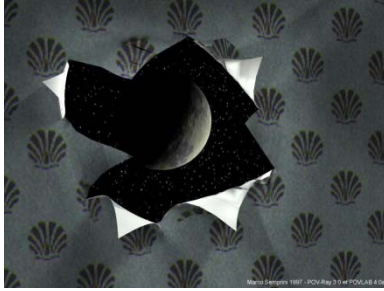


Religion and Literature: Biblical Poetry



RLST 3460/ENGL2440

M/W, 2:45PM

Classroom: CC 5

Office: CC 9; 974 1328

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Office Hours: MWF: 11; T/Th: 10 & by appointment

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I. Course Description

This is a poetry class, an ancient poetry class, an ancient Hebrew/Jewish poetry class about passion. The ancient poetic passions that we will explore are found in four classic Hebrew scrolls of Bible: *Psalms*, *Lamentations*, *Job*, and *Song of Songs*, all of which appeal to deeply human emotions. In this class we will read and discuss these classic poems carefully, listening to the workings of Hebrew poetry, noting their literary setting, and, hopefully, enjoying and wondering.

II. Specific Objectives

1. Learn basic content of the four poetry collections.
2. Gain familiarity with their ancient world environment.
3. Explore the poetic forms and expression of piety, sensuality, and loss.
4. Create, satisfy, and perpetuate **curiosity** for poetic learning.

Only you can prevent forest fires and only you can make this class valuable.

III. Our Poetic Friends' offerings.

1. Bowley, James E. *Introduction to Hebrew Bible: A Guided Tour of Israel's Sacred Library*. Prentice Hall, 2007.
2. Bloch, Ariel and Chana, *The Song of Songs*. University of California, 1995.
3. Walsh, Carey, *Exquisite Desire*. Fortress, 2000.
4. Linafelt, Tod, *Surviving Lamentations: Catastrophe, Lament and Protest in the Afterlife of a Biblical Book*. University of Chicago Press, 2004.
5. Scheindlin, Raymond, *The Book of Job* Norton, 1998.
5. Alter, Robert, *The Book of Psalms* Norton, 2009.

IV. Here are the multiple ways we will engage our poetic studies:

Learning Basic Information

Our final exam will consist of questions about "the basics" of our four ancient poetry collections. Students will have a great deal of input into the final exam.

Reading Engagements

For each of our four primary poetic texts and our secondary texts, students will write a total of 6 reflection paper. The questions will be distributed at least one week in advance.

Poetry and Fun Together

Poetry is often intensely personal and sometimes communal. We will work on creative expressions of our own. Each Wednesday students may bring in any relevant recording of music. . . .

Personal, Critical, Creative Thinking Expression; Thesis paper

And what about you? What are you most interested in pursuing more deeply regarding poetry and passions? Each student will write a 10-13 page paper regarding one of the four poetic books covered in class. Students, in consultation with the teacher, will choose the topics. Papers are intended to allow each student to follow her/his curiosity for the sake of research, analysis, and expression. Topics will be chosen by the fifth week of class.

IV. Course Policies

ACADEMIC HONOR CODE of MILLSAPS COLLEGE

Millsaps College is an academic community dedicated to the pursuit of scholarly inquiry and intellectual growth. The foundation of this community is a spirit of personal honesty and mutual trust. Through their Honor Code, the students of Millsaps College affirm their adherence to these basic ethical principles.

An Honor Code is not simply a set of rules and procedures governing students' academic conduct. It is an opportunity to put personal responsibility and integrity into action. When students agree to abide by an Honor Code, they liberate themselves to pursue their academic goals in an atmosphere of mutual confidence and respect.

The success of the Code depends on the support of each member of the community. Students and faculty alike commit themselves in their work to the principles of academic honesty. When they become aware of infractions, both students and faculty are obligated to report them to the Honor Council, which is responsible for enforcement.

The pledge signed by all students upon entering the College is as follows:

As a Millsaps College student, I hereby affirm that I understand the Honor Code and am aware of its implications and of my responsibility to the Code. In the interests of expanding the atmosphere of respect and trust in the College, I promise to uphold the Honor Code and I will not tolerate dishonest behavior in myself or in others.

Each examination, quiz, or other assignment that is to be graded will carry the written pledge: **"I hereby certify that I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid on this assignment. (Signature)"** The abbreviation "Pledged" followed by the student's signature has the same meaning and may be acceptable on assignments other than final examinations.

It is the responsibility of students and faculty to report offenses to the Honor Code Council in the form of a written report. This account must be signed, the accusation explained in as much detail as possible, and submitted to the Dean of the College.

2. All of us (students and teacher) are expected to attend class in a prepared manner; this is crucial for those desiring to make the most of their personal investments. Experience has shown that there are direct relationships between attendance and learning and final grade. Absences of 4 or more will merit a final grade of no higher than a C. Perfect attendance is seriously smiled upon ☺ and will result in 10 points being added to one's final exam. Persons are always responsible for material missed during absence.

3. Exam and assignments must be submitted at the scheduled time, except in cases of personal emergency. In such cases, appropriate documentation will be required. There will be no make-ups, except by special permission, in which case it must be completed within 1 week. Late papers will be discounted by one grading increment (e.g. B+ to B) per day.

4. Written assignments must be neatly typed and well organized and conform to appropriate academic standards.

5. Students with special needs because of a learning disability or other kind of disability are encouraged to discuss your needs for this class with me at your earliest convenience.

6. Students are responsible for knowing the syllabus, for reading emails about class, and maintaining communication with the teacher.

7. At times the complexities and exigencies of life come to bear even on carefully designed course policies and otherwise idyllic classrooms. In other words, shit happens. Whenever you have a personal "issue" or question or difficulty, you are welcome to talk to me. I have never bitten anyone. If you have any questions about this course, assignments, policies, grading etc. or about your ability to complete the tasks, please come talk to me. I have never bitten anyone (no matter what my sister says). I can help you only if I am informed. For example, if you do not understand an assignment or question, ask as soon as possible; do not wait until it is due to report that you didn't understand.

V. Outline and Assignments (Subject to revision)

Assignments are listed below in the boxes. EACH PAPER SHOULD INCLUDE AT THE TOP, YOUR NAME, DATE, and NAME OF ASSIGNMENT. NO TITLE PAGES OR COVER SHEETS

Week 1 11 Jan. M: Introduction
W:

Tehelim: Psalms

Week 2 18 Jan. M: For the love of poetry
W: READ Bowley, on Hebrew Poetry and Psalms

Week 3 25 Jan. M:
W:

Week 4 1 Feb. M:
W:

In Class Psalm Group Project; 2 people, 2 psalms of your choosing 4-6 pages

1. Diagram poetic parallel structures and larger structures
2. Note content sections and map progress of the content, imagination, motifs
Watch for interplay between content and structure
3. Consider “big ideas” behind themes
Be specific and descriptive; not simplistic about ideas
Be open to various possibilities; Pss may not conform to previous notions!

Eikha: Lamentations

Week 5 8 Feb. M:
W: READ Bowley on Eikha

Week 6 15 Feb. M:
W:

#1 (1) In 1/2-1 page articulate your emotional/intellectual/religious response to this poetry. (2) Choose chapter 1,2, or 4 and in 2-3 pages analyze the poem’s poetic design, noting parallels, large structure, movement, person, voice, motifs.
. . .

Week 7 22 Feb. M:
W:

#2 Linafelt report due, Intro, 1, 2, 7 What is the value of literature for survivors? How should non-survivors attempt to appreciate it?

2010: (1) In 1-1.5 pages articulate your emotional/intellectual/religious response to this poetry, referring directly to the poems.
(2) Read Linafelt, Intro, ch. 1, 2, 7 In 1-2 pages summarize Linafelt’s arguments. In 1-2 pages respond, react, critique analyze as you see fit.

Eyyov: Job

Week 8 1 Mar. M:
W: READ Bowley on Eyyov

Week 9 8 Mar. M:
W:

In Class Screen Play. Reports on the orality . . .

😊😊😊😊😊😊😊😊😊😊 **SPRING BREAK** 😊😊😊😊😊😊😊😊😊😊

Week 10 22 Mar. M:
W:

Shir HaShirim: Song of Songs

Week 11 29 Mar. M:
W:

Week 12 5 Ap. M:
W: Bloch/Song of Songs report due

#3 Read all of Bloch. In 5-6 pages (1) analyze one poem’s poetic design, (report what of Bloch’s work most helpful for your analysis), (2) reflect on the meaning/worth/value of this singular erotic scroll in ancient Israelite and/or modern culture.

Week 13 12 Ap. M:
W:

#4 In brief paragraphs **summarize** the main points of Walsh's chapters 1-8 (solid 2-3 pages). **Explain** what (and why) you found most compelling in her work and what you found least compelling (solid 2-3 pages).

Week 14 19 Ap. M:

W: ATTENDANCE REQUIRED

Friday 23 April, 5.00 PM Final Paper due

Exam

VI. Grading

Learning Basic Information Exam	20
4 Writing assignments	30
2 In Class Projects	20
Personal, Critical, Creative Paper	30

Letter grades are assigned to increments of 10 on a scale of 100.

A 94-100	A- 91-93	B+ 88-90	B 84-87	B- 81-83
C+ 78-80	C 74-77	C- 71-73	D+ 68-70	D 61-67

A grade of A means you have produced a paper exemplary in almost every way. You have presented your thesis coherently, you have organized your thoughts effectively, and you have supported your interpretations meticulously. An A paper is also one that is excellent in style and voice or tone. And in an A paper, attention to form (spelling, punctuation, grammar, documentation) is as rigorous as it is to the content. Your work on that paper is superior.

A grade of B means you have gone beyond the minimum requirements of the assignment and have successfully balanced description with analysis. And you express yourself more clearly, meaningfully, and imaginatively than in a C paper. Your work on that paper is good.

A grade of C means you have successfully completed the minimum requirements of an assignment. Your paper has no major problems of any kind, but there is still much for you to do to better your grade. Your work on that paper is average.

A grade of D means your work is seriously deficient in some way and is thus evaluated as below average.

A grade of F means your work is implausible.