

**BABYLON AND ITS LEGACY: ROMANCE, RELIGION, AND MYSTERY IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST**  
HIS 380-01/The Near and Middle East  
UNCG – Spring 2012  
Syllabus

**COURSE INFORMATION**

Instructor: Stephanie Reed  
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**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

2500 years ago the ancient Mesopotamian city of Babylon fell to Cyrus the Great of Persia, never to regain its former glory. Babylon would soon be lost in the sands of time, yet its name remained evocative, conjuring tales about the Tower of Babel, the Hanging Gardens, Daniel in the Lion's Den, and the madness of Nebuchadnezzar and his "city of sin"; stories which still resonate in the Western world today. Biblical and Greek descriptions of Babylon have also inspired some of the world's great art. But how much do we really know about the original city? What is the reality behind these myths, traditions, and images?

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century CE, archaeological discoveries finally began to shed light on the true wonders of Babylon and its people. This course will trace the history of the city in the context of the Ancient Near East, its religious life and culture, and its magnificent art and architecture. Special interests will include the actual temple tower that inspired the biblical Tower of Babel, Nebuchadnezzar's conquest of Jerusalem and the Babylonian exile of the Hebrews, the Persian conquest and emergence of monotheism in the region, and how Babylon's legacy lives on in modern astronomy, astrology, medicine, and technology. We will also consider the recent troubled history of Babylon and its archaeological remains near modern Baghdad.

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES:**

- 1) To understand the literary, artistic, and technological contributions of Babylon to modern Western Civilization.
- 2) To know the origins and basic development pattern of Babylonian civilization from urbanization to empire.
- 3) To understand the historical and socio-religious circumstances, both ancient and modern, that created the Babylonian mystique.
- 4) To understand the basic geography of ancient Mesopotamia and the Babylonian cultural sphere.
- 5) To be able to communicate freely and respectfully in online discussions.
- 6) To be able to critically discuss historical sources and scholarly theories concerning Babylonian history.
- 7) To better understand Middle Eastern culture and the current challenges of the region.

**READINGS:**

**REQUIRED TEXTS:**

*Babylon* by Irving L. Finkel and M.J. Seymour. Michigan: Oxford University Press, 2009.

ISBN: [0195385403](#), [9780195385403](#). Currently out of print. Readings from this volume will be made available under Course Documents or on eReserve over the course of the term in case you are unable to find a used copy online. The book is also available at the library circulation desk for 2hr Reserve.)

*The Babylonians: An Introduction* by Gwendolyn Leick. London and New York: Routledge, 2003. (Unit 1 readings under Course Documents- see unit folder.) Available at the campus bookstore next week.

Although our biblical readings will not be extensive, when assigned I recommend using a version of the *New Oxford Annotated Bible* (NOAB). Any editions of the *New Oxford Annotated Bible with Apocrypha* (collegiate version), and or *New Revised Standard Version* (NRSV) would be fine. “Living Bibles” are strongly discouraged since they paraphrase the original text. The beauty of the NOAB is that it features in-depth academic research and commentaries from non-denominational perspectives.

RESEARCH AND RECOMMENDED READING TEXTS: See bibliography on final page

### **CLASS FORMAT AND ACTIVITIES:**

Course instruction and evaluation will be based on weekly assignments (such as a quiz or a Discussion Board writing prompt), a final exam, and one peer-reviewed essay project (4-5 pgs). The essay will analyze a (pre-approved) modern book, play, or artwork based on historical Babylon (Details TBA). Unit readings and weekly assignments will be geared toward an interdisciplinary approach to our subject matter and scholarly debates in the field (see Calendar below).

Weekly assignments along with any additional readings will be announced by 9 AM WEDNESDAY of each week and will be due the following MONDAY BY 11:59 PM. You will usually be directed to either the Discussion Board or Quizzes link to submit your assignment. \*If the submission time on your assignment reads one day later than the due date it will not be graded, so leave plenty of time for any potential Internet quirks, etc. Students are responsible for keeping up with all assignments, any additional readings, and course announcements.

For Discussion Board assignments, you will be asked to post 1-2 paragraph responses to the designated readings (I will provide the prompts or discussion questions). Keep your posts short and to the point — succinct but weighty. DO NOT SUMMARIZE THE READING in your posts; relay your reaction to or opinion of the reading(s) for that unit and INCLUDE SPECIFIC EXAMPLES, REFERENCES, and ILLUSTRATIONS from the readings in your posts. When there is more than one discussion prompt or question, respond to each in separate paragraphs. Always remember that while you are free to state your opinions on the Discussion Board, you should always be respectful and tolerant of the opinions and views of others as well.

### **A GREAT TIME-MANAGEMENT TIP:**

Read texts for general themes and the main examples of these themes, writing them down as you go. This will help tremendously on timed quizzes and keep you from having to re-read texts before exams. If assigned an article, find and jot down the author’s main idea (thesis) and key supporting evidence.

### **QUESTIONS/COMMUNICATIONS:**

Any course material questions should be directed to the DISCUSSION BOARD under “QUESTIONS FOR THE PROFESSOR/CLASSMATES.” You have the option of posting your questions anonymously and subscribing to the forum so that you will know when new questions and responses have been posted. I will reply to questions as promptly as possible, but I encourage you to respond to a classmate’s question if you are confident of the answer. Questions and responses must be clear, concise, and IN COMPLETE SENTENCES. \*Excellent responses are eligible for up to 5 points of EXTRA CREDIT over the course of the term. This could bump your final score up a letter grade!

Please send personal emails to the instructor ONLY if you have a grade concern to discuss or would like to set up an appointment. I will respond to your questions and emails as quickly as possible M-F during normal “business

hours,” or 8am-6pm. I will try but cannot guarantee a prompt response if I receive your mail after 6pm weekdays or on weekends/holidays.

Students with disabilities should contact me during the first week of class regarding any special needs.

**GRADING:** (Grades can be checked over the course of the semester in Blackboard’s Grade Center).

Weekly assignments (Discussions and Quizzes) 60%

Peer-Reviewed Essay Project, 4-5 pgs. 15% (Essay tentatively due Fri. Mar. 16<sup>th</sup>; Peer review Fri. Mar. 23<sup>rd</sup>)

Final Exam 25% (Due by Monday, April 30<sup>th</sup>)

\*NO LATE ASSIGNMENTS OR ESSAYS WILL BE ACCEPTED. I’ve noticed that grandmothers often become very ill around due dates, and although a truly ill grandparent is no laughing matter, please do not email me to make an exception to the rule. Your two lowest weekly assignment grades will be dropped to accommodate any unforeseen personal situations. You may take a make-up exam if you notify me in advance of a schedule conflict. All make-up exams will be in essay format.

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND PLAGIARISM:**

Plagiarism is “representing the words of another as one's own in any academic exercise.” In other words, it’s *bad*, and this instructor takes it very seriously. All writing assignments/reading summaries must be **IN YOUR OWN WORDS** unless you are giving a specific quote, and the source of the quote (author, title, and page number) must be cited. (For more detailed information, visit <http://academicintegrity.uncg.edu/complete>). Suspected cases of plagiarism, or any other kind of academic dishonesty, will be handled according to the Academic Integrity policy of the university.

**SPRING 2010 CALENDAR**

Note: Use this calendar for assignment due dates, and the one below for detailed unit readings. Remember that these are your primary readings for each week, but supplementary articles may be required with your weekly assignments. (Posted each Wednesday by 9am)

<b>WEEK (MONDAY TO SUNDAY)</b>	<b>UNIT READINGS AND ASSIGNMENT DATES (DUE BY 11:59 PM)</b>
1: Jan. 9-15	Write your bios, begin reading Unit 1
2: Jan. 16-22 Campus holiday: Mon. Jan. 16	Unit 1 assignment and bio due Tues., Jan. 17
3: Jan. 23-29	Unit 2 due Mon. Jan. 23
4: Jan. 30-Feb. 5	Unit 3 due Mon. Jan. 30
5: Feb. 6-12	Unit 4 due Mon. Feb. 6
6: Feb. 13-19	Unit 5 due Mon. Feb. 13
7: Feb. 20-26	Unit 6 due Mon. Feb 20
8: Feb. 27-March 4 Last day to drop March 2	Unit 7 due Mon. Feb. 27 Essay projects/peer review sheets distributed
9: ~Spring Break~ Sat. March 3 to Sun. March 11	
10: March 12-18	Unit 8 due Mon. March 12 Essays due Fri. Mar. 16
11: March 19-25	Unit 10 (no Unit 9) due Mon. March. 19 Peer Reviews due Fri. Mar. 23
12: March 26-April 1	Unit 11 due Mon. March 26

13: April 2-8 Campus holiday: Fri. April 6	Unit 12 due Mon. April 2
14: April 9-15	Unit 13 due Mon. April 9
15: April 16-22	Unit 14 due Mon. April 16
16: April 23-29 Last day of class: Tues. April 24 Reading Day: Wed. April 25	Unit 15 Due Mon. April 23
Final Exam: By Mon. April 30th	

Text Abbreviations: F&S (Finkel and Seymour); Leick (The Babylonians); BB (Blackboard link)

WEEK	TOPICS AND UNIT READINGS
1	1: Introduction/Disappearance and Rediscovery F&S pp. 10-32 Leick pp. 1-22
2	2: Mesopotamian Geography and History F&S- Review map on p. 14-15 carefully Leick pp. 23-69
3	3: The City of Babylon L&S pp. 34-65 “The Site of Babylon” by J. Oates (BB)
4	4: The Neo-Babylonian Period and its Kings L&S pp. 66-73 “Interrelations between Assyria and Babylonia” by H. Galter (BB) “Last Empires” by M. Roaf (BB)
5	5: Life and Letters L&S pp. 74-100 Leick pp. 70-99 “Babylonian Intellectual Life” by P. Beaulieu
6	6: Material Culture and Philosophy Leick pp. 129-155 (Additional readings TBA)
7	7: History and Legend L&S pp. 102-123 “The Hanging Gardens” by S. Dalley (BB) <i>The Histories</i> by Herodotus (pp. TBA)
8	8: Babylonian Religion and the Tower of Babel L&S pp. 124-132 Leick pp. 100-128
9	Spring Break
10	10: The Babylonian Captivity/Jewish Exile in Artistic and Historical Memory L&S pp. 142-160 Old Testament/Hebrew Bible: The Books of Daniel, 2 Kings “Return and Exile” by J. Purvis (BB)
11	11: Belshazzar’s Feast and Fall of the Neo-Babylonian Dynasty L&S pp. 161-178 The “Nabonidus Chronicle”; “Nabonidus and the Babylonian Priesthood” by A. Khurt (BB) Begin reading “Judaism in the Persian Period” by L. Schiffman (Due by Unit 12) (BB)
12	12: Cyrus the Great and the Achaemenid Persian Empire Isaiah 40-45, 2 Chronicles and Ezra/Nehemiah (BB) “Last Empires” by M. Roaf (BB)

	“Zoroastrianism” by E. Yamauchi “From Babylon to Persia” by A. Kuhrt (BB) Suggested: “The Religion of Cyrus the Great” by A. Khurt and/or “Achaemenid Images of Royalty and Empire” (BB)
13	13: Babylon in the Book of Revelation L&S pp. 179-189 (Additional readings TBA)
14	14: The Legacy of Babylon (Writing, Medicine Astronomy, Mathematics, Art and Culture) L&S 190-212 “Mathematics, Metrology, and Professional Numeracy” by E. Robson
15	15: The Site of Babylon Today (Saddam Hussein’s Babylon, modern reconstructions and looting) L&S pp. 213-220 (Additional readings TBA)
16	Review for Final Exam

**REFERENCE OR RESEARCH GUIDE:**

Many of the following texts are available in Jackson Library, and some are on library reserve specifically for our course. You can look up the reserve list online under course reserves or ask at the circulation desk. This list is far from exhaustive; ask me for specific research interests.

For any books unavailable in the UNCG catalog you can request a copy through Interlibrary Loan. Ph: 336-334-5849. You can also simply go to Jackson Library's home page <http://library.uncg.edu> and click on "ILL Request Forms." Login to the ILL software (ILLiad) with your Novel login/password. Click on either *Request a journal article*, *Request a loan*, or *Request a book chapter* and follow the instructions filling out the form.

**GENERAL REFERENCE:**

Black, Jeremy and Anthony Green. 1992. *Gods, Demons, and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia* The *Cambridge Ancient History* series. 1971-75. (See library catalog- available on shelf and conveniently as eBooks.

Freedman, David Noel et al. 1992. *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*. (vols. 1-6). \*Most comprehensive treatment of biblical subjects and scholarship.

Roaf, Michael. 1990. *Cultural Atlas of Ancient Mesopotamia and the Ancient Near East*

Sasson, Jack. 1995. *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East* (CANE) (vols. 1-4). \*\*“Encyclopedia” of ANE topics organized by theme

Van de Mieroop, Marc. 2007 (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). *A History of the Ancient Near East, ca. 3000-323 BC* (Bookstore) \*See Appendix for king lists/timelines

**BABYLON AND SUMER (The Sumerians are the earliest inhabitants of what later became Babylonia):**

Crawford, Harriet. 2004. *Sumer and the Sumerians*

Herodotus. 1996. *The Histories*. Edited by David Grene (and varied others). \*Most thorough account of the Persian/Greek wars and the events leading up to it. Herodotus (lived 5th c. BCE) is considered the “father of history” and is a key source of information (and misinformation) about the Ancient Near East and Babylonia.

Kramer, Samuel Noah. 1971. *The Sumerians: Their History, Culture, and Character*.

Leick, Gwendolyn, ed. 2007. *The Babylonian World*. \*Series of scholarly articles according to topic.

Saggs, H. W. F. 2000. *Babylonians*

Oates, Joan. 1996. *Babylon*

**ART AND ARCHAEOLOGY OF ANCIENT MESOPOTAMIA AND PERSIA:**

Aruz, Joan, ed. 2003. *Art of the First Cities: The Third Millennium BC from the Mediterranean to the Indus*  
Barnett, Richard D. \*Numerous catalogs of Assyrian palace sculpture  
Cohen and Kangas. 2001. *Assyrian Reliefs from the Palace of Ashurnasirpal II: A Cultural Biography*  
Frankfort, Henri. 1996. *The Art and Architecture of the Ancient Orient*  
Oates, Joan and David. 2001. *Nimrud: An Imperial City Revealed*  
Porada, Edith. 1969. *The Art of Ancient Iran*  
Reade, Julian. 1983. *Assyrian Sculpture*  
Schmidt, Erich. 1953-1970. *Persepolis*. (vols. I-III) \*Most complete archaeological report of the site and its monuments  
Strommenger, Eva. 1962. *5000 Years of Mesopotamian Art*  
Winter, Irene. \*Numerous articles on Assyrian art and royal ideology

#### **RELIGION/WRITING/NEAR EASTERN LIFE AND THOUGHT:**

Bottero, Jean. 1992. *Mesopotamia: Writing, Reasoning, and the Gods*  
Oppenheim, Leo. 1977. *Ancient Mesopotamia: Portrait of a Dead Civilization*  
Snell, Daniel. 2011. *Religions of the Ancient Near East*  
Pritchard, James B. 1971. *The Ancient Near East: An Anthology of Texts and Pictures*. \*Contains an excellent ANE map and includes translations of *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, *The Code of Hammurabi*  
Van de Mieroop, Marc. 2003. *Cuneiform Texts and the Writing of History*

#### **ACHAEMENID PERSIAN AND BIBLICAL HISTORY:**

Allen, Lindsay. 2007. *The Persian Empire*  
Briant, Pierre. 2002 (English translation). *From Cyrus to Alexander: A History of the Persian Empire*. \*Most comprehensive account of Achaemenid history and historiography. Includes full list of ancient sources.  
Wiesehofer, Josef. 2001. *Ancient Persia: From 550 BC to 650 AD*  
Yamauchi, Edwin. 1996. *Persia and the Bible*. \*Excellent encyclopedia-style history for quick reference.

#### **FOR FOODIES:**

Bottero, Jean. 2004. *The Oldest Cuisine in the World: Cooking in Mesopotamia*