

Origins of God
RLST 206 IH
Spring Semester 2012
MWF 12:00-12:50 PM

Instructor: Dr. Susan Cohen
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Office hours: MW 9:30- 11:00 AM or by appointment.
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Goals of the course:

- 1) to become acquainted with the ways in which humans have attempted to present, define, depict, and describe the divine and their own relationship to the divine.
- 2) to learn to use texts, visual images, and other evidence to examine human methods of divine representation and expressions of the divine-human relationship.
- 3) to learn to read, examine, and discuss human concepts of the divine as an academic subject.

Required texts: Bible. Harpercollins Study Bible.
Coogan, M. *Stories from Ancient Canaan*
Foster, B. *From Distant Days*.
Hesiod, *Theogony* and *Works and Days*
Readings on electronic reserve and posted on D2L.

Course requirements:	five quizzes	20% (lowest quiz grade will be dropped)
	midterm exam	20%
	first paper	20%
	final paper	40%

Course grades will be posted on D2L throughout the semester.

Please Note: There will be no make-up exams or extensions on papers or exams unless the student has made arrangements with the professor at least one week in advance.

Course Policies:

- 1) This is a course about religion and the development of religious thought, this is not a class teaching religion itself. We will be examining the development of the human idea of the divine in an academic and secular setting, leaving the idea of the divine and the nature of the divine-human relationship open to questioning, examination, and diverse interpretations and expressions. An open mind and a willingness to examine new ideas and new methods is essential. **This class is not a forum for expressions of personal theology.** Statements of personal theological convictions, especially at the expense of others' interpretations or opinions, will not be tolerated.
- 2) Plagiarism – the presentation of others' work as your own – is an offense punishable by expulsion. All work submitted in this class must be your own, and all references to ideas from books, articles, or other sources must be cited correctly. If you do not know how to properly reference your work, or you are in doubt whether or not you should cite material, refer to the *Student Academic and Conduct Guidelines*, or make an appointment to see the instructor to discuss the problem. **Anyone found guilty of plagiarism, cheating, forgery, falsification or any other form of academic dishonesty will fail this course and the incident will be reported to the Dean of Students.**

Course Schedule:

Week One:

- Jan 11: Introduction
Syllabus and assignment handed out in class
- Jan. 13: Origins of God: background, approach, and the academic study of the divine

Week Two:

- Jan. 16: **UNIVERSITY HOLIDAY – NO CLASS**
- Jan.18: Creation in ancient Egypt.
Read: Creation Myths, on reserve.
Creation and Myths of Origins, on reserve.
The Great Hymn to Khnum, on reserve.
The Memphite Theology, on reserve.
- Jan 20: Creation in Mesopotamia.
Read: Foster, pp. 9-51.

Week Three:

- Jan. 23: Creation in classical Greece.
Read: Hesiod, *Theogony*, pp. 1-33.
Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, pp. 1-8, on reserve.
- Jan. 25: Creation in biblical traditions
Read: Bible, Gen. 1-2.
- Jan. 27: **QUIZ 1**
God, gods, and creation.

Week Four:

- Jan. 30: Destruction in Mesopotamia
Read: The Story of the Flood, on reserve.
Foster, pp. 52-77.
- Feb. 1: Destruction in biblical traditions
Read: Bible, Gen. 6-9.
- Feb. 3: Destruction in classical Greece
Read: Hesiod, *Works and Days*, pp. 37-61.
Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, pp. 9-14, on reserve.

Week Five:

- Feb. 6: **QUIZ 2**
Communication with the divine: ancient Egypt
Read: Hymn to Hapy, on reserve.
- Feb. 8: Communication with the divine: Mesopotamia
Read: Foster, pp. 221, 224-226, 238-247, and 269-271.
Personal Religion, on reserve.
- Feb. 10: **FIRST PAPER DUE**

Week Six:

- Feb. 13: Communication with the divine: biblical traditions
Read: Bible, Gen. 32:23-33; Ex. 19; Ex. 24; Ex.33:7-23, Ps. 32.
- Feb. 15: Communication with the divine: names of gods/God.
Read: Bible, Ex. 3.
God Reveals his Personal Name, on reserve.
- Feb. 17: Evidence for God.

Week Seven:

- Feb. 20: **UNIVERSITY HOLIDAY – NO CLASS**
- Feb. 22: Divine kingship in Egyptian traditions
Read: The Poetical Stela of Thutmose III, on reserve
A Cycle of Hymns to King Sesostri III, on reserve.
- Feb. 24: Kingship and the gods in Mesopotamia
Read: Foster, pp. 165-166, 197-201, 278-284.

Week Eight:

- Feb. 27: Kingship and the gods in Canaan.
Read: Coogan, Kirta, pp. 52-74.
- Feb. 29: Kingship and the divine in biblical traditions – Hebrew Bible
Read: I Sam 8; II Sam 7: 8-16; Ps. 2, 24, 89, 110.
- March 2: **QUIZ 3**
Kingship and the divine in biblical traditions – New Testament
Read: Matt. 1-2, 21; John 1; Heb. 1.

Week Nine:

- March 5: Houses of the gods and the “house” of God
Read: TBA
Bible, II Sam 7, I Kgs. 6-8; Ez. 40-43, Rev. 21.
- March 7: The divine as female
Read: TBA
- March 9: **MIDTERM EXAM**

March 12-16: Spring Break

Week Ten:

- March 19: Images of the divine in ancient Egypt
Read: Hornung, “Depiction and Manifestations of the Gods,” on reserve.
- March 21: Images of the divine in Canaan and Mesopotamia
Read: Jacobsen, The Graven Image, on reserve.
- March 23: Image or imageless: divine representations in biblical traditions.
Read: Ex. 19-20; Deut. 4; Is. 6; Is. 44:9-20, Jer. 10:1-15; Ez. 1.

Week Eleven:

March 26: **QUIZ 4**

The divine as many and as one

Read: The Everlasting Fire, on reserve.

March 28: The Canaanite connection: El, Baal, and Yahweh

Read: Coogan, Introduction

Coogan, Baal

Bible: Ex. 15:1-18; Ps. 18:1-15, Ps. 89.

March 30: One god or many in the Hebrew Bible?

Read: Levensen, "One God or one Lord?" on reserve.

Week Twelve:

April 2: Partly or fully divine?

Read: Armstrong, Trinity, the Christian God, on reserve.

April 4: Inclusivity and exclusivity

Read: TBA

April 6: **UNIVERSITY HOLIDAY – NO CLASS**

Week Thirteen:

April 9: **QUIZ 5**

The problem of evil

Read: Russell, "The Devil around the World," on reserve.

April 11: The divine and evil

Read: Foster, pp. 298-310, 316-323.

Jacobsen, Ultimate Power: The Assembly of the Gods, on reserve.

April 13: God and evil in the Hebrew Bible, pt. 1

Read: Russell, "The Good Lord and the Devil," on reserve.

Week Fourteen:

April 16: God, good, and evil in the Hebrew Bible, pt. 2.

Read: Bible, Gen. 22, Job 1-4, 9-10, 38-42.

April 18: The divine and evil

Read: Russell, "Christ and the Power of Evil," on reserve.

April 20: Who is God and whose God?

Read: Armstrong, "The Death of God?" on reserve.

Week Fifteen:

April 23: Conclusion: the origins of God.

April 25: **FINAL PAPER DUE**