

PACIFICA GRADUATE INSTITUTE

Mythological Studies Program
PhD III Fall 2007

Hebrew and Jewish Mythology. MS 702
Instructor: Dr. Christine Downing

Office Hours: By appointment

chris@orcasonline.com

COURSE SYLLABUS

A. Course Description

An examination of Hebrew and Jewish monotheisms from a mythological perspective. The focus will be on the emergence of monotheism in early Israel and on trying to understand the ways in which this mythic system differs from polytheistic traditions. We will study how this mythology develops and changes in relation to changing historical circumstances not only within the Biblical period but also ongoingly in the course of Jewish history.

Books to Purchase:

Some edition of the Bible that you would feel as comfortable marking as you do any other textbook. My own favorite is the Oxford Annotated New Revised Standard Version because of its excellent explanatory material. Since we will be focusing on the Hebrew Bible (aka Old Testament) another particularly relevant translation is *Tanakh: A New Translation of the Holy Scriptures* published by the Jewish Publication Society. However, as always, it will be useful to have a variety of translations at hand.

Miles, Jack. *God: A Biography*. New York: Vintage, 1996.

Downing, Christine. *The Luxury of Afterwards*. New York: iUniverse, 2004.

Downing, Christine. *Preludes: Essays on the Ludic Imagination*. New York: iUniverse, 2005. (We will be using several more of the essays from both books in the summer course, "Myths of the Self.")

Jung, C.G. *Answer to Job*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1973.

Course Objectives

1. To explore what is involved in approaching the biblical tradition from a mythological perspective.
2. To examine the tensions between monotheistic and polytheistic perspectives.
2. To be introduced (or-re-introduced) to some of the great stories of a tradition centrally formative of Western culture.
3. To explore how these myths are revised in response to changing cultural and political circumstances.
4. To look at biblical mythology not only in relation to its original contexts but also to its enduring meanings, particularly as these are made visible by adopting a depth psychological perspective.

B. Class Schedule and Readings

Session 1:

BEGINNINGS:

LOOKING AT THE BIBLICAL TRADITION AS A MYTHOLOGY

GENESIS: THE BIBLE'S OWN VERSION OF THE BEGINNING

REQUIRED READING:

Read all of the first book of the Hebrew Bible, Genesis 1-50.

Miles, Jack. *God: A Biography*. New York: Vintage, 1996. 3-95.

Downing, Christine. *The Luxury of Afterwards*. New York: iUniverse, 2004, chs. 3, 4, 6.

Downing, Christine. *Preludes: Essays on the Ludic Imagination*. New York: iUniverse, 2005, chs 5, 9, 23.

Digital Course Reserve Reader:

Auerbach, Erich. "The Scar of Odysseus," *Mimesis*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953, 3-23

Buber, Martin. "Myth in Judaism." *On Judaism*. New York: Schocken, 1972. 95-107.

Buber, Martin. "Saga and History." *Moses: The Revelation and the Covenant*. New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1958. 13-19.

Downing, Christine, "The Myth of Biblical Monotheism," to be included in a volume of essays by Myth Program faculty edited by Slattery and Slater.

Vernant, Jean-Pierre. "Foreword," Maurice Olender, *The Languages of Paradise: Aryans and Semites, A Match Made in Heaven*, New York: Other Press, 2002, x-xi.

BACKGROUND READING:

Alter, Robert. *The Art of Biblical Narrative*. New York: Basic Books, 1981.

Alter, Robert. *Genesis: Translation and Commentary*. New York: Norton, 1996.

Fishbane, Michael. *Biblical Myth And Rabbinic Mythmaking*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003

Ginzberg, Louis. *The Legends of the Jews*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1961

Graves, Robert, and Raphael Patai. *Hebrew Myths: The Book of Genesis*. New York: Anchor Books, 1989.

Kugel, James L. *The Bible As It Was*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997.

Smith, Mark S. *The Early History of God: Yahweh & the Other Deities in Ancient Israel*, New York: Harper & Row, 1990

Teubal, Savina. *Sarah the Priestess*. Athens, Ohio: Swallow Press, 1984.

Thompson, Thomas L. *The Mythic Past: Biblical Archaeology and the Myth of Israel*. New York: Basic Books, 1999.

Session 2:

THE MYTHIC HISTORY

REQUIRED READING:

From the Bible read: Exodus 1-15, 19-24, 32-34, Judges 19-21, Ruth, I and II Samuel,

Miles, Jack. *God: A Biography*. New York: Vintage, 1996, 96-194, 339-343, 397-408.

Downing, Christine. *The Luxury of Afterwards*. New York: iUniverse, 2004, ch. 2.

Digital Course Reserve Reader:

Freud, Sigmund. "The Moses of Michelangelo." *Collected Papers*. London: The Hogarth P, 1948. 257-287.

BACKGROUND READING:

Alter, Robert. *The David Story*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1999.

Assmann, Jan. *Moses the Egyptian: The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism*.
Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997.

Bal, Mieke. *Death and Dissymmetry: The Politics of Coherence in the Book of
Judges*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988.

Finkelstein, Israel and Neil Asher Silberman. *The Bible Unearthed*. New York: Free
Press, 2001.

Freud, Sigmund. *Moses and Monotheism*. New York: Knopf, 1939

Friedman, Richard Elliot. *The Hidden Book of the Bible*. San Francisco:
HarperSanFrancisco, 1998.

Gottlieb, Mel. "King David's Journey Towards Wholeness: An Archetypal Study."
Diss. Pacifica Graduate Institute, 2000.

Trible, Phyllis, *Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narrative*.
Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984.

Session 3:
PROPHECY AND WISDOM

REQUIRED READING:
From the Bible read: Amos, Hosea, Isaiah 1-11, 40- 55, Jeremiah 4-25, Job.

Jung, C.G. *Answer to Job*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1973

BACKGROUND READING:

Heschel, A. J. *The Prophets*. New York: Harper & Row, 1969.

C. Course Requirements:

A well-written 10-15 page paper relating to a theme relevant to the focus of
the course. You may discuss your proposed topic with the instructor on
campus or by e-mail (chris@orcasonline.com.)

Please include the course and group number on the paper *and* on the outside
of the envelope (MS 702 PhD EIII/GIII).

- **E student papers (or Incomplete Forms) must be postmarked on or before
January 3, 2008**
- **G student papers (or Incomplete Forms) must be postmarked on or before
January 10, 2008**

Mail to:
Christine Downing
11 Discovery Way
Eastsound WA 98245

Incompletes:

Students are allowed four Incompletes per academic year. Should you choose to take an Incomplete in this class, the completed paper would need to be postmarked by March 8, 2008 for E students and March 15, 2008 for G students. When you complete the paper send it directly to the faculty *and include a Grade Change Form*. All assignments are due on the dates specified. No credit will be given for late papers.

Mail Incompletes to:

Christine Downing
11 Discovery Way,
Eastsound, WA 98245