

## COURSE SYLLABUS

RELS 6111  
Qumran and its Literature  
W 3:30-6:15  
Dr. John C. Reeves  
204B Macy  
Office hours: W 2:00-3:00; or by appointment  
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[Home Page of John C. Reeves](#)

**Course description:** The manuscripts recovered from the caves of Qumran provide a valuable window through which we may view the intellectual dynamism of the types of Israelite religiosity on display during the Second Temple period (roughly 515 BCE-70 CE). Some scholars are now recognizing that the Qumran finds attest a more complex religio-historical scene than was heretofore assumed by earlier generations of researchers. It is also intriguing that certain compositions, themes, motifs, and/or interpretative solutions found in the Qumran scrolls recur in later literary works, sometimes as much as a millennium later! These reflexes (attestations?) potentially bear witness to several vectors of biblical formulation, redaction, exegesis, and cooptation that were repeatedly exploited, transmitted, shaped, and transformed by subsequent biblically affiliated religious communities in the Near East.

The present course shall be devoted to the intensive study of two sets of important literary and religious texts that have been recovered from Qumran: (1) Hebrew language texts which have been classified under the broad category of ‘exegetical’ or ‘interpretive’ works; and (2) Hebrew language texts which have received the problematic label ‘mystical.’ Primary emphasis shall be given to the reading and translation of these texts, as well as a comparative analysis of their contents alongside related materials gleaned from apocryphal, pseudepigraphical, rabbinic, Christian, gnostic, Karaite, and Muslim traditions. Our principal aims are three: 1) to acquire familiarity with some significant Qumran texts; 2) to ponder the existence of and explanations for presumable Qumran ‘survivals’ in the literatures of subsequent religious communities; and 3) to develop skill in the practice of responsible comparative study.

### **Textbooks (none are available in the bookstore):**

Access to the [Tanakh](#) (in Hebrew)  
Access to a [Christian Bible](#) (one containing Apocrypha as well as New Testament)  
Access to a [Qur’ān](#)

I will send you Word and/or Adobe files for the Qumran texts which we will read.

Numerous primary sources (Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek, Latin, Coptic, Ethiopic, Syriac, Arabic, and Persian) in English translation may be assigned and/or distributed by the instructor.  
Additional secondary essays and articles will be distributed or assigned by the instructor.

### **Course requirements:**

a. *Diligent attendance and preparation.* Almost perfect attendance is an essential requirement for this course. Each class session builds upon the knowledge gained and skills acquired during previous meetings. Moreover, oral recitation and group study/discussion comprises practically the entirety of every class session. Weekly class meetings will combine the oral recitation, the English rendering(s), and grammatical and/or structural analyses of the assigned Qumran texts. Some of these readings may be keyed to the individual interests of the students. The instructor’s assessment of one’s attendance, class

preparation, oral recitation, and verbal contribution to class discussions constitutes 100% of the final course grade.

b. *Critical discussions.* Almost every week during a portion of the class period students will orally expound and collectively discuss the content of at least one secondary article or essay that has been previously assigned by the instructor. Individual students may be asked to present and guide our discussions. The readings will come from essays and journal articles selected by the instructor. The instructor's evaluation of the student's contributions to these assignments will be factored into the class preparation component of the final course grade.

c. Each student is responsible for all lectures, class discussions, assignments, and announcements, whether or not he/she is present when they occur.

**Miscellaneous information:**

a. The grading scale used in this course is as follows:

91-100	A
81-90	B
71-80	C
0-70	U

b. One of the requirements of this course is to complete the work of the course on time. Sometimes there are legitimate reasons for late work—an illness or other emergency. 'Emergency,' however, does not include your social involvements, travel plans, job schedule, disk and/or printer failures, the state of your love life, your obligations to other courses, or general malaise over the state of the world. The world has been in a mess as long as anyone can remember, and most of the world's work is done by people whose lives are a mass of futility and discontent. If you haven't learned yet, you had better learn now to work under the conditions of the world as it is. Therefore:

1) All assignments are due at their announced dates and times. In other words (and please note well!), there will be NO MAKEUP OPPORTUNITIES scheduled. All missed assignments (these include weekly oral recitations!) will be averaged as a 0 in the computation of the course grade. No exceptions will be considered or granted.

2) Any written homework exercises for which a roman font is used must be typed and double-spaced; apart from Hebrew print or script, no handwritten exercises will be accepted. Written homework exercises are assessed according to the following formulae:  $\sqrt{+}$  = A- (roughly 5 or fewer errors);  $\sqrt{}$  = C+ (roughly 6-20 errors);  $\sqrt{-}$  = U (more than 20 errors and/or incomplete work).

3) For accounting purposes, letter grades bear the following values: A=95; A-=92; B=85; C+=78; C=75; U=35.

4) Since your diligent physical participation is critical for the success of this course, attendance at class meetings will be monitored by the instructor. One absence is regrettable; two absences are the limit of tolerability. Three (3) or more absences will result in an automatic U for the course. Please note that the instructor does not distinguish 'excused' from 'unexcused' absences. Unsanctioned late arrivals and early departures will be tallied as absences.

5) Policy regarding Audits: the instructor expects auditors (whether formally enrolled as such or not) to meet the same attendance, preparation, and oral participation standards as those students who are taking the course for credit. The instructor does not expect auditors to prepare and submit any written assignments.

c. The [Cuneiform Studies Laboratory](#) (located in Macy 216) houses a number of lexical and grammatical aids (both print and electronic) for the close study of biblical and postbiblical Hebrew. Please consult with the instructor for access to this learning resource and the regulations regarding its use.

d. Assistance and solicitation of criticism is your right as a member of the class. It is not a privilege to be granted or withheld. Do not hesitate to request it nor wait too late in the course for it to be of help.

**General textual outline:** Unless otherwise indicated, we shall proceed with the following texts, in the order listed:

‘Exegetical’ texts:

4Q252 (4QCommGen A)  
11Q13 (11QMelch)  
4Q174 (4QFlor = 4QMidrEschat<sup>a?</sup>)  
4Q177 (4QCatena A = 4QMidrEschat<sup>b?</sup>)  
4QpPs 37 (4Q171)  
1QpHab  
4QpNah (4Q169)

‘Mystical’ texts:

1QS 10.21-11.22  
1QS 3.13-4.26  
4Q471b, 4Q427 7i 1-9, 1QH<sup>a</sup> 26.6-16 (so-called ‘ascent’ of the *maskīl*)  
1Q27 (so-called 1Q Mysteries) + 4Q299-301 fragments  
4Q180-181 (4QAgesCreat A-B)  
4Q385 (4QpsEzek<sup>a</sup>)  
4Q400-407 (ShirShabb<sup>a-h</sup>) + 11Q17 (ShirShabb<sup>i</sup>) + Mas1k (ShirShabb<sup>i</sup>)

### SOME USEFUL QUMRAN RESOURCES

The official publication venue for the Dead Sea Scrolls is the series of folio volumes entitled *Discoveries in the Judaean Desert* (40 vols. to date; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955-2009). Therein you will find physical descriptions of each fragment, photographic plates, transcriptions, extensively annotated translations and some commentary, concordances, and references to earlier publications and discussions.

Excellent editions of our texts and some study aids are also available in Florentino García Martínez and Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, eds., *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition* (2 vols.; Leiden: Brill, 1997-98). Note also (where relevant) James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek Texts with English Translations* (6 vols. to date; Tübingen/Louisville: J. C. B. Mohr/Westminster John Knox, 1994- ).

For concise presentations and initial bibliographic pointers to more extended treatments, consult Lawrence H. Schiffman and James C. VanderKam, eds., *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (2 vols.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). Do not neglect the relevant articles in the standard biblical and Judaica reference works like David Noel Freedman, ed., *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (6 vols.; New York: Doubleday, 1992); Katherine Doob Sakenfeld, ed., *The New Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible* (5 vols.; Nashville, Tenn: Abingdon Press, 2006-2009); or the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (2d ed.; 22 vols.; ed. Fred Skolnik; Detroit: Macmillan, 2007). You should also note the many useful resources assembled [here](#).