



On-Campus Course Syllabus
OTS 350
OLD TESTAMENT BACKGROUNDS
Fall 2021

Class Information

Day and Time: Tuesday/Thursday 12:15-1:30 pm
Room Number: E205

Contact Information

Instructor Name: Kevin Warstler
Instructor Email: kwarstler@criswell.edu
Instructor Phone: 214.818.1331
Instructor Office Hours: Tuesday 2 to 3 pm; Thursday 10 to 11 am, 2 to 3 pm, 5 to 6 pm

Instructor Name: Kirk Spencer
Instructor Email: kspencer@criswell.edu
Instructor Phone: 469.834.5211 (please text first)
Instructor Office Hours: Monday 11am to 1pm & Thursday 9am to 11am

Course Description and Prerequisites

An intensive study of the historical, social, and literary contexts of the Old Testament. This course will explore discoveries in the Ancient Near East from the Stone Age to the Iron Age through the art, literature and history of Mesopotamia, Egypt and Canaan and how they compare with that of Israel. (Prerequisites: OTS 101, OTS 201)

Course Objectives

- A. Know and give the location and history of major geographic features, people groups, cities, civilizations and archeological sites in the Bible lands related to Old Testament history and literature;
- B. Know and organize the dates of major events of the ancient Near East, especially those that relate to Old Testament history and literature;
- C. Describe and interact with significant archeological discoveries and the content of ancient texts in their historical and cultural context in order to understand the concepts and world views of that particular time and place;
- D. Evaluate supposed parallels between ancient texts and the Old Testament and articulate your thoughts on the nature and significance of the parallelisms.

Required Textbooks

- A. Arnold, Bill T., and Bryan E. Beyer. *Readings from the Ancient Near East*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002. (978-0801022920)
- B. Spencer, Kirk. "Ancient of Days: an Orientation in the Ancient World," 2008. Unpublished Manuscript.

Course Requirements and Assignments

A. Reading Assignments:

Ancient of Days

As you read through and study *The Ancient of Days*, mark-up the text in whatever system you want (underlining, drawing boxes, stars, brackets etc.) and also annotate the text by writing notes, ideas and comments in the margins. Mark-up and annotation is especially important in the literary interlude portions of the manuscripts which deal with primary texts because very few exam questions will come from these sections. Marking up and annotating a text will document that you have read all the material. As you mark-up and annotate the text, you are attempting to demonstrate that you have done a close reading of the text in preparation for the exams. At the end of the semester, I will collect your manuscript and look through them to determine how thoroughly you have read the material based upon your mark-up and annotations.

Primary Texts

Class discussion will also include familiarity with primary texts studied as part of the course. (Readings for each week from Spencer's "The Ancient of Days," and Arnold and Beyer's, *Readings from the Ancient Near East* are supplied in the course schedule at the end of this syllabus.)

B. Maps and Timeline

Three map and one timeline project will be given during the first half of the semester. You will have access to a Nation Map, a City Map and an Israel Map, as well as a Time Map (or Timeline) on Canvas. It is important that you review and memorize these maps and take the test over them (also found on Canvas). You will be allowed to take these tests more than one time and only the highest grade will be recorded.

C. Exams

Five exams will be taken during the semester over the assigned readings and class discussion. Exams will be taken over: The Stone Age, Mesopotamia, Egypt, The Promised Land (Israel) and The Exile. The exams will include questions taken primarily from your readings in "Ancient of Days." There will also be a few questions from the lecture and discussion. Descriptions of the types of questions and the amount of time given to take the tests are given in the Test Description section of each test as seen on Canvas.

D. Comprehensive Final Exam

There will be a comprehensive final exam taken on Canvas. All the questions on this final exam will be taken from questions presented on the previous exams. While it is a thorough comprehensive exam, you will have access to all possible questions by opening and studying previous tests to help you prepare.

E. Class Participation

Since class participation is vital to learning, absences should be taken only when absolutely necessary. Granting of excused absences is permitted at the discretion of the professors.

Three instances of either being tardy to class or departing before the end of class will be considered one absence. You will receive a participation grade based upon attendance and informed participation in class discussion. The participation grade will be reduced by four points for each unexcused absence.

Discussion is based on the amount and quality of questions asked and comments made during classroom discussions.

For the primary text discussions (Arnold/Beyer), there will be text evaluations to fill out. These will be turned in on the day of the class discussion and will constitute a portion of your class participation grade.

Course/Classroom Policies and Information

Online exams will be timed with multiple choice and matching questions. You should take the exam as quickly as possible from memory. With the time remaining, after the exam is completed, you can check and change any answers by searching the manuscript and notes you have taken. While you can use the manuscript and your notes in this search, here is a list of activities which will be considered cheating and cause you to face disciplinary action:

- Talking to someone about the exam to give or get information about the content of the exam.
- Digitizing the manuscript or using other means to do keyword searches to simply find answers without knowing the material in the manuscript.
- Using the course manuscripts or lecture notes to find the answer to a question before you have completed the entire exam. (Although these sources can be used to find answers in an “open-book” format after you have completed the entire exam and still have remaining time.)
- Using any other source material other than the course manuscripts and lecture notes to look up answers while taking the exam.
- Letting someone else take the exam for you.
- Taking the exam for someone else.

The above instructions apply to the reading exams only. It does not apply to the tests over maps and timeline. Maps and Timeline tests must be taken from memory only. If you look at the maps or timeline at any time before you submit the test you are cheating. It will be a better learning experience if you take time to learn the maps

and timeline before you begin taking the exam. It is possible that you could learn by taking the tests over and over, but this is not the best way.

Class Attendance

Students are responsible for enrolling in courses for which they anticipate being able to attend every class session on the day and time appearing on course schedules, and then making every effort to do so. When unavoidable situations result in absence or tardiness, students are responsible for acquiring any information missed. Instructors are not obliged to allow students to make up missed work. Per their independent discretion, individual instructors may determine how attendance affects students' ability to meet course learning objectives and whether attendance affects course grades.

Campus Closure

To ensure the health and safety of students and employees, college administrators may decide it is necessary on rare occasions to close the campus. Once this decision is announced, instructors will contact students to provide further details regarding the campus closure's impact on those courses. Students are responsible to watch for communication from their instructors and respond appropriately. (Unless otherwise specified by the instructor in this syllabus, this communication will be sent to the student's Criswell College e-mail account.)

In order to make progress toward the courses' objectives, instructors have the freedom during most campus closures to require students to participate in activities as alternatives to meeting on campus. An instructor may, for example, hold class remotely (through Zoom) at the scheduled time, provide a recording of a class or presentation for students to watch independently, or assign other activities that students are to accomplish before returning to campus. Students are responsible for accomplishing these alternative activities as well as any course requirements listed in this syllabus during the period of the campus closure. If, during the period of the campus closure, personal circumstances prohibit a student from accomplishing these alternative activities or course requirements and assignment listed in the syllabus during the campus closure, the student is responsible for communicating with the instructor as soon as possible. Instructors will not penalize students who do not have the means to accomplish the alternative activities during the period of the campus's closure and will work with students whose circumstances during the campus closure prohibited their timely completion of course requirements and assignments in the syllabus.

Grading Scale

			Grade Definitions
A	93-100	4.0 grade points per semester hour	Superior Work
A-	90-92	3.7 grade points per semester hour	
B+	87-89	3.3 grade points per semester hour	
B	83-86	3.0 grade points per semester hour	Above Average Work
B-	80-82	2.7 grade points per semester hour	
C+	77-79	2.3 grade points per semester hour	
C	73-76	2.0 grade points per semester hour	Average Work
C-	70-72	1.7 grade points per semester hour	

D+	67-69	1.3 grade points per semester hour	
D	63-66	1.0 grade point per semester hour	Below Average Work
D-	60-62	0.7 grade points per semester hour	
F	0-59	0.0 grade points per semester hour	Unacceptable Work

Incomplete Grades

Students requesting a grade of Incomplete (I) must understand that incomplete grades may be given only upon approval of the faculty member involved. An “I” may be assigned only when a student is currently passing a course and in situations involving extended illness, serious injury, death in the family, or employment or government reassignment, not student neglect.

Students are responsible for contacting their instructors prior to the end of the semester, plus filing the appropriate completed and approved academic request form with the Registrar’s Office. The “I” must be removed (by completing the remaining course requirements) no later than 60 calendar days after the close of the term or semester in which the grade was awarded, or the “I” will become an “F.”

Academic Honesty

Absolute truth is an essential belief and basis of behavior for those who believe in a God who cannot lie and forbids falsehood. Academic honesty is the application of the principle of truth in the classroom setting. Academic honesty includes the basic premise that all work submitted by students must be their own and any ideas derived or copied from elsewhere must be carefully documented.

Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to:

- cheating of any kind,
- submitting, without proper approval, work originally prepared by the student for another course,
- plagiarism, which is the submitting of work prepared by someone else as if it were his own, and
- failing to credit sources properly in written work.

Institutional Assessment

Material submitted by students in this course may be used for assessment of the college’s academic programs. Since programmatic and institutional assessment is done without reference to specific students, the results of these assessments have no effect on a student’s course grade or academic standing at the college. Before submitting a student’s work for this type of assessment, the course instructor redacts the work to remove anything that identifies the student.

Institutional Email Policy

All official college email communications to students enrolled in this course will be sent exclusively to students’ institutional email accounts. Students are expected to check their student email accounts regularly and to respond in an appropriate and timely manner to all communications from faculty and administrative departments.

Students are permitted to setup automatic forwarding of emails from their student email accounts to one or more personal email accounts. The student is responsible to setup and maintain email forwarding without

assistance from college staff. If a student chooses to use this forwarding option, he/she will continue to be responsible for responding appropriately to all communications from faculty and administrative departments of the college. Criswell College bears no responsibility for the use of emails that have been forwarded from student email accounts to other email accounts.

Disabilities

Criswell College recognizes and supports the standards set forth in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, and similar state laws, which are designed to eliminate discrimination against qualified individuals with disabilities. Criswell College is committed to making reasonable accommodations for qualifying students, faculty, and employees with disabilities as required by applicable laws. For more information, please contact the Student Services Office.

Intellectual Property Rights

Unless otherwise specifically instructed in writing by the instructor, students must neither materially nor digitally reproduce materials from any course offered by Criswell College for or with the significant possibility of distribution.

Resources and Supports

Canvas and SONIS: Criswell College uses Canvas as its web-based learning tool and SONIS for student data. Students needing assistance with Canvas should contact the Canvas Help Support line at (844) 358-6140. Tech support is available at this number, twenty-four hours a day. Students needing help with SONIS should contact the Campus Software Manager at studenttechsupport@criswell.edu.

Student Services: The Student Services Office exists to foster and encourage success in all areas of life—physical, intellectual, spiritual, social, and emotional. Students are encouraged to reach out for assistance by contacting the office at 214.818.1332 or studentservices@criswell.edu. Pastoral and certified counseling services are also available to Criswell students. Appointments are scheduled through the Dean of Students, at deanofstudents@criswell.edu.

Wallace Library: Students can access academic resources and obtain research assistance by contacting or visiting the Wallace Library, which is located on campus. For more information, email the Wallace Library at library@criswell.edu. Offsite login information is available in Canvas in the “Criswell Student Training Course” under “Library Information.”

Tutoring Center: Students are encouraged to consult with tutors to improve and enhance their skills and confidence in any subject matter taught at the college. Tutors have been recommended by the faculty to ensure that the tutor(s) are qualified to serve the student body. Every tutor brings experience and expertise in an effort to provide the proper resources for the subject matter at hand. To consult with a tutor, students can visit the Tutoring Center located on the second floor in room E203, or schedule an appointment by emailing tutoringcenter@criswell.edu or by calling 214.818.1373.

Course Outline/Calendar

Weekly Session

Cultural Topic Textual Topic Assignment

ARCHEOLOGY

Week 1 (August 16-20)

Introduction
Archeological Technique

Learn City and Nation Map
Study TimeMap (Timeline)

Week 2 (August 23-27)

Archeological Finds

Read Stone Age Chapter (Spencer AofD)
Study TimeMap (Timeline)
Read Prolegomena for Ancient Texts

~~~~~[Take Both Nation & City Map Test]~~~~~

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### STONE AGE

#### Week 3 (August 30 - September 3)

Stone Age: Paleolithic  
    Discussion of Prolegomena

Study Stone Age Chapter (Spencer AofD)  
Learn TimeMap (Timeline)  
Read "Enuma Elish" (Spencer AofD pp. 37-54)

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#### Week 4 (September 6-10)

Stone Age: Neolithic  
    Mesopotamian Creation Stories

Study Stone Age Chapter (Spencer AofD)  
Read Mesopotamia Chapter (Spencer AofD)  
Learn TimeMap (Timeline)  
Read Arnold/Beyer, Chapter 1, #1-4, pp. 13-21.

~~~~~[Take Timeline Test]~~~~~

MESOPOTAMIA

Week 5 (September 13-17)

Earliest Civilizations
 Mesopotamian Creation Stories

Sacred Space & Sacred Texts
Read Mesopotamia Chapter (Spencer AofD pp.28-97)
Read carefully for discussion "The Gilgamesh Epic" and flood stories (Spencer AofD pp. 55-77)
Read Arnold/Beyer, Chapter 1, #5, pp. 21-31, and Chapter 2, #13, p. 71.

~~~~~[Take Stone Age Exam]~~~~~

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**Week 6 (September 20-24)**

Sumer to Old Babylon

Mesopotamian Creation and Flood Stories

Study Mesopotamia Chapter (Spencer AofD pp.28-97)  
Read Arnold/Beyer, Chapter 3, #14-16, pp. 72-74, Chapter 5, #21-23, pp. 96-98, and Chapter 6, #27-28, 30, pp. 104-109, 111-114.

Read Exodus 21:15, 22-25, 28-32; Leviticus 24:19-20; and Deuteronomy 19:21. Compare these laws to those of Hammurabi (or Hammurapi). Include your observations on the text evaluation.

**EGYPT**

**Week 7 (September 27 - October 1)**

Old and Middle Kingdom: Hieroglyphics, Mummies & Pyramids

Patriarchal Customs and Law Codes

Read Egypt Chapter (Spencer AofD pp.98-148)  
Read Arnold/Beyer, Chapter 1, #8-10, pp. 62-65, Chapter 10, #50, p. 160.

~~~~~[Take Mesopotamia Exam]~~~~~

Week 8 (October 4-8)

New Kingdom

Akhenaton & Tutankhamen

Egyptian Creation Stories

Study Egypt Chapter (Spencer AofD pp.98-148)
Study Israel Map
Read Arnold/Beyer, Chapter 4, #17-18, pp. 75-82, Chapter 11, #55, pp. 166-168, and Chapter 15, #72-73, pp. 194-197.

Week 9 (October 11-15)

The Exodus

Epic Literature and Amarna Period

Study Egypt Chapter (Spencer AofD pp.98-148)
Study Israel Map
Read Arnold/Beyer, Chapter 13, #63, 65-66, 69, pp. 175-176, 187-189.

PROMISED LAND

Week 10 (October 18-22)

Israel: Northern Rift

Wisdom Literature

Read Promised Land Chapter (Spencer AofD pp.150-181)
Learn Israel Map

Read Arnold/Beyer, Chapter 1, #7, pp. 50-62, and Chapter 10, #51, 54, pp. 160-162, 165.

~~~~~[Take Egypt Exam]~~~~~

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**Week 11 (October 25-29)**

Israel: Southern Rift

Canaanite Texts

Study Promised Land (AofD pp.150-181)

Read Arnold/Beyer, Chapter 7, #35, 38, pp. 122-123, 128-133, Chapter 15, #74-75, 77, pp. 197-199, 201-202, and Chapter 17, #87, pp. 218-219.

~~~~~[Take Israel Map Test]~~~~~

Week 12 (November 1-5)

Jerusalem

Cultic and Ritual Texts

Read Exile Chapter (Spencer AofD pp.197-226)

Read Arnold/Beyer, Chapter 8, #40, pp. 145-145, #43, pp. 146-147.

Read 2 Kings 9-10. This is related to the Shalmaneser III reading (the Black Obelisk) that mentioned Jehu (#40).

Read 2 Kings 18-19. This is related to Sennacherib's account of the siege of Jerusalem (#43).

Include these biblical readings on your text evaluation.

~~~~~[Take Promise Land Test]~~~~~

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**EXILE: Assyria, Babylon & Persia**

**Week 13 (November 8-12)**

Assyria

Assyrian Royal Records

Study Exile Chapter (Spencer AofD pp. 197-226)

Read Arnold/Beyer, Chapter 16, #79-80, pp. 207-208, and Chapter 18, #90, pp. 222-224.

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**Week 14 (November 15-19)**

Neo-Babylon

Prophetic and Lamentation Texts

Read Arnold/Beyer, Chapter 9, #49, Chronicle 5, pp. 158-159, and Chapter 8, #44, pp. 147-149.

Read Ezra 1:2-4. This is the biblical account of the decree of Cyrus and is related to the Cyrus cylinder text. Compare this text to the Cyrus Cylinder and include on your text evaluation.

~~~~~[Take Exile Exam]~~~~~

(November 22-26)

Fall Break & Thanksgiving Holiday

Catch-up on All Testing
Prepare for Final

Week 15 (November 29 - December 3)

Persia

Exile and Postexile

Prepare for Final

Week 16 (December 6-10)

Presentations

Finish all outstanding work

COMPREHENSIVE FINAL EXAM

Turn in Marked Manuscripts and Extra Credential Sheet

EXTRA CREDIT CREDENTIALS

Students are encouraged to consider “extra credentials.” This is any learning experience related in some way to the culture of the Ancient World. The student can choose any learning experience they wish outside of the classroom related to the course.

Here is a partial list:

- Visiting museums,
- Watching good feature length historical film,
- Reading a good historical novel,
- Attending expert lectures or society meetings on other campuses
- Participating (and organizing) toga/tunic parties with costumes, historical movies and period refreshments.

If the student participates in these learning experiences they should keep record of what they have done and a very brief description of what they have learned. At the end of the course you should turn in a list of these activities to the professors.

Selected Bibliography

Arnold, Bill T., and Bryan Beyer. *Readings from the Ancient Near East: Primary Sources for Old Testament Study*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002.

Chavalas, Mark W., ed. *Ancient Near East: Historical Sources in Translation*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2006.

Hallo, William W., and K. Lawson Younger. *The Context of Scripture*. 3 vols. Leiden: Brill, 2001-2003.

Hallo, William W., and William Kelly Simpson. *The Ancient Near East: A History*. 2nd ed.

Hess, Richard S. *Israelite Religions: An Archaeological and Biblical Survey*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007.

Hill, Andrew E., and John H. Walton. *A Survey of the Old Testament*. 3rd ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009.

Kitchen, K. A. *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003.

- Kuhrt, Amélie. *The Ancient Near East, c. 3000–330 B.C.* 2 vols. New ed. New York: Routledge, 1997.
- Lichtheim, Miriam *Ancient Egyptian Literature*. 3 vols. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006.
- Matthews, Victor H., and Don C. Benjamin. *Old Testament Parallels: Laws and Stories from the Ancient Near East*. Third revised expanded ed. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2007.
- Pritchard, James B., ed. *The Ancient Near East: A New Anthology of Texts and Pictures*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010.
- Sasson, Jack M., ed. *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2001.
- Walton, John H. *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament*. 2nd ed. Baker Academic, 2018.