

COURSE SYLLABUS

RELS 6651
Seminar in the History of Religions
W 3:30-6:15
Dr. John C. Reeves
Macy 204B
Office hours: W 2:00-3:00; or by appointment
jcreeves@uncc.edu

Course description: ‘Current and seminal issues related to the academic study of one or more of the interpretive categories or concepts associated with the practice and expression of religion(s).’ The seminar this semester will focus on the generic rubric ‘Near Eastern Prophecy and Prophetology,’ wherein we will pursue a genealogical and comparative investigation of the changing roles of the ‘prophet’ and the various realizations of prophetic authority in a wide variety of Near Eastern cultural contexts ranging from ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia to medieval Judaism and Islam. We will devote special attention to the office of ‘prophet’ as it comes to be exemplified in focal figures like those of Moses, Jesus, Mani, Zoroaster, and Muhammad, as well as various more obscure claimants to the same type of authority. We will also probe the role of writing and book culture in the construction of prophetic credentials and authority.

Textbooks (none are available in the bookstore):

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

I will send you Adobe files for the following complete works:

- A. V. Williams Jackson, *Zoroaster: The Prophet of Ancient Iran* (London & New York: Macmillan & Co., 1899).
- D. S. Margoliouth, *Mohammed and the Rise of Islam* (3d ed.; New York & London: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1905).
- Judah Halevi, *Kitāb al-Khazari* (trans. Hartwig Hirschfeld; New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1905).

I will also send you Adobe files containing the following unpublished works (many thanks to their distinguished authors for granting their consent for us to look at and talk about their work-in-progress as it pertains to our interests):

Angelika Neuwirth, “The Qur’ān as a Late Antique Text.”
Michael Pregill, “Prophecy and Prophetic Discourse Before and After the Rise of Islam: Some Historiographic Reflections.”

Numerous primary sources (Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek, Latin, Coptic, 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. *Research project.* One (1) formal research project will be presented in oral and written form (at least 20 double-spaced pages, exclusive of notes and list of sources) that focuses upon a particular topic relevant to the study of Near Eastern prophets and/or prophetology. In consultation with the instructor, the student should select a topic of individual interest that permits such an extended exposition, analysis, and/or

evaluation. The topic for one's project should be selected no later than the October 21 class meeting. The project will be presented orally (approximately 15-20 minutes) at the final class meeting (December 9); the formal written version of the papers are due by 12:00 PM one week later (December 16). The research project accounts for 50% of the course grade.

b. *Individual involvement.* Almost perfect attendance (see below) is an essential requirement for this course. Each class meeting builds upon the knowledge gained and queried during the previous meetings. Moreover, in-class discussion, close reading, and detailed analysis by both the instructor and class members comprise the bulk of every class meeting. Preparation for every class usually involves the completion of a series of required readings and/or brief written assignment(s), and individual students are often asked to initiate our collective examination and discussion of the weekly topics. Students are expected to contribute in an informed manner to the public analysis and discussion of any assigned topic. The instructor's collective assessment of one's attendance, weekly class preparation, seminar papers, and oral presentations will constitute 50% of the final course grade.

c. *Zakhor (Remember!):* Mastery of the assigned readings, the timely completion of any written assignments, and diligent class attendance are necessary prerequisites for the successful completion of this course. Each student is responsible for all lectures, class discussions, hand-outs, 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:

91-95+	A	=	demonstrable mastery of material—outstanding performance
81-90	B	=	satisfactory performance of assignments
71-80	C	=	inadequate and/or faulty understanding of material
0-70	U	=	unacceptable graduate-level work

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 missing work is averaged as a 0 in the computation of the course grade.

2) All written work falls due on the dates scheduled in the syllabus, or on the date announced by the instructor in class (usually the next class meeting). 'Late' work will not be accepted from students who were privy to its oral evaluation and discussion (i.e., you were present while we 'went over it' but you neglected to do it beforehand). In the event of one's absence, 'late' submissions bear the following penalties: one day late/one letter grade; two days late/two letter grades; three or more days late/U. Please note: these 'days' are calendar days, not class meeting days. For accounting purposes, letter grades bear the following values: A=95; A-=92; B+=88; B=85; B-=82; C+=78; C=75; C-=72; U=35. Seminar papers are assessed according to the following formulae: $\sqrt{+} = A$; $\sqrt{-} = B$; $\sqrt{-} = U$. An untyped seminar paper or final project automatically receives the grade U, as do those typed submissions which violate the required parameters or which the instructor deems physically unacceptable and/or grammatically incomprehensible.

3) 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.

4) 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. 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.

BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR RELS 6651

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- A. L. Oppenheim, "The Arts of the Diviner," in his *Ancient Mesopotamia: Portrait of a Dead Civilization* (rev. ed.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 206-27.
- _____, "The Interpretation of Dreams in the Ancient Near East," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* n.s. 46 (1956): 179-373.

Egyptian & Mesopotamian

- Wen-Amon Papyrus; oracles from Mari; Prophecy A; Marduk Prophecy; Shulgi Prophecy; Dynastic Prophecy; Uruk Prophecy; Prophecy B; LBAT 1543; Prophecy C; Prophecy D; oracles to Esarhaddon; oracles to Assurbanipal
- Paul-Alain Beaulieu, "The Historical Background of the Uruk Prophecy," in *The Tablet and the Scroll: Near Eastern Studies in Honor of William W. Hallo* (ed. Mark E. Cohen, Daniel C. Snell, and David B. Weisberg; Bethesda, Md.: CDL Press, 1993), 41-52.
- Robert D. Biggs, "The Babylonian Prophecies and the Astrological Traditions of Mesopotamia," *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 37 (1985): 86-90.
- _____, "Babylonian Prophecies, Astrology, and a New Source for 'Prophecy Text B'," in *Language, Literature, and History: Philological and Historical Studies Presented to Erica Reiner* (ed. Francesca Rochberg-Halton; New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1987), 1-14.
- _____, "More Babylonian 'Prophecies'," *Iraq* 29 (1967): 117-32.
- Maria deJong Ellis, "Observations on Mesopotamian Oracles and Prophetic Texts: Literary and Historiographic Considerations," *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 41 (1989): 127-86.
- A. K. Grayson, *Babylonian Historical-Literary Texts* (Toronto & Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1975), 13-37.
- A. K. Grayson and W. G. Lambert, "Akkadian Prophecies," *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 18 (1964): 7-30.
- W. W. Hallo, "Akkadian Apocalypses," *Israel Exploration Journal* 16 (1966): 231-42.
- Hermann Hunger and Stephen A. Kaufman, "A New Akkadian Prophecy Text," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 95 (1975): 371-75.

Israelite and Early Jewish Currents

- Tanakh: Gen 20:7; Exod 7:1-2; Num 11:23-30; 12:4-9; 27:12-23 (cf. Josh 1:5-9, 16-18); Deut 13:1-6; 18:9-22; 34:9-12; 1 Sam 9:1-10:13; 1 Kgs 13:1-34 (cf. 2 Kgs 23:15-18); 22:1-29; Jer 51:59-64; Ezek 12:27-13:9; Mic 3:5-12; Lam 2:9, 14; Dan 9:1-3, 21-27.
- Extracanonical graeco-Jewish: 1 Macc 4:46; 9:27; 14:41; Josephus, *C. Ap.* 1.40-41.

Dead Sea Scrolls: 1QS 1.2-6; 8.15-16; 9:7-11; CD 3:12-17; 5.17-6:11; 7:14-18; 1QpHab 7.1-5; 4Q375 frg. 1 col. i.1-9; 4Q381 frg. 69 4-5; 4Q390 frgs. 1-2; 4Q504 col. 16.13-15; 11QPs^a col. 27.2-11; 11QT 54.8-18; 60.16-61.5.

Rabbinic literature: *m.* 'Abot 1.1; *t. Soṭa* 13.2-3; *Mek. Bo* §1 (Horovitz-Rabin, 2-6); *b. Yoma* 9b; *B. Bat.* 12a-b; *Sanh.* 11a; *Cant. Rab.* to 8:9 §3.

Divrey ha-yamim shel Mosheh (Englished)

Hans M. Barstad, "No Prophets? Recent Developments in Biblical Prophetic Research and Ancient Near Eastern Prophecy," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 57 (1993): 39-60.

Robert P. Carroll, "Prophecy and Society," in *The World of Ancient Israel: Sociological, Anthropological and Political Perspectives* (ed. R. E. Clements; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 203-25.

Moshe Weinfeld, "Ancient Near Eastern Patterns in Prophetic Literature," *Vetus Testamentum* 27 (1977): 178-95.

Daniel E. Fleming, "The Etymological Origins of the Hebrew *nābî*: The One Who Invokes God," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 55 (1993): 217-24.

Sigmund Mowinckel, "'The Spirit' and the 'Word' in the Pre-Exilic Reforming Prophets," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 53 (1934): 199-227.

Menahem Haran, "From Early to Classical Prophecy: Continuity and Change," *Vetus Testamentum* 27 (1977): 385-97.

Robert R. Wilson, "Prophecy and Ecstasy: A Reexamination," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 98 (1979): 321-37.

Alan Cooper, "Imagining Prophecy," in *Poetry and Prophecy: The Beginnings of a Literary Tradition* (ed. James L. Kugel; Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 1990), 26-44.

Frederick E. Greenspahn, "Why Prophecy Ceased," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 108 (1989): 37-49.

Rimon Kasher, "The Mythological Figure of Moses in Light of Some Unpublished Midrashic Fragments," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 88 (1997-98): 19-42.

John C. Reeves, "Scriptural Authority in Early Judaism," in *Living Traditions of the Bible: Scripture in Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Practice* (ed. James E. Bowley; St. Louis: Chalice Press, 1999), 63-84.

Benjamin D. Sommer, "Did Prophecy Cease? Evaluating a Re-evaluation," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 115 (1996): 31-47.

Christian Currents

Mark 13 and synoptic parallels

Paraclete prophecy(s) in Gospel of John (14:16-17, 26; 15:26; 16:7-11; and note Q 61:6)

1 Cor 12:28-31; Eph 3:5; 4:11

[Didache](#) 10.7-13.7; 15.1-16.8

[Shepherd of Hermas](#) 43, Mandate 11 (also *apud* Bart D. Ehrman, ed., *The Apostolic Fathers II* [LCL], 284-93).

[Pseudo-Clementine Homilies](#) (*ANF* 8:215-346): 1.15-22; 2.4-53; 3.5-28, 40-57; 8.4-7, 9-23; 9.1-19; 16.11-21.

[Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions](#) (*ANF* 8:75-211): 1.12-74; 2.7-15; 5.9-13; 8.59-62.

The Book of Elchasai (as reconstructed & translated by F. Stanley Jones, "The *Book of Elchasai* in its Relevance for Manichaean Institutions," *Aram* 16 [2004]: 179-215, at 190-96).

Other testimonia about Elchasaites, Ebionites, et al.

Zoroaster

Many Zoroastrian primary sources can be accessed [here](#) and [here](#)

Roger Beck, "Thus Spake Not Zarathustra: Zoroastrian Pseudepigrapha of the Greco-Roman World," in Mary Boyce and F. Grenet, *A History of Zoroastrianism, Volume Three: Zoroastrianism Under Macedonian and Roman Rule* (Leiden: Brill, 1991), 491-565.

William R. Darrow, "Zoroaster Amalgamated: Notes on Iranian Prophetology," *History of Religions* 27 (1987-88): 109-32.

Richard J. H. Gottheil, "References to Zoroaster in Syriac and Arabic Literature," in *Classical Studies in Honour of Henry Drisler* (New York: Macmillan and Co., 1894), 24-51.

- Shaul Shaked, "Some Islamic Reports Concerning Zoroastrianism," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 17 (1994): 43-84.
- S. H. Taqizadeh, "A New Contribution to the Materials Concerning the Life of Zoroaster," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies* 8 (1937): 947-54.
- Andrew J. Welburn, "Iranian Prophetology and the Birth of the Messiah: The Apocalypse of Adam," in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* II.25.6 (ed. W. Haase; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1988), 4752-94.

Mani, Mazdak, and neo-Irano-gnostic currents

- Cologne Mani Codex from Richard Valantasis, ed., *Religions of Late Antiquity in Practice* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 161-76; or Iain Gardner and Samuel N. C. Lieu, *Manichaean Texts from the Roman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 47-73.
- Selections from my *Prolegomena to an Islamicate Manichaeism* (in press)
- Selections from my *Shades of Light and Darkness* (in preparation)

Muḥammad

- Q 2:136, 213, 285; 3:2-4, 7, 81, 183-84; 5:19; 6:74-94, 112; 7:157-58; 16:103; 17:105-106; 21:5; 22:49-57; 23:68-77; 25:4-5; 26:192-97; 33:40; 35:23-24; 41:43-45; 42:51-53; 52:29; 61:6; 69:41-42; 81:22; 85:21-22
- Fred M. Donner, "The Background to Islam," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian* (ed. Michael Maas; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 510-33.
- A[lfred]. Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad: A Translation of Ibn Ishāq's Sīrat Rasūl Allāh* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955).
- Tryggve Kronholm, "Dependence and Prophetic Originality in the Koran," *Orientalia Suecana* 31-32 (1982-83): 47-70.
- F. E. Peters, "The Quest of the Historical Muhammad," *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 23 (1991): 291-315.
- Chase F. Robinson, "Early Islamic History: Parallels and Problems," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 143 (2007): 91-106.
- Maxime Rodinson, "A Critical Survey of Modern Studies on Muhammad," in *Studies on Islam* (ed. Merlin L. Swartz; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), 23-85.
- Uri Rubin, "Prophets and Prophethood," *EncQur* 4:289-307.
- Shimon Shtober, "Muḥammad and the Beginning of Islam in the Chronicle *Sefer Divrey Yoseph*," in *Studies in Islamic History and Civilization in Honour of David Ayalon* (ed. M. Sharon; Leiden: Brill, 1986), 319-52.
- Brannon Wheeler, "Arab Prophets of the Qur'an and Bible," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 8.2 (2006): 24-57.
- Michael Zwettler, "A Mantic Manifesto: The Sūra of 'The Poets' and the Qur'anic Foundations of Prophetic Authority," in *Poetry and Prophecy: The Beginnings of a Literary Tradition* (ed. James L. Kugel; Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 1990), 75-119.

Islamicate Currents

- Judah Halevi, *Kuzari* 1.31-43, 71-89, 101-17; 4.1-9 plus Hirschfeld's introduction.
- Moses Maimonides, *Moreh Nebukim* 2.32-48; 3.24, 51-52.
- Philip S. Alexander, "'A Sixtieth Part of Prophecy': The Problem of Continuing Revelation in Judaism," in *Words Remembered, Texts Renewed: Essays in Honour of John F. A. Sawyer* (JSOTSup 195; ed. Jon Davies, Graham Harvey, and Wilfred G. E. Watson; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 414-33.
- Michael S. Berger, "Toward a New Understanding of Judah Halevi's *Kuzari*," *Journal of Religion* 72 (1992): 210-28.
- Hans Daiber, "Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī (10th century A.D.) on the Unity and Diversity of Religions," in *Dialogue and Syncretism: An Interdisciplinary Approach* (ed. Jerald Gort, et al.; Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 1989), 87-104.

- Abraham Joshua Heschel, *Prophetic Inspiration after the Prophets: Maimonides and Other Medieval Authorities* (Hoboken, N.J.: Ktav, 1996).
- Etan Kohlberg, "Some Shī'ī Views of the Antediluvian World," *Studia Islamica* 52 (1980): 41-66.
- Chase Robinson, "Prophecy and Holy Men in Early Islam," in *The Cult of Saints in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages: Essays on the Contribution of Peter Brown* (ed. James Howard-Johnston and Paul Antony Hayward; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 241-62.
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- Raymond P. Scheindlin, *The Song of the Distant Dove: Judah Halevi's Pilgrimage* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).
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- Naphtali Wieder, "The Cessation of Prophecy in Karaite Ideology," in his *The Judean Scrolls and Karaism* (London: East and West Library, 1962), 259-63.
- Elliot R. Wolfson, "Merkavah Traditions in Philosophical Garb: Judah Halevi Reconsidered," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 57 (1990-91): 179-242.
- Harry Austryn Wolfson, "Halevi and Maimonides on Prophecy," *Jewish Quarterly Review* n.s. 32 (1942): 345-70; n.s. 33 (1942): 49-82.