these kingdoms interacted with ancient near eastern empires.

**Teaching method:** In-person lectures and classroom discussions.

**Required Texts:** The student is required to have access to a Bible in the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV). It can be accessed online at [www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com). All other readings will be made available as pdf files or links on MyCourses.

**Assignments:**

Task	Breakdown	Timeline
<b>Participation</b>	<b>10%</b>	
<b>Reflection on Excavate! Egypt</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>Due: Sept. 15 (23h59, Wednesday).</b>
<b>6x biweekly reflections</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>Due: Sept. 27, Oct. 11, Oct. 25, Nov. 8, Nov. 22, Dec. 6 (23h59, Mondays).</b>
<b>Paper proposal</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>Due: Oct. 13 (23h59, Wednesday).</b>
<b>Final paper</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>Due: Dec. 3 (23h59, Friday).</b>

Attendance and active engagement during class are crucial components of your participation in this course. For a detailed breakdown of the attendance policy, see the additional notes at the end of this syllabus. For class participation, you are expected to come prepared to discuss the reading. This means being able to summarize and discuss the readings— especially their central arguments—and ask questions based on the material.

The reflections are the least formal type of writing you will submit this term, which is not to say they should be lacking in substance, good syntax, or proof-reading. This assignment is a venue for more personal reflection, for freer engagement with course content, or for the development of

proprietary ideas. (There is no expectation that these submissions take a personal tone if you find it more productive to write in a straightforward analytical fashion.) These reflections function as a form of participation: they demonstrate that you are engaging fully with the course material. In the case of the six biweekly reflections, you are expected to engage in each reflection with at least one of the weekly readings AND with at least one of the discussions in class. Each submission should be between 300- and 400-words long.

The Excavate! Egypt game is a video game developed by the Dig-it! Games Production Studios and is currently available to play online for free in this link: <https://dig-itgames.com/portfolio/excavate-egypt-world-history-lesson-game/> The student is only required to excavate the initial tutorial and the city of Alexandria completely. Through the game it is expected that the student will learn some notions and issues associated with how an archaeological research works. After playing the game, the student needs to submit a small reflection on the experience containing between 150-200 words.

Finally, one of the main learning outcomes of this course is to develop your research and writing skills. The paper should be focused on the examination of a small passage from the Hebrew Bible or literature from Second Temple Judaism, chosen by the student. The aim of the paper is to explicate the possible meanings of a passage or term. The student should try to uncover the historical connotations of a text and strives to place the assumptions, intentions, and concerns of its author in a plausible framework. The student should also try to consider how early audiences might have understood the text, a task that requires consideration of their social circumstances and language. The challenge here is to be faithful to the limits of the text with which you are working as you develop and support your interpretation. Since your aim is to recover the perspective of ancient authors and readers, you must ask yourself whether your explanations would make sense in a time and place far removed from our own. To assist the students in this process, they are required to submit a proposal expressing which passage they would like to explore in their paper and at least four secondary sources (academic books or articles) available through the McGill library system that are going to be relevant for the proposed research.

The length of the final paper should be 8-10 pages, cover page and bibliography page do not count towards the number of pages. Double-spaced, regular font and font size (12 pt.) and regular margins. You may use parenthetical citations for biblical references (e.g., Gen 1:1; 2 Ki 18:14-15). For citations you can use any standard style manual that you like as reference, but you need to be consistent.

**Course Outline:**

	Tuesday	Thursday	Weekly Reading
September 2	X	Syllabus and Introduction to the course	
Sept. 7 & 9	Discussing “Religion” in Antiquity	Hellenism, Maccabees and the ancient Israel	L. Grabbe, <i>Judaic Religion in the Second Temple Period: Belief and Practice from the Exile to Yavneh</i>

Daily readings:	2 Mac 4:7-17; 6:1-11; 8:1-7; 14:37-46.	Judith 1-2, 7-8.	(London: Routledge, 2000), 1-8; Idem, <i>Ancient Israel: Revised Edition</i> (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 3-11, 19-25.
Sept 14 & 16	Seleucids, calendar and apocalypticism	Basic notions in archaeology and Excavate! Egypt	Excavate! Egypt assignment
Daily readings:	Daniel 2, 7-8.		
Sept 21 & 23	The Temple and the Persian Empire	Life during the Exilic Period	L. Grabbe, <i>Judaic Religion in the Second Temple Period: Belief and Practice from the Exile to Yavneh</i> (London: Routledge, 2000), 129-149.
Daily readings:	Haggai 1; Ezra 3; Isaiah 44:21-45:7.	2 Kings 25:22-30	
Sept. 28 & 30	The Documentary Hypothesis and Pentateuch Scholarship	Ezekiel and prophetic innovation	J. J. Collins, <i>Introduction to the Hebrew Bible, Third Edition – The Torah/Pentateuch</i> (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2018), 65-82.
Daily readings:	Gen 1-3, 37:1-36.	Jeremiah 1-2; Ezekiel 1 and 20:1-44.	
October 5 & 7	The last days of the Kingdom of Judah	Josiah and the Deuteronomistic History	F. M. Cross, <i>Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: essays in the History of the Religion of Israel</i> (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), 274-289.
Daily readings:	2 Kings 23:31-25:22; Jeremiah 52:1-34.	2 Kings 22; 2 Chronicles 34.	
October 14	X	The death of Josiah and the centralization of the cult	L. Grabbe, <i>Ancient Israel: Revised Edition</i> (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 247-251.
Daily readings:	X	2 Kings 23:1-30; 2 Chronicles 35; 1 Esdras 1:1-33.	
October 19 & 21	Josiah, Huldah and Prophetism	Gender in ancient Israel and Judah	Carol L. Meyers, “Was Ancient Israel a Patriarchal Society?”, in <i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i> 133.1 (2014): 8-27
Daily readings:	Exodus 15:20-21; Judges 4; Isaiah 8:1-4; Nehemiah 6:14.	1 Samuel 25, 2 Kings 4:8-37, 8:1-6.	
October 26 & 28	Manasseh and his idolatry	Hezekiah and Jerusalem	L. Grabbe, <i>Ancient Israel: Revised Edition</i> (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 238-247.
Daily readings:	2 Kings 21:1-26; 2 Chronicles 33.	2 Kings 18-19.	
November 2 & 4	Israelites and the province of	The Fall of Samaria	

	Samerina under Assyrian Rule		L. Grabbe, <i>Ancient Israel: Revised Edition</i> (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 189-192.
Daily readings:	2 Kings 17:24-40; Ezra 4:1-5	2 Kings 17:1-6.	
November 9 & 11	The Kingdom of Judah and the Syro-Ephraimite War	The Kingdom of Israel between the Eighth and Ninth Centuries	L. Grabbe, <i>Ancient Israel: Revised Edition</i> (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 176-189.
Daily readings:	2 Kings 16; Isaiah 7:1-9.	2 Kings 14:23-29.	
November 16 & 18	Solomon and the First Temple	The Debate on the House of David and the United Monarchy	L. Grabbe, <i>Ancient Israel: Revised Edition</i> (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 138-158.
Daily readings:	1 Kings 5-8.	2 Samuel 5:1-12; 1 Kings 4:20-28; 9:10-28.	
November 23 & 25	Pre-Monarchical Israel and Judah	The Debate on the Exodus	L. Grabbe, <i>Ancient Israel: Revised Edition</i> (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 92-138.
Daily readings:	Judges 6-8; 1 Samuel 8.	Exodus 1-3, 12-15.	
Nov. 30 & Dec 2	God, gods and the debate on monotheism	Intermediary beings and ancient Israel	L. Grabbe, <i>Judaic Religion in the Second Temple Period: Belief and Practice from the Exile to Yavneh</i> (London: Routledge, 2000), 210-231.
Daily readings:	Ps 89:6-8; 2 Sam 2:8, 21:7; 1 Chronicles 8:33-34; 1 Kings 15:13	1 Kings 22:19-23; Ezekiel 9:1-11; Dan 7:9-10, 8:15-18; Zec 3:1-2.	

### Policy statements and additional information:

**E-mail Correspondence:** I will only check messages between 9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday. This means that if you e-mail me on Friday night, do not expect a response until Monday morning at the very earliest. Similarly, if you e-mail me the night before something is due, you can be assured that you will not receive an answer in time to meet the deadline.

**The Lands and Waters on Which We Meet:** McGill University is located on land which has long served as a site of meeting and exchange amongst Indigenous peoples, including the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabeg nations. These nations are hereby honoured, recognized and respected as the traditional stewards of the lands and waters on which we meet today.

**Academic integrity:** McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the “Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures” (see <http://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/> for more information). It is your responsibility to educate yourself on this issue. Please do so using the resources here:

<http://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/publications/> If you still have questions regarding academic culture at McGill after reviewing these documents, you are urged to consult with the instructor personally.

**Language of Submission:** In accord with McGill University's Charter of Students' Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.

**Copyright and recordings:** Instructor-generated course materials (e.g., handouts, notes, summaries, exam questions, etc.) are protected by law and may not be copied or distributed in any form or in any medium without explicit permission of the instructor. Video and audio recording of lectures and review sessions without the consent of the instructor is prohibited. Unless explicit permission is obtained from the instructor, recordings of lectures and review sessions may not be modified and must not be transferred or transmitted to any other person, whether or not that individual is enrolled in the course.

**Equal access and academic accommodations:** As the instructor of this course I endeavor to provide an inclusive learning environment. However, if you experience barriers to learning in this course, do not hesitate to discuss them with me and the Office for Students with Disabilities (514-398-6009).

**Course evaluations:** End-of-course evaluations are one of the ways that McGill works towards maintaining and improving the quality of courses and the student's learning experience. You will be notified by e-mail when the evaluations are available. Please note that a minimum number of responses must be received for results to be available to students.

**Attendance policy:** Class attendance and participation are important elements of this course. Therefore, attendance is linked to your grade in the following way: Students are allowed **one** absence during the term. Subsequent absences will result in deductions from your attendance/participation grade. **Your attendance/participation grade will be lowered 1 point for each absence.** Students also are expected to attend for the entire class period. Students who leave early or arrive late may also lose points for attendance/participation.

Of course in certain specific instances an absence can be excused. **Examples of excused absences are verifiable situations that the student could not have prevented, such as jury duty, illness, medical emergencies or the funeral of a family member or friend. Religious observances also are excused absences, however the student must inform the professor of such an absence by email at least two weeks before the observance.** (For McGill's Policy for the Accommodation of Religious Holy Days, see [https://mcgill.ca/secretariat/files/secretariat/religious\\_holy\\_days\\_policy\\_on\\_accomodation\\_of.pdf](https://mcgill.ca/secretariat/files/secretariat/religious_holy_days_policy_on_accomodation_of.pdf)). In all cases other than religious observances, excused absence requests require written documentation, and it remains the instructor's decision whether or not to excuse an absence, as well as how many absences will be excused (if any) for a particular situation. Please note that if the reason for your absence is not on the list above, it is likely that it will not be excused. This is why students are provided one allowable absence when they find that they must miss class for a reason that is not excused.