

Exodus and the Life of Moses

Professor	Daniel R. Driver, PhD	Course	Version 0.8-DRAFT
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Hours	Mon–Thu, 12:30–1:00 PM	Website	danieldriver.com/courses/

1 Course Description

Who is Moses, and what does his life have to do with Israel's exodus from Egypt? This course will examine the Moses story in the context of the Book of Exodus, attending above all to the book's canonical shape and its historic reception. Students will also become familiar with some of the current debate about the formation of the Pentateuch, particularly as it relates to different accounts of Israel's origins in the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament.

Prerequisites: RM 1000 or GTRS 6000; and BF 1001.

2 Learning Objectives

By the end of the course students should be able to demonstrate a critical awareness of the main contours of the Book of Exodus and, to a more limited extent, of its modern interpretation and ancient reception history. They should be able to communicate their own understanding of who Moses is, with an ecumenical outlook that includes some knowledge of Jewish and Christian tradition. They should develop a critical self-awareness of their own patterns of thought about biblical story and biblical law, particularly where these elements converge on the figure of Moses. Ideally, they will discover in the study of Old Testament scripture a genuine love of learning, all due humility before the task of interpretation, and the courage to address themselves to text and tradition.

Students should also be able to: summarize and understand major hermeneutical approaches to the Pentateuch; identify, analyze, and explicate suitably short biblical passages, especially from Exodus; appreciate, compare, and evaluate traditional religious understandings of the text; generate and defend an original, coherent thesis about Moses.

3 Required Texts & Materials

The following texts are required. Students are strongly encouraged to purchase their own copies. Library copies that are not reference works have been placed on a 2-hour reserve.

- [Childs] Brevard S. Childs. *The Book of Exodus: A Critical, Theological Commentary*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1974. ISBN 978-0664229689.
- [Sommer] Benjamin D. Sommer. *Revelation and Authority: Sinai in Jewish Scripture and Tradition*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015. ISBN 978-0300234688.
- [von Rad] Gerhard von Rad. *Moses*. 2nd ed. Edited by K. C. Hanson. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2011. ISBN 978-1606087718.
- [Nyssa] Gregory of Nyssa. *The Life of Moses*. Translated by Abraham J. Malherbe and Everett Ferguson. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2006. ISBN 978-0060754648. This title is optional but strongly recommended.

Students should also have a good, modern translation of the Bible, such as the NRSV or NJPS. If you want a study Bible, I recommend either Michael Coogan et al., eds., *The New Oxford Annotated Bible: NRSV with Apocrypha* (5th ed.; Oxford: OUP, 2018) or, with some superior notes and essays but neither Apocrypha nor NT, Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler, eds., *The Jewish Study Bible: Second Edition* (2nd ed.; Oxford: OUP, 2014).

4 Supplementary Texts

Supplementary readings may be recommended throughout the semester. Excerpts from this literature will either be placed on reserve or made available through the course website.

In addition, the following reference works are worth owning and consulting. First, [1] includes sound advice on things like reading religious texts, writing essays and book reviews, making oral presentations, and learning languages. Second, [2] is a standard reference in the field, useful to beginning students and specialists in biblical studies alike.

- [1] Northey, Margot, Bradford A. Anderson, and Joel N. Lohr. *Making Sense in Religious Studies: A Student's Guide to Research and Writing*. 2nd ed. Oxford: OUP, 2015.

- [2] Collins, Billie Jean, et al. *The SBL Handbook of Style*. 2nd ed. Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014. Designed to augment *The Chicago Manual of Style*, which is the standard at AST, there is also a free “[Student Supplement for The SBL Handbook of Style, Second Edition](#).”

5 Course Outline

We will adhere to the schedule in [Table 1](#) as closely as possible, though the professor reserves the right to adjust it to suit the needs of the class.

§. Primary	Commentary	Secondary	Due
1. Exodus 1–2	[Childs , Intros]		2 Jul.
2. Exodus 3	[Childs , IV]	[von Rad , 1–44]	3 Jul.
3. Exodus 7	[Childs , VII]	[von Rad , 45–87]	4 Jul.
☞ <i>First paper is due by midnight on day three</i>			
4. Exodus 12	[Childs , VIII]		5 Jul.
5. Exodus 16	[Childs , XII]	[Sommer , 1–26]	6 Jul.
~. No Class: Term Break (Saturday & Sunday)			
6. Exodus 19	[Childs , XVI]	[Sommer , 27–98]	9 Jul.
☞ <i>Second paper is due by midnight on day six</i>			
7. Exodus 24	[Childs , XIX]	[Sommer , 99–187]	10 Jul.
8. Exodus 32	[Childs , XXI]	[Sommer , 188–251]	11 Jul.
9. Exodus 33	[Childs , XXII]	[Nyssa , 1–68]	12 Jul.
☞ <i>Final paper is due before the start of the last class</i>			
10. Exodus 34	[Childs , XXIII]	[Nyssa , 69–132]	13 Jul.
☞ <i>End of Term: Final marks are due for this course</i>			27 Jul.

Table 1: Schedule of Readings

See the AST website for a list of other [important dates](#).

6 Evaluation

6.1 Grade Structure for HB 3115

1. A **book review** will facilitate student reflection on a work of biblical interpretation, in this case by [[von Rad](#)]. Note that a book review is not the same thing as a book report. At least half of this paper should be devoted to analysis and evaluation. Its total length should be 1,000 words, and it is due on the third day of class.
2. An **exegetical essay** will facilitate direct engagement with the biblical text. The first task is to identify an appropriate text. Select a suitably short passage from Exodus. Then, conduct an analysis and explication of it. Interact with [[Childs](#)] and at least one other commentator as you work, but be sure not to lose sight of the text itself. The paper should be 1,500 words long, and it is due on the sixth day of class.
3. A **final thesis** gives students an opportunity to develop their own answer to the question “Who is Moses?” The paper must have a clear thesis, which should govern the entire discussion. The paper should also show an awareness of all assigned readings

and any relevant lectures and classroom discussions. It should be 2,000 words long, and it is due at the start of the last class.

For guidance on how to approach these and other assignments, see [1] in section 4, above. The breakdown for the semester's total work is shown in Table 2.

Book Review	25%
Exegetical Essay	35%
Final Thesis	40%

Table 2: Distribution of Grades

AST's **Academic Calendar** provides guidelines and detailed criteria for academic assessment. Marks are assigned by letter grade using these benchmarks (summarized in Table 3). Note that, at AST, a grade of "C" is deemed "Unsatisfactory."

A+	94–100	Exceptional
A	87–93	Outstanding
A–	80–86	Excellent
B+	77–79	Good
B	73–76	Acceptable
B–	70–72	Marginally Acceptable
C	60–69	Unsatisfactory
F	0–59	Failure
FP	0	Failure due to Plagiarism

Table 3: Outline of Grades at AST

7 Other Course Policy

Late work will not be accepted, except in genuinely extenuating circumstances. Students must submit something before the deadline if they wish to receive credit. Unless I state otherwise, written assignments are to be uploaded by 11:59 PM on the date indicated.

Essay submissions must be typewritten, double-spaced, and formatted as PDFs. They should be free from error. In this course they should follow SBL Style (see [2] in section 4, above). As a reminder, AST also upholds an Inclusive Language Policy.

Plagiarism, if **detected**, will result in failure of the course.

Students should request permission to record a class or lecture. If permission is granted, or if recordings are provided (as in the case of an online course), I stipulate that all recordings be for personal use only. They may not be shared or distributed.

If you have abilities or disabilities that require modifications to the assessment process or other aspects of this course, please advise the course instructor as soon as possible.

Finally, I encourage the conscientious use of laptops, tablets, and other technology in my classes. In classroom settings, realize that, as **cognitive psychologists have demonstrated**, "laptop multitasking hinders classroom learning for both users and nearby peers." Do your part to foster an environment of open dialogue by honouring the presence of your classmates. In online settings, consider both the physical environment in which you choose to work and the virtual environment that you help create through your participation in various forums. Let your engagement in this course be marked by rigour and charity alike.