

**The World of the Old Testament:
Ancient Near Eastern History, Literature, and Culture**

Online

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*I met a traveller from an antique land
Who said: "Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert. Near them on the sand,
Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown
And wrinkled lip and sneer of cold command
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
The hand that mocked them and the heart that fed.
And on the pedestal these words appear:
'My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings:
Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair!
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare,
The lone and level sands stretch far away".
Ozymandias, by Percy Bysshe Shelley*

1. Course Description

This course is a basic, introductory survey of ancient Near Eastern history, literature, and culture from prehistoric times up to Alexander's conquest. Civilizations singled out for focus include Sumer, Egypt, Hatti, Babylonia, Assyria, Israel, and Persia. In the periods narrated by the Old Testament, special attention will be paid to the ways in which surrounding cultures impinged on and influenced Israel and Judah. In addition to historical events and texts, students will be asked to master basic geographical data, and will be briefly introduced to the languages and writing systems of some of the cultures covered.

There are no prerequisites for this course, and the only previous knowledge that is presumed is basic familiarity with the contents of the Old Testament.

2. Course Objectives

The civilizations covered form the backdrop of the Old Testament, informing the study of its history, religion, and social institutions; thus students' understanding of the Bible will be enriched. Close consideration of the multicultural contexts of the ancient and modern worlds will also energize and ground students' exegesis and proclamation.

Students successfully completing the course will have demonstrated (1) broad familiarity with the history, literature, culture, and geography of major ancient Near Eastern civilizations; (2) the ability to articulately compare biblical and ANE texts and the significance of those comparisons for biblical interpretation and theology; and (3) the ability to articulate similarities and connections between the cultures of the ancient world and our own, reflecting a hermeneutic that allows biblical texts to speak with integrity to diverse cultural contexts in the present day.

3. Textbooks

- Electronic copies of this syllabus and other course documents online at the course webpage.

Required:

- Hays, Christopher B. *Hidden Riches: A Sourcebook for the Comparative Study of the Hebrew Bible and Ancient Near East*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2014. (HR)
- Van de Mieroop, Marc. *A History of the Ancient Near East*, 3rd ed. Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2016. (HANE)
- Van de Mieroop, Marc. *A History of Ancient Egypt*. Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2011. (HAE)
- Izaak J. de Hulster, Brent A. Strawn, and Ryan P. Bonfiglio, eds. *Iconographic Exegesis of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015. (IEHB)
- Bible (NRSV, TNIV, or CEB)
- Online readings via e-reserves, or other online sources.

Recommended

- Miller, J. Maxwell, and John H. Hayes. *A History of Ancient Israel and Judah*. Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006. (HAIJ) (We will be reading about 100 pages from this text. This section will be available via e-reserves, but this is a beneficial text.)
- Facebook page: <http://www.facebook.com/Fuller.ANE>

4. Requirements and Grading

1. Online participation is required. Each week, students must log on to the course webpage course page and complete all online learning modules, complete quizzes, submit assignments, and participate in online group discussions.

2. This course is reading intensive. Students will read selections from the course textbooks, biblical texts, various articles, and online content.
3. Your grade is made up of these components:
 - Participation in online discussions: Each week, students will post one 250-300 word response to a question about one of the week’s comparative reading assignments (from either *Hidden Riches* or *Iconographic Exegesis*). Each student will also post responses to two other students’ posts (students will be divided into groups of 4-5). (20%)
 - Comparative reading responses: Each week, students will write a 250-300 word response to questions about the other comparative reading assignment each week (from either *Hidden Riches* or *Iconographic Exegesis*). These will be submitted online. (20%)
 - Geography and knowledge quizzes: Each week, students will complete quizzes covering various material from the week’s historical, cultural, and geographic readings/lessons. These will be accomplished online. (10%)
 - Five-page paper on textual comparison. This assignment will be due at the end of Week 10, and will require students selecting their own biblical and ancient Near Eastern texts or images to compare and contrast. This will be submitted online. (20%)
 - Final examination. This is an at-home, open-book, exam and will consist of three essay questions. This will be submitted online. (30%)

4. Grading Rubric

GRADE	MARK	DESCRIPTION
A	96-100	Outstanding: The level of research, thinking, and communication are outstanding. You critically evaluate the relevant theories, integrate it in the analysis of your selected topic or case, and show how it is applicable in the context you have chosen. Additionally, you synthesize models to create new understandings and/or theory. This is NOT a common grade.
A-	92-95	Superior: The level of research, thinking, and communication are superior. You understand and interact with the theories, integrate it with your topic, and have shown how it is applicable in the context you have chosen.
B+	88-91	Very Good: The level of research, thinking, and communication are satisfactory. You appear to understand the theories, read the assigned literature, and have made progress in showing how it is applicable in the context you have chosen, though your work could be stronger in both areas.
B	84-87	Satisfactory: The level of research, thinking, and communication are satisfactory. You appear

		to have read the assigned literature and have made progress in showing how it is applicable in the context you have chosen, though your work could be stronger in both areas.
B-	80-83	Acceptable but average at best: The level of research, thinking, and communication are acceptable. It appears you understand the reading and have made a start in showing how it is applicable in the context you have chosen.
C+	77-79	Acceptable but definitely below average: The level of research, thinking, and communication are barely acceptable. You have read some of the theories and have started to consider how it is applicable in the context you have chosen, but you have not demonstrated either clearly.
C	74-76	Borderline pass: The level of research, thinking, and communication are borderline. The demonstration of your critical thinking is absent, but the narrative may merit some consideration.
C-	71-73	Not acceptable: Depending on what I see, I may assume you tried, but it is not graduate level. The only reason it received a passing grade is that you submitted it for consideration with some evidence of work done.
F	70 or below	

6. Schedule

***Note:** The schedule below provides the assignments for each week of the course; however, in order to complete all of the weekly assignments, you must use the online course webpage. Use this schedule as a guide to assist you in completing the course requirements, but much of the course material is only accessible via the course website, and many of the readings outside of the text books are accessible via e-reserves.

Week 1: Jan 4 – Jan 10

4TH AND 3RD MILLENNIA MESOPOTAMIA

- Modules:
 1. Course Introduction
 2. Introduction to the Ancient Near East
 - **Why Study the ANE?**
 - Dr. Martin Luther King Junior, “Light on the Old Testament from the Ancient Near East”
(http://kingencyclopedia.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/documententry/doc_481124_000.1.html)

- Alan Lenzi, “How Does the Bible Relate to the Ancient Near East?” (<http://bibleodyssey.org/en/tools/bible-basics/how-does-the-hebrew-bible-relate-to-the-ancient-near-eastern-world.aspx>)
 - **History:** *HANE*, 1-18
 - **Culture:**
 - Simo Parpola, “Mesopotamian Soul of Modern Culture,” 1-8
 - **Literature:**
 - William W. Hallo, “Introduction: Ancient Near Eastern Texts and Their Relevance for Biblical Exegesis,” *COS* 1: xxiii-xxviii.
 - Hays, “Prolegomena ,” *HR*, 3-40.
 - **Geography:** Module Introductions
3. Mesopotamia in the 4th and 3rd Millennia
- **History:** *HANE*, 19-89.
 - **Culture:**
 - Harriet Crawford, “An Exploration of the World of Women in the Third-Millennium Mesopotamia,” *Women in the Ancient Near East*, 10-27.
 - Sumerian song: Stef Conner (and the Lyre Ensemble) sings a Sumerian lullaby: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j6bx_srgARU
 - **Literature:**
 - Piotr Michalowski, “Sumerian Literature: An Overview,” *CANE*, 2279-2293
 - Invention of Writing: http://www.mesopotamia.co.uk/writing/home_set.html
 - Scribes and Writing: https://youtu.be/cmZ_3VYWLqU
 - *Eridu Genesis* (<http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.1.7.4#>)
 - *Sumerian King List* (<http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/section2/tr211.htm>)
 - *The Advice of a Supervisor* (<http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.5.1.3#>)
 - Hays, “City Laments,” *HR*, 375-396.
 - **Geography:** Online Content
- Assignments:
 1. Initial Knowledge Quiz – Complete before working through Modules 1-3.
 2. Online post on “Why Study the Ancient Near East”
 3. Comparative Analysis: 250-300 word response to Hays, “City Laments,” *HR*, 375-396
 4. Online Geography and Knowledge Quiz
 - Due: 10 Jan

Week 2: Jan 11 – Jan 17

4TH AND 3RD MILLENNIA EGYPT

- Modules:
 1. Introduction to Ancient Egypt
 - **History:** *HAE*, 1-26
 - **Culture:** Online content.
 - **Literature:**
 - Donald Redford, “Ancient Egyptian Literature: An Overview,” *CANE* 4:2223-2241.
 - Hulster, et al., “Introduction,” *IEHB*, 19-42.
 - **Geography:** Online content: Overview of Egyptian Geography
 2. Egypt in the 4th and 3rd Millennia
 - **History:** *HAE*, 27-96
 - **Culture:**
 - Ronald J. Leprohon, “Royal Ideology and State Administration in Pharoanic Egypt,” *CANE* 1:273-287
 - **Literature:**
 - David Wengrow, “The Invention of Writing in Egypt,” pp. 99-103 in *Before the Pyramids: The Origins of Egyptian Civilization*.
<https://oi.uchicago.edu/sites/oi.uchicago.edu/files/uploads/shared/docs/oimp33.pdf>
 - Iconographic Analysis Exercise
 - **Geography:** Online content
- Assignments:
 1. Online post on “Treading Grapes”
 2. Comparative Analysis: 250-300 word response to “Iconographic Analysis Exercise”
 3. Online Geography and Knowledge Quiz

Week 3: Jan 18 – Jan 24

THE ANE IN THE 2ND MILLENNIUM

- Modules:
 1. Egypt in the First Half of the 2nd Millennium
 - **History:** *HAE*, 97-149
 - **Culture:**
 - Anthony J. Spalinger, “Warfare in Ancient Egypt,” *A Companion to the Ancient Near East*, 229-242
 - Optional: “Ancient Warriors: Soldiers of Pharaoh,” *History Channel*
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EnJ0uf7J2jc>

- **Literature:**
 - Primary: The Instruction to Amenemhet I, The Prophecies of Nepherti, Satire of the Trades
 - Comparative: Textual Comparison: Hays, “Prayers Regarding Wrongdoing,” *HR*, 339-356.
- **Geography:** Online content
- 2. Mesopotamia in the Early 2nd Millennium
 - **History:** *HANE*, 90-134
 - **Culture:**
 - Raymond Westbrook, “Biblical and Cuneiform Law Codes,” *Law From the Tigris to the Tiber*, pp. 4-20
 - Online content
 - **Literature:**
 - Secondary: Jean Bottero, “Akkadian Literature,” *CANE*, 2293-2305
 - Primary: Mari Letters
 - Comparative: Hays, “Law Collections,” *HR*, 121-145
 - **Geography:** Online content
- Assignments:
 1. Online post on “Prayers Regarding Wrongdoing”
 2. Comparative Analysis: 250-300 word response to “Law Collections”
 3. Online Geography and Knowledge Quiz

Week 4: Jan 25 – Jan 31

THE ANE IN THE 2ND MILLENNIUM (CONT'D)

- Modules:
 1. The Hittites in the 2nd Millennium
 - **History:** *HANE*, 135-201
 - **Culture:**
 - Harry A. Hoffner Jr., "Hittite-Israelite Cultural Parallels," *COS* 3:xxix-xxxiv
 - Listen: Listen: Hurrian Music: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9c-hmFN610g>
 - Online Content
 - **Literature:**
 - Secondary: Alfonso Archi, "Hittite and Hurrian Literature: An Overview," *CANE* 4:2367-2378.

- Primary: Treaty between Treaty between Suppiluliuma I of Hatti and Huqqana of Hayasa, Letter of Suppiluliuma I of Hatti to Niqmaddu II of Ugarit, Edict of Tudhaliya IV of Hatti Concerning the Divorce of Ammistramru II of Ugarit, Mursili’s “Third” Plague Prayer to the Sun-Goddess of Arinna, The Disappearance of Telipinu
 - Textual Comparison: Hays, “Ritual Texts,” *HR*, 147-160.
 - (Optional) Billie Jean Collins, "Hittitology, Importance for Biblical Interpretation,"
https://www.academia.edu/1555544/Hittitology_Importance_for_Biblical_Interpretation
 - **Geography:** Online content
2. Egypt in the late 2nd Millennium
- **History:** *HAE*, 151-239
 - **Culture:**
 - Raymond Cohen and Raymond Westbrook, “Introduction: The Amarna System,” *Amarna Diplomacy: The Beginnings of International Relations*, pp. 1-14
 - Optional: James K. Hoffmeier, “The Influence of Atenism in Egypt and the Bible?” pp. 238-266 in *Akhenaten and the Origins of Monotheism*.
 - Online content
 - **Literature:**
 - Secondary: Christopher Rollston, “Jerusalem in the Amarna Letters,” *BibleOdyssey* <http://www.bibleodyssey.org/en/places/related-articles/jerusalem-in-the-amarna-letters.aspx>.
 - Primary: EA 285-291 in William Moran, *The Amarna Letters*, pp. 325-334.
 - Comparative: Hays, “Hymns of Praise with Solar Imagery,” *HR*, 357-366
 - Online Content
 - **Geography:** Online content
- Assignments:
 1. Online post on “Ritual Texts”
 2. Comparative Analysis: 250-300 word response to “Hymns of Praise with Solar Imagery”
 3. Online Geography and Knowledge Quiz

Week 5: Feb 1 – Feb 7

COLLAPSE OF THE LATE BRONZE AGE

- Modules:
 1. Ugarit and the Late Bronze Age Collapse
 - **History:**
 - *HANE*, 202-220
 - Watch: Eric Cline, “1177 BC: The Year Civilization Collapsed,” (52 min)
 - **Culture:**
 - W.H. van Soldt, “Ugarit: A Second Millennium Kingdom on the Mediterranean Coast,” *CANE* 2:1255-1266.
 - Online Content
 - **Literature:**
 - Primary: RS 4.475 + TBD, “Kirta” (pp. 12-20), “Aqhat” (pp. 51-54), *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry*.
 - Textual Comparison: Hays, “Praise and Polemics for Baal,” *HR*, 287-294.
 - **Geography:** Online content
 2. Egypt and the Collapse of the Late Bronze Age
 - **History:** *HAE*, 240-259
 - **Culture:**
 - Interact:
<http://www.unc.edu/courses/2005fall/art/080a/001/EGYPT%20INTRO%20&%20MISC/egyptian%20iconography.htm>
 - Online content
 - **Literature:**
 - Primary: Medinet Habu inscription, Papyrus Harris.
 - Iconographic Comparison: Hulster, et al., “Masking the Blow,” *IEHB*, 281-294.
 - **Geography:** Online content
- Assignments:
 1. Online post on “Praise and Polemics for Baal”
 2. Comparative Analysis: 250-300 word response to “Masking the Blow”
 3. Online Geography and Knowledge Quiz

- Modules:
 1. Israel's Ethnogenesis
 - **History:**
 - *HANE*, 221-245
 - Read: Avraham Faust, "The Emergence of Iron Age Israel," https://www.academia.edu/11906343/Faust_A._2015_The_Emergence_of_Iron_Age_Israel_On_Origins_and_Habitus_in_T.E._Levy_T._Schneider_and_W.H.C._Propp_eds._Israel_s_Exodus_in_Transdisciplinary_Perspective_Text_Archeology_Culture_and_Geoscience_Springer_pp._467-482
 - If you would rather watch this presentation, see: Avraham Faust, "The Emergence of Iron Age Israel," <http://exodus.calit2.net> [Go to Archaeology and History link on the Right, and find Avi Faust's presentation]
 - **Culture:**
 - William D. Whitt, "The Story of the Semitic Alphabet," *CANE* 4:2379-2398.
 - Online Content
 - **Literature:**
 - Primary: Merneptah Stela; Song of Deborah (Judges 5); Song of the Sea (Exodus 15)
 - Textual Comparison: Hays, "Birth Accounts," *HR*, 113-119.
 - **Geography:** Online content
 2. Egypt and the Early First Millennium
 - **History:** *HAE*, 260-282
 - **Culture:**
 - Elizabeth Froom, "Social Structure and Daily Life: Pharaonic," *A Companion to Ancient Egypt*, 469-490.
 - Online content
 - **Literature:**
 - Primary: The Tale of Wenamun, The Instruction of Amenemope
 - Iconographic Comparison: Hulster, et al., "With a Strong Hand and an Outstretched Arm," *IEHB*, 103-116.
 - **Geography:** Online content
- Assignments:
 1. Online post on "Birth Accounts"

2. Comparative Analysis: 250-300 word response to “With a Strong Hand and an Oustretched Arm”
3. Online Geography and Knowledge Quiz

Week 7: Feb 15 – Feb 21

ISRAEL IN THE MONARCHAL PERIOD

- Modules:
 1. Israel under Saul, David, and Solomon
 - **History:**
 - Hayes and Miller, *HAIJ*, 119-220
 - **Culture:**
 - Hays, “Introduction to Prophecy in the Ancient Near East,” *HR*, 235-238
 - Online Content
 - **Literature:**
 - Secondary: Simon Parker, “The Literature of Canaan, Ancient Israel, and Phoenicia,” *CANE*, 4:2399-2410
 - Primary: Tel Dan Inscription, Mesha Stele
 - Textual Comparison: Hays, “Temple-Building Accounts,” *HR*, 201-212.
 - Iconographic Comparison: John Monson, “The New ‘Ayn Dara Temple: Closest Solomonic Parallel,” *Biblical Archaeological Review* 26 (May/June, 2000): 20-35, 67 .
<http://www.michaelsheiser.com/PaleoBabble/Ayn%20Dara%20Parallel%20to%20Solomons%20Temple.pdf>
 - **Geography:** Online content
- Assignments:
 1. Online post on “The New ‘Ayn Dara Temple”
 2. Comparative Analysis: 250-300 word response to “Temple-Building Accounts”
 3. Online Geography and Knowledge Quiz

Week 8: Feb 22 – Feb 28

THE NEO-ASSYRIAN EMPIRE

- Modules:
 1. The Assyrians in the Early First Millennium
 - **History:**
 - *HANE*, 246-264
 - **Culture:**
 - Jean Bottero, “The Religious System,” pp. 201-231 in *Mesopotamia: Writing, Reasoning, and the Gods.*”

- View: The Northwest Palace at Nimrud, (<http://www.metmuseum.org/metmedia/video/collections/ancient-near-eastern-art/northwest-palace-nimrud>)
 - Online Content
 - **Literature:**
 - Secondary: William W. Hallo, “Introduction: The Bible and Monuments,” *COS* 2:xxi-xxvi
 - Primary: Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser; Siloam Tunnel Inscription
 - Textual Comparison 1: Hays, “Treaty, Oath, and Covenant,” *HR*, 161-189.
 - Textual Comparison 2: Hays, “Comparative Historiography,” *HR*, 221-231
 - **Geography:** Online content
2. Egypt and the Early First Millennium
- **History:** *HAE*, 283-294
 - **Culture:**
 - Holly Pittman, “Cylinder Seals and Scarabs in the Ancient Near East,” *CANE* 3:1589-1603 (or another reading, TBD)
 - Online content
 - **Literature:**
 - Primary: Select Egyptian texts.
 - Iconographic Comparison: Hulster, et al., “Of Angels and Iconography,” *IEHB*, 147-164.
 - **Geography:** Online content
- Assignments:
 1. Online post on “Treaty, Oath, and Covenant”
 2. Comparative Analysis: 250-300 word response to “Of Angels and Iconography”
 3. Online Geography and Knowledge Quiz

Week 9: Feb 29 – Mar 6

THE NEO-BAYLONIAN EMPIRE

- Modules:
 1. The Babylonians in the Mid-First Millennium
 - **History:**
 - *HANE*, 298-307
 - **Culture:**
 - JoAnn Scurlock, “Death and the Afterlife in Ancient Mesopotamian Thought,” *CANE* 3:1883-1894
 - View: The Ancient City of Babylon:

- Watch: <https://youtu.be/l1Hbht4iNQg>
 - Explore: <http://www.kadingirra.com>
 - Online Content
 - **Literature:**
 - Secondary:
 - Primary: The Babylonian Chronicle; Nabonidus' Rebuilding
 - Textual Comparison: Hays, "Creation Accounts," *HR*, 41-74.
 - **Geography:** Online content
2. Egypt and the Mid-First Millennium
- **History:** *HAE*, 295-300
 - **Culture:**
 - Leonard H. Lesko, "Death and the Afterlife in Ancient Egyptian Thought," *CANE* 3:1763-1774
 - Paola Xella, "Death and the Afterlife in Canaanite and Hebrew Thought," *CANE* 3:2059-2070
 - Online content
 - **Literature:**
 - Primary: Select Egyptian texts.
 - Iconographic Comparison: Hulster, et al., "Picturing Ancient Israel's Cosmic Geography," *IEHB*, 45-62.
 - **Geography:** Online content
- Assignments:
 1. Online post on "Creation Accounts"
 2. Comparative Analysis: 250-300 word response to "Picturing Ancient Israel's Cosmic Geography"
 3. Online Geography and Knowledge Quiz

Week 10: Mar 7 – Mar 13 THE PERSIAN EMPIRE

- Modules:
 1. The Achaemenid Empire
 - **History:**
 - *HANE*, 308-345
 - **Culture:**
 - Amelie Kuhrt, "The Cyrus Cylinder and Achaemenid Imperial Policy," *JSOT* 25 (1983): 83-97
 - Online Content

- **Literature:**
 - Primary:
 - Read: Cyrus Cylinder
 - Watch: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nRMzrzu0wRw>
 - Textual Comparison: Hays, “Persian Edicts,” *HR*, 397-401.
 - **Geography:** Online content
2. Egypt and the Mid-First Millennium
- **History:** *HAE*, 300-315
 - **Culture:**
 - P.O. Skjaervo, “Achaemenid Religion,” *Religion Compass* 8 (2014): 175-187
 - Online content
 - **Literature:**
 - Primary: Behistun Inscription
 - Iconographic Comparison: Hulster, et al., “The Power of Images,” *IEHB*, 197-216.
 - **Geography:** Online content
- Assignments:
 1. Online post on “Persian Edicts”
 2. Comparative Analysis: 250-300 word response to “The Power of Images”
 3. Online Geography and Knowledge Quiz
 4. Comparative Assignment Due

Finals Week: Mar 14 – Mar 18