

Ancient Near Eastern Religion

Religion 227**Classroom:** 302 Memorial Hall**Class Time:** TTh 2:35-3:45pm**E-mail:** radine@moravian.edu**Telephone:** x1314**Professor:** Jason Radine**Office:** 108 Comenius Hall**Office Hours:** Monday 1:30-2:30pm
and by appointment

Course Description: A study of the religions of the ancient Near East, this course will explore the myths and rituals of the peoples of Mesopotamia, Syria-Palestine, and Egypt before the Roman era. Foundational to western civilization in general, these religions also form the cultural context and background for the sacred scriptures of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

Course Goals: This course will not just focus on mythology, but also on ancient religion as lived experience. While the differences between these religions and those of today are substantial and will be explored in detail, this course will reveal the commonalities of religious life then and now. Ancient religions were expressions of the hopes, fears, anxieties, and imaginations that are basic to the human experience, and the study of these religions opens a window to the understanding of people of the past as human beings, and a better perspective on modern religious life as well.

Assignments and Grading: There will be four exams, each worth 15% of your grade, and two research papers, each counting for 20%. Plagiarism can result in a failed paper or failing grade in the class as a whole (see the Student Handbook for the academic honesty policy). Attendance roll will be taken in each class day, with two unexcused absences reducing the total course grade by 1/3 of a letter. Assigned readings should be done before the class for which they are assigned. This is not a passive-learning course; we will be actively studying and discussing the texts and other material in class. Students who wish to request accommodations in this class for a disability should contact Ms. Elaine Mara, Assistant Director of Academic & Disability Support, located on the first floor of Monocacy Hall (extension 1401). Accommodations cannot be provided until authorization is received from the Academic & Disability Support office.

Sample Paper Topics:

Magic and Ritual Power

Relations between Deity and Monarch

Comparative Views of the Netherworld

Militant Goddesses: Inanna, Ishtar, Anat

Sacred Sexuality: Temple Prostitutes, Homosexuality, Virgin Goddesses

Required Texts:Holland, Glenn S., *Gods in the Desert: Religions of the Ancient Near East*, Rowman and Littlefield, 2009.Dalley, Stephanie, *Myths from Mesopotamia* (Revised Edition), Oxford: 2000.Coogan, Michael D. and Smith, Mark S.; *Stories from Ancient Canaan* (2nd ed.),

Westminster John Knox, 2012.
Simpson, William Kelly, *The Literature of Ancient Egypt*, Yale University Press,
online resource through Reeves Library.

Class Schedule

Introduction and Overview

Introduction, overview of ancient religion January 20th

Mesopotamian Religion

Overview of Mesopotamia January 22nd
Readings: Holland Introduction, Chapter 6.

Dumuzi and Inanna/Ishtar January 27th-29th
Readings: Holland chapter 7; Dalley, *Descent of Ishtar*

Adapa and Atrahasis February 3rd -5th
Readings: Holland chapter 8; Dalley, *Adapa and Atrahasis*

Anzu, Etana, and Dummu February 10th-12th
Readings: Dalley, *Anzu, Etana, and Dummu*

The Triumph of Marduk February 17th-19th
Readings: Dalley, *Enuma Elish*
Mesopotamian Religion Exam 1

Gilgamesh February 24th -26th
Readings: Holland 9; Dalley, *Gilgamesh*
Holland paper #1 due

Erra and Nergal March 3rd
Readings: Holland 10; Dalley, *Erra and Nergal*

Mesopotamian Religion Exam 2 March 5th

Ancient Egyptian Religion

Introduction to Ancient Egypt March 17th
Readings: Holland chapter 1

Old Kingdom Egypt, cult of Re March 19th
Readings: Holland chapter 2

Old Kingdom Egypt continued, pyramids
Readings: Holland chapter 4

March 24th

Middle Kingdom Egypt
Readings: Holland chapter 3

March 26th

Middle Kingdom Egypt, cult of Osiris
Readings: Holland chapter 5

March 31st

New Kingdom Egypt
Readings:

April 2nd

New Kingdom Egypt and the Aten Revolution
Readings:

April 7th

Hellenistic Egypt
Readings:

April 9th

Ancient Egyptian Religion Exam

April 9th

Canaanite/Ugaritic Religion

Introduction to ancient Ugarit
Readings: Holland chapter 11, Coogan/Smith, Introduction
First paper due

April 14th

Ugaritic Hero Tales
Readings: Holland chapter 12, Coogan/Smith, *Kirta* and *Aqhat*

April 16th-21st

Ba'al Cycle
Readings: Holland chapter 13, Coogan/Smith, *Baal*

April 23rd

Miscellaneous Ugaritic Myths
Readings: Holland chapter 14, Coogan/Smith, Rephaim, Lesser Gods, El's
Drinking Party

April 28th

Ugaritic Ritual Life
Readings: Holland chapter 15, Conclusion

April 30th

Second paper due

2:35pm

Tuesday, May 5th

Ugaritic Religion Exam

8:30am!

Friday, May 8th