RLST 320: Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity  
God’s Friends and Foes: From the Hebrew Bible to Rabbinic Texts

Section 01 (34751)  
Spring 2016  
Course Meetings: T/Th 12:40-2:00pm  
Course Location: LA 337

Professor: Dr. Jennifer Elizabeth Singletary (Prof. Jen)  
Email: jennifer_singletary@alumni.brown.edu  
(Since I check my email regularly, this is the best way to contact me. In the unlikely event that 
you do not receive a response within 48 hours, feel free to email me again.)  
Office Location: LA 101  
Office Telephone: 243-5793  
Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 2:00-3:30pm and by appointment

Course Description
This course examines the relationships between the God of Israel and other gods and divine 
beings (including monsters, angels, and demons) in a range of ancient sources, while tracing the 
development of ancient Judaism. We will begin by examining the relationships between Yahweh 
and other deities and/or divine beings in Israelite religions by examining texts from the Hebrew 
Bible and other ancient sources. Then, we will examine later interpretations of these relationships 
in texts such as the Dead Sea Scrolls and Rabbinic texts. We will explore questions such as: Was 
Israelite religion monotheistic? Did God have a court or friends in the ancient texts? Was God 
thought to have a wife or consort? Did God battle other deities in these texts? Did God have 
rivals in ancient Israeli religion or ancient Judaism? To answer these questions, we will 
examine ancient texts in English translation (including the Hebrew Bible, the inscriptions from 
Kuntillet ʿAjrud, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and Rabbinic texts), as we trace the development of 
ancient Judaism from its precursors in the Hebrew Bible through Rabbinic Judaism.

Prerequisites
This course assumes no prior knowledge of the Hebrew Bible, Judaism, or Christianity. 
However, students are expected to have an interest in learning to examine biblical and other 
religious texts in an academic, critical, non-evaluative manner, rather than theologically.

Course Goals and Objectives: Learning Outcomes
In this course, students will:
* Explore the development of ancient Judaism from its precursors in Israeliite religion and the 
religion of the Hebrew Bible.
* Analyze the construction of relationships between gods and/or divine beings in a range of ancient texts.
* Develop their ability to read religious texts critically and to analyze and discuss religious concepts, while situating these texts and concepts within their historical contexts.
* Develop their skills as researchers, writers, and collaborators by reading ancient texts and modern scholarship, debating topics in class, and producing a multimedia group final project.

**Required Course Materials**

**Required Textbooks** (available at the University bookstore, or through Amazon):


Additional brief readings will be posted on Moodle or available through the library’s e-reserves for the course. [These readings are marked with an asterisk * in the syllabus.]

Note: You must have copies of all assigned readings with you and accessible in class for discussion! These may be print or electronic. Electronic copies on a smartphone are NOT sufficient (they’re too small)!

**Additional Required Materials:**
Reading Questions: A set of about 3-5 brief, straightforward short answer study questions will be posted on Moodle for most reading assignments. You will need to answer the Reading Questions, mostly concerning key concepts and ideas in the readings, as you complete each of the assigned readings. These questions will form the basis of our in-class discussions. I may or may not collect these at any given meeting! You can use your notes with your answers to these on any pop quizzes I might give, so be sure to complete them before each meeting and bring a copy of the questions and your answers to them with you to every class! The midterm and final will also contain questions based on the Reading Questions, so these will help you study for the exams as well. You are responsible for checking Moodle for the Reading Questions and completing them before each class meeting.
Course Requirements, Evaluation, and Grading

Your grade for the course will be based on the following:

Participation  20%  Attendance, preparation of readings and Reading Questions, and active participation in class discussions.

Simply showing up will not guarantee you full participation credit (though it certainly helps)! Two (2) unexcused absences are allowed without penalty. Additional unexcused absences will be penalized 5 points per absence from the participation grade. The participation portion of your grade may also include occasional pop quizzes based on the Reading Questions, so come prepared every meeting! Due: Each meeting

Midterm  20%  Multiple choice, matching, and/or short answer questions based on the readings, Reading Questions, lectures, and course discussions in the first half of the course.

Date: 3/22/16

Final  30%  Multiple choice, matching, and/or short answer questions. based on the readings, Reading Questions, lectures, and course discussions in the entire course.

Exam will take place at University scheduled time.

Final Group Project  30%  Groups of 2-3 students will create and present an original, multimedia final project. (More information on this project will be given later in the course.) Due: 5/3/16

Other Details

1. Grading Scale: A (94-100), A- (90-93), B+ (87-89), B (84-86), B- (80-83), C+ (77-79), C (74-76), C- (70-73), D+ (67-69), D (64-66), D- (60-63), F (59 and below).

As noted in the UM Explanation of Transcript, the letter grades have the following meanings:

A  Superior performance
B  High degree of performance
C  Adequate performance
D  Minimum performance
F  Achievement does not merit awarding credit

2. Late/Missed Quizzes or Exams: Late quizzes or exams will only be accepted in cases of documented emergencies other very compelling reasons (as determined by University policy and
at the instructor’s discretion). Advance notice is required unless absolutely unavoidable. You are responsible for arranging for the make-up with the instructor.

3. Other Late Work: Except in cases of documented emergencies (as determined by University policy and at the instructor’s discretion), NO late work will be accepted. Students should contact the instructor as soon as possible (and preferably in advance of the due date) to arrange to turn in work that is late due to a documented emergency.

4. Academic Honesty Policy: “All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or a disciplinary sanction by the University. All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code (http://www.umt.edu/vpsa/policies/student_conduct.php).” All work submitted for this course should be your own work (not submitted for previous courses within or outside the University), and all references to others’ work must be properly cited.

5. Disability Services Statement: “The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction through collaboration between students with disabilities, instructors, and Disability Services for Students. If you think you may have a disability adversely affecting your academic performance, and you have not already registered with Disability Services, please contact Disability Services in Lommasson Center 154 or 406.243.2243. I will work with you and Disability Services to provide an appropriate modification.”

Course Schedule

Note: This schedule may be changed at the instructor’s discretion at any time depending on class progress and other factors. Changes will be announced in class or through email. You are responsible for keeping up with these changes! (Before reading any of the biblical texts, first read the introductions to the Torah, Nevi’im, and Kethuvim in JSB. For all biblical readings, begin by reading the introduction to each book from which verses are assigned in JSB, then read the whole chapter in which each assigned verse is found, for context.)

WEEK ONE: Introduction to the Course
T 1/26: Introduction; syllabus; no class meeting (first meeting on Thursday!)

Th 1/28: What is the Academic Study of Religion? How do we study the Bible critically?
Reading: *R. McCutcheon, “What is the Academic Study of Religion?”
M. Sweeney, “The Modern Study of the Bible” [JSB]
WEEK TWO: Introduction to the Hebrew Bible
T 2/2: The Hebrew Bible and Ancient Israel in the Ancient Near East
O. Lipschits, “The History of Israel in the Biblical Period” [JSB]

Th 2/4: The Religions of Israel and the Hebrew Bible
Reading: S. Geller, “The Religion of the Bible” [JSB]
Schiffman, Chapters 2 and 3

WEEK THREE: Monotheism in the Hebrew Bible?
T 2/9: Monotheism in the Hebrew Bible?
Reading: Exodus 20:1-6 (compare Deuteronomy 5:6-10); Exodus 22:19; 23:13; 34:14-16; Deuteronomy 6:4-15; 32:8-12; 4:15-20; 29:23-27; Micah 4:1-5;
1 Samuel 26:17-20; 2 Kings 5:17-18; Psalm 137:1-4; Isaiah 40:18-20, 25-26;
8:20-22; 11:1-9; Amos 1:2-2:16; 9:7 (cp. 3:2); Isaiah 2:2-4; Isaiah 11:1-9, 10; 56:1-8;
Ezekiel 1; 10; Deuteronomy 32:8-9; Isaiah 52:1 [JSB: Remember to read the introductions to each chapter, especially if you are not familiar with the Hebrew Bible. Read the entire chapter in which the assigned verses are found to get the context, but focus especially on those assigned.]

Th 2/11: Monolatry, Henotheism, or Monotheism?
Reading: *B. Halpern, “‘Brisker Pipes Than Poetry’: The Development of Israelite Monotheism”
*S. Olyan, “Is Isaiah 40-55 Really Monotheistic?”

WEEK FOUR: God(s) in the Hebrew Bible
T 2/16: One God or Many Gods in the Hebrew Bible?
Reading: Deuteronomy 4:39; Exodus 15:11; Isaiah 24:21-22; Judges 11:24;
Jeremiah 27:5

Th 2/18: Yahweh and His Court
Reading: Psalm 82; Psalm 89:6-15; Joshua 5:13-15; 1 Kings 22:19-21
*“Council,” in Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible
*Excerpts from ANE texts: the divine council

WEEK FIVE: God’s Friends in the Hebrew Bible
T 2/23: Yahweh’s Messengers
Reading: Genesis 3:24; Genesis 18-19, 22; Genesis 28:12 Exodus 23:20-21;
Judges 5:20; 2 Samuel 22:11; Isaiah 6
Th 2/25: Yahweh’s Messengers  
Reading: Daniel 7-12  
*S. Olyan, excerpt from A Thousand Thousands Served Him, 14-18.

WEEK SIX: God’s Foes in the Hebrew Bible  
T 3/1: Yahweh’s Foes: Sea, Leviathan, and Rahab  
Reading: Psalm 89:2-38; Psalm 74:12-17; Psalm 93:1-5; Psalm 29:3, 10; Psalm 65:7-8, Psalm 77:14-21; Psalm 106:7-12; Psalm 89:6-15; Psalm 74:12-17; Psalm 104:25-26; Job 40-41, Isaiah 30:7; Psalm 87:4; Ezekiel 29:2-6; Ezekiel 32:2-15; Jeremiah 51:34-37; Habakkuk 3; Isaiah 51: 9-11.

Th 3/3: Yahweh’s Foes  

WEEK SEVEN: God’s Rivals in Israelite Religion  
T 3/8: Yahweh’s Rivals  
Reading: Judges 2:11-13; Judges 6:25-32; 1 Samuel 7:4; 1 Kings 16:31-32; 1 Kings 17, 18, 19; 2 Kings 10:18-28; 2 Kings 11:18; 2 Kings 17:16; Hosea 2:18; Jeremiah 2:8; 23:13; Leviticus 18:21; 20:2-4; Deuteronomy 18:10; 2 Kings 23; Jeremiah 32:35; Jeremiah 7:16-19; Jeremiah 44:17-20; Zephaniah 1:4-9; 2 Kings 21:3-7; 23:4-6

Th 3/10: Yahweh’s Rivals  
Reading: *“Baal,” “Molech,” and “Queen of Heaven,” in Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible

WEEK EIGHT: Did God Have a Consort?  
T 3/15: Yahweh and Asherah  
Reading: 1 Kings 15:13; 1 Kings 18:19; 2 Kings 21:7; 2 Kings 21:4-7  
“Asherah” in Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible

Th 3/17: Yahweh and Asherah  

WEEK NINE: From the Hebrew Bible to Ancient Judaism  
T 3/22: MIDTERM EXAM
Th 3/24: The Development of Ancient Judaism: When Did Judaism Become Judaism?
   Reading: Vanderkam, 1-53, 186-192
   Schiffman, Chapters 4, 5, and 6

WEEK TEN: God’s Friends and Foes in the Dead Sea Scrolls
T 3/29: Introduction to the Dead Sea Scrolls
   Reading: Vanderkam, 147-165
   Schiffman, Chapter 7 (pay special attention to 130-136)
   “Early Nonrabbinic Interpretation” [JSB]

Th 3/31: God, Angels, and Demons in the Dead Sea Scrolls
   Reading: J. Collins, “Powers in Heaven: God, Gods, and Angels in the Dead Sea Scrolls”
   *Excerpts from The Book of Watchers, excerpts from Jubilees

WEEK ELEVEN: SPRING BREAK

WEEK TWELVE: Introduction to the Rabbinic Period
T 4/12: Introduction to the Rabbinic Period: The Jewish-Christian Schism, Revolt, and Restoration
   Reading: Schiffman, Chapters 8-9

Th 4/14: The Mishnah and Talmud and Rabbinic Interpretation
   Reading: Schiffman, Chapters 10, 11, and 12

WEEK THIRTEEN: God, Leviathan, Behemoth, and Angels in Rabbinic Texts
T 4/19: Yahweh, The Prince of the Sea, Leviathan, and Behemoth
   Reading: *b.Baba Batra 74b-75a
   Y. Elman, “Classical Rabbinic Interpretation” [JSB]
   D. Stern, “Midrash and Jewish Exegesis” [JSB]


WEEK FOURTEEN: The Conflict Myth From the Ancient Near East to Supernatural
T 4/26: The Conflict Myth Continues: From Medieval Art to Contemporary Television
   Reading: *J. Gutmann, “Leviathan, Behemoth, and Ziz”
   (Optional) Watch: Supernatural, Season 7, Episode 1 (“Meet the New Boss”)

Th 4/28: Course Wrap-up and Discussion

WEEK FIFTEEN: Student Presentations on Final Projects
T 5/3: Student Presentations
Th 5/5: Student Presentations