

HBRJD-GA 3311—Topics in the Bible: The Priestly Narrative Spring 2019

Thursday 2:00–4:45
KJCC 109

Prof. Liane Feldman
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Pronouns: she/her

Office Hours by appointment (KJCC 107)

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

This seminar is designed as an introduction to the pentateuchal Priestly Narrative, with a specific focus on the question of the relationship between its narrative and ritual components. To that end, a significant focus of the course will be an engagement with different theoretical approaches, including (but not limited to) narratology, ritual theory, and the myth/ritual school of thought. This course has three main objectives:

- ⇒ to introduce students to the Priestly Narrative, its distinct worldview, and the place of these materials in the history of biblical scholarship
- ⇒ to practice reading extended sections of biblical Hebrew prose, with an eye to both structure and content, and
- ⇒ to engage with multiple different theoretical intertexts that have relevance not only for the Priestly Narrative, but also for other biblical and ancient Near Eastern literature.

The ritual materials in the Priestly Narrative have played a significant role in the reconstruction of ancient Israelite religion. One of the overarching questions this seminar seeks to address is what role ritual writing, and narrativized ritual materials more broadly, can and should have in the construction of histories.

A note about the term “Priestly Narrative” and issues of composition and redaction:

While scholars continue to disagree about most aspects of pentateuchal studies, the existence of a distinct stratum of priestly materials is one of the few areas of general agreement. The exact nature of the priestly materials and their relationship to other biblical texts remain points of debate. One of the biggest debates is whether the priestly writings should be seen as an independent source or as a redactional layer. While this course is not primarily focused on issues of composition and redaction, these topics will inevitably arise, and we will be reading scholars who have diverse and, at times, contradictory opinions about the development, dating, and ideology of the priestly writings.

For the purposes of this course, I have created a rough draft of what is, from my methodological perspective, a nearly full and independent Priestly Narrative. This is by no means a text that all scholars would agree to, but represents a maximalist approach to what can be attributed to a series of “priestly” authors and editors in Genesis through Joshua. The Priestly Narrative that I have developed does not distinguish between different strata, but rather presents the final form of an independent priestly source prior to its combination with other penta/hexateuchal materials.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

Participation (40%)

Students are expected to complete all assigned readings for each class and be ready to participate in an active discussion about them. Readings for this course are broken down into three categories: primary text, biblical studies, and theoretical intertexts. Class will be divided into two unequal parts. The first hour of each class meeting will be spent as a student-led, panel-style discussion of the theoretical intertexts, and the last hour and forty-five minutes will be a professor-led seminar on the primary text and biblical studies readings.

Each week, one student will be responsible for chairing the panel discussion of the theoretical intertexts.

- That student will need to prepare *brief* introductory remarks (5–10 minutes at most), be prepared with questions to pose to the panel, and prompt the discussion to keep it going.
- All students are expected to participate in the discussion.
- Guidelines for preparing for and leading discussions are available on the Classes website under the “resources” section.

Note: Some of the secondary readings are not in English. PhD students are required to complete these readings; MA and undergraduate students are not, unless they happen to know the language. All students are required to complete the primary readings from the Priestly Narrative.

Book Review (10%)

In lieu of class during the third week of the semester, students will select a book from the list below, read it and write a short review (1000–1500 words). If you are unfamiliar with how to write a book review, read [this](#), [this](#), and [this](#) before you get started.

Book reviews are due on Friday, Feb. 15th at 5:00pm. Please submit them via the NYU Classes website.

Books Eligible for Review

- Balberg, Mira. *Blood for Thought: The Reinvention of Sacrifice in Early Rabbinic Literature*. Oakland: The University of California Press, 2017.
- Bartor, Assnat. *Reading Law as Narrative: A Case Study in the Casuistic Laws of the Pentateuch*. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2010.
- Bell, Catherine. *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992/2009.
- Bibb, Bryan B. *Ritual Words and Narrative Worlds in the Book of Leviticus*. Bloomsbury: T&T Clark, 2009.
- Boorer, Suzanne. *The Vision of the Priestly Narrative: Its Genre and Hermeneutics of Time*. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2016.
- Chavel, Simeon. *Oracular Law and Priestly Historiography in the Torah*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014.
- Douglas, Mary. *Leviticus as Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Final Research Presentation (40%)

Students are expected to pursue a research project related to the Priestly Narrative that results in a 20-minute presentation (approximately 3000–3500 words depending on how quickly you speak), to be given at the final meeting of the course. This presentation should include either a handout or slides to help the audience follow your talk.

- ⇒ **Due March 8:** An abstract (250–300 words) along with the title of your presentation should be submitted via NYU Classes by 5pm.
- ⇒ **Week of March 11–15:** Each student must meet with me to discuss their topic with me in person.
- ⇒ **Due April 30:** First drafts of your papers should be submitted to NYU Classes by 5pm. Comments will be returned to you by May 3.
- ⇒ **Week of May 13:** Final presentation of your paper at the student conference. A final copy of your paper should be submitted to the NYU Classes website before the start of the conference.

Active Participation in Course Conference (10%)

All students are expected to attend and participate in the end of the semester course conference. Active participation includes each student asking at least one question of each presenter.

REQUIRED TEXTS

- 1) Bal, Mieke. *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative, third edition*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009. [the 4th edition is also acceptable]
- 2) Douglas, Mary. [*Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*](#). New York: Taylor and Francis (Routledge), 2003.
- 3) Knohl, Israel. *The Sanctuary of Silence: The Priestly Torah and the Holiness School*. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2007.

The rest of the secondary readings will be available as a PDF on the course website.

The text of the Priestly Narrative itself will also be made available in printed form.

OTHER NOTES AND POLICIES

Attendance Policy

You are expected to attend each seminar session. One unexcused absence will be permitted.

Two unexcused absences will result in the lowering of your course grade by half a letter grade (A to A-; A- to B+, etc.).

Three unexcused absences will result in the lowering of your course grade by a full letter (A to B, B to C, etc.).

More than 3 unexcused absences will result in failure of the course.

Academic Integrity

Students are expected to adhere to the guidelines for academic honesty found on the university website. Plagiarism or cheating of any kind will be reported to the proper authorities including, but not

limited to, the department chair and the student's advisor. It will result in a grade of F on the assignment and, depending on the severity of the offense, failure of the entire course. NYU's academic integrity policy can be found [here](https://www.nyu.edu/about/policies-guidelines-compliance/policies-and-guidelines/academic-integrity-for-students-at-nyu.html). (<https://www.nyu.edu/about/policies-guidelines-compliance/policies-and-guidelines/academic-integrity-for-students-at-nyu.html>)

Learning Disability or Difference

If you are a student with a documented disability at NYU, I will be happy to work with you to adapt the course material and assignments to your needs. Please provide me with documentation of your learning needs as soon as possible because accommodations cannot be provided retroactively. If you have any questions about documentation, please contact the [Henry and Lucy Moses Center for Students with Disabilities](#) online or at (212)-998-4980.

Forms of Address

You are welcome to share your preferred name and/or pronoun at any point in the semester. We will address you respectfully in accordance with your preference.

COURSE SCHEDULE

WEEK 1

THU., JAN. 31, 2019

INTRODUCTION; WHAT IS P; OVERVIEW OF MYTH

Biblical Studies:

Baden, *Composition of the Pentateuch*, chs. 1, 5, conclusion (13–33; 169–192; 246–250).

Blum, “Issues and Problems in the Contemporary Debate Regarding the Priestly Writings,” (31–44).

Gaines, “The Priestly Source in Scholarship,” (257–287).

Theoretical Intertexts:

Lévi-Strauss, “The Structural Study of Myth” (428–444).

Burkert, “The Organization of Myth,” (1–34).

WEEK 2

THU., FEB. 7, 2019

HISTORIOGRAPHY AND NARRATIVE

Biblical Studies:

van der Toorn, “Making Books: Scribal Modes of Text Production,” (109–142).

Dobbs-Allsopp, “Rethinking Historical Criticism,” (235–271).

Theoretical Intertexts:

White, “The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality,” (5–27).

Huizinga, “A Definition of the Concept of History,” (1–10).

Bal, *Narratology, Part 1* “Text: Words and Other Signs,” (15–74).

WEEK 3

THU., FEB. 14, 2019

NO CLASS! (LIANE IS AT A CONFERENCE)

Book reviews on 2/15.

Upload your review to NYU Classes by 5pm on Friday, Feb 15.

WEEK 4

THU., FEB. 21, 2019

THE PRIESTLY PRIMEVAL HISTORY (PART 1)

GUEST SEMINAR LEADER: PROF. DAVID CARR

Reading Assignments TBD, will be sent to the class by 2/8/19.

WEEK 5

THU., FEB. 28, 2019

**THE PRIESTLY PRIMEVAL HISTORY (PART 2):
CREATION AND THE FLOOD (GEN 1–9*)**

Primary Text:

P in Gen 1–9 (part 1 of the Priestly Narrative document [PN1])

Biblical Studies:

Halpern, “The Assyrian Astronomy of Genesis 1 and the Birth of Milesian Philosophy,” (74–83).

Polak, “Poetic Style and Parallelism in the Creation Account (Genesis 1.1–2.3),” (2–31).

Theoretical Intertexts:

Bal, *Narratology, part 2* “Story: Aspects” (75–180).

Optional:

Darshan, “The Calendrical Framework of the Priestly Flood Story in Light of a New Akkadian Text from Ugarit (RS 94.2953),” (1–14).

Krüger, “Genesis 1:1–2:3 and the Development of the Pentateuch,” (125–138).

WEEK 6

THU., MAR. 7, 2019

“BE FRUITFUL AND MULTIPLY” (GEN 10–EXOD 2*)

Primary Text:

P in Gen 10–Exod 2 (PN 2)

Biblical Studies:

Fox, “The Sign of the Covenant: Circumcision in Light of the Priestly Aetiologies,” (557–596).

Theoretical Intertexts:

Bal, *Narratology, part 3* “Fabula: Elements” (181–224).

Brettler, *The Creation of History in Ancient Israel*, intro; chs. 1–2 (1–47).

Optional:

Baden, “From Joseph to Moses: The Narratives of Exodus 1–2,” (133–158).

Schmid, “Genesis and Exodus as Two Formerly Independent Traditions of Origins for Ancient Israel,” (187–208).

WEEK 7

THU., MAR 14, 2019

IN AND OUT OF EGYPT (EXOD 6–14*)

Primary Text:

P in Exod 6–14 (PN 3)

Biblical Studies:

Stackert, “Why does the Plague of Darkness Last for Three Days? Source Ascription and Literary Motif in Exodus 10:21–23, 27,” (657–676).

Schwartz, “The Pesah in P’s account of Exodus” (2012 SBL talk).

Theoretical Intertexts:

Balberg and Chavel, “The Polymorphous Pesah: Ritual Between Origins and Reenactment,” (292–343).

Eliade, “Myth and Reality,” (180–189).

Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, ch. 2 “Story: Events,” (43–94).

Optional:

Gesundheit, *Three Times a Year*, ch. 2 “The Pesah and the Unleavened Bread in Exod 12:1–28,” (44–95).

Zevit, “The Priestly Redaction and Interpretation of the Plague Narrative in Exodus,” (193–211).

WEEK 8

THU., MAR 21, 2019

NO CLASS — SPRING BREAK!

WEEK 9

THU., MAR 28, 2019

MOSES AND YAHWEH ON SINAI (EXOD 19–40:33A*)

Primary Text:

P in Exod 19–40:33a (PN 4)

Biblical Studies:

Haran, “The Priestly Image of the Tabernacle” (191–225)

Wright, “Ritual Theory, Ritual Texts, and the Priestly-Holiness Writings of the Pentateuch,” (195–216).

Theoretical Intertexts:

Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, ch. 3 “Story: Existents,” (95–144); excerpt of ch. 5 (219–222).

Ronen, “Narrative and Representation,” (274–286).

Optional:

George, *Israel’s Tabernacle as Social Space*.

Vater, “Narrative Patterns for the Study of Commissioned Speech in the Old Testament,” (195–216).

WEEK 10

THU., APR. 4, 2019

MOSES AND YAHWEH IN THE MISHKAN (EXOD 40:33B–LEV 7)

Primary Text:

P in Exod 40:33b–Lev 7 (PN 5)

- Biblical Studies:* **Nihan**, *From Priestly Torah to Pentateuch*, ch. 2 (69–110).
Watts, *Ritual and Rhetoric in Leviticus*, ch. 2 “The Rhetoric of Ritual Instruction,” (37–62).
- Theoretical Intertexts:* **Meshel**, “Toward a Grammar of Sacrifice: Hierarchic Patterns in the Israelite Sacrificial System,” (543–567).
Cover, “Nomos and Narrative” (4–69).
- Optional:* **Koch**, *Die Priesterschrift von Exodus 25 bis Leviticus 16*, ch 3 “Die Erscheinung der Herrlichkeit Jahwes und die Anweisung für die Kultriten Ex 40,34–Lv 7,” (45–66).
Milgrom, *Israel’s Sanctuary: The Priestly Picture of Dorian Gray*,” (390–399).

WEEK 11

THU., APR. 11, 2019

INAUGURATION OF THE MISHKAN (LEV 8–16)

- Primary Text:* Lev 8–16 (PN 6)
- Biblical Studies:* **Liss**, “Ritual Purity and the Construction of Identity: The Literary Function of the Purity Laws in the Book of Leviticus,” (329–354).
Klawans, “Rethinking Leviticus and Re-Reading Purity and Danger,” (89–102).
- Theoretical Intertexts:* **Douglas**, *Purity and Danger*
- Optional:* **Feldman**, “Ritual Sequence and Narrative Constraints in Lev 9:1–10:3,” (1–35).
Knohl and Na’eh, “Ordination and Atonement,” (17–44) [Hebrew].
Nihan, *From Priestly Torah to Pentateuch*, ch. 6 “Inner-biblical Exegesis in Leviticus 10 and Editorial Closure of the Book,” (576–607).

WEEK 12

THU., APR. 18, 2019

MAINTAINING THE MISHKAN, I (LEV 11–17)

- Primary Text:* Lev 17–27 (PN 7)
- Biblical Studies:* **Knohl**, *The Sanctuary of Silence*, selections TBD.
Elliger, “Heiligkeitsgesetz,” (2039–2040).
- Theoretical Intertexts:* **Grimes**, *The Craft of Ritual Studies*, ch. 3 “Reading, Writing, and Mediatizing Ritual,” (55–94).
Reinhart, “What to do with Ritual Texts: Islamic Fiqh Texts and the Study of Islamic Ritual,” (67–86).
Weeks, “Myth and Ritual: An Empirical Approach,” (92–111).
- Optional:* **Blum**, *Studien zur Komposition des Pentateuch*, “Reinheit und Heiligung (Lv 11–26),” (318–332).
Feldman, “Leviticus 17 and the So-Called Holiness Code,” (ch. 6 of dissertation; 221–295).

WEEK 13

THU., APR. 25, 2019

MAINTAINING THE MISHKAN, II (NUM 1–NUM 9)

Primary Text:

Num 1–Num 9 (PN 8)

Biblical Studies:

Milgrom, “Encroaching on the Sacred: Purity and Polity in Numbers 1–10,” (241–253).
Nihan, “The Priestly Laws of Numbers, the Holiness Legislation, and the Pentateuch,” (109–137).

Theoretical Intertexts:

Dworkin, “Law as Interpretation,” (179–200).
White, “Law as Language,” (415–445).
Fish, “Working on the Chain Gang: Interpretation in Law and Literature,” (201–216).

Optional:

Chavel, “Oracular Novellae and Biblical Historiography: Through the Lens of Law and Narrative,” (1–27).
Joosten, *People and Land in the Holiness Code*, chs. 1–2 (5–28).
Nasuti, “Identity, Identification, and Imitation: The Narrative Hermeneutics of Biblical Law,” (9–23).

WEEK 14

THU., MAY 2, 2019

FROM SINAI TO THE WILDERNESS (NUM 10–30*; EXOD 16)

Primary Text:

P in Num 10–30, Exod 16 (PN 9)

Biblical Studies:

Baden, “The Original Place of the Priestly Manna Story in Exodus 16” (491–504)
Feldman, “Manna and Korah” [article in progress]

Theoretical Intertexts:

Simon-Shoshan, “Narrativity and Textuality in the Study of Stories,” (228–237).
Kawashima, “Biblical Time and Epic Time: From Grammar to Narrative Technique,” (124–160).

Optional:

Kislev, “P as Source or Redaction: The Case of Numbers 25,” (387–399).
Nihan, “Israel’s Festival Calendars in Leviticus 23, Numbers 28–29 and the Formation of ‘Priestly’ Literature,” (177–231).

WEEK 15

THU., MAY 9, 2019

CONQUEST AND THE END OF P? (NUM 31–JOSH 22*)

GUEST SEMINAR LEADER: PROF. JESSIE DEGRADO

Primary Text:

P in Num 31–Josh 22 (PN 10)

Biblical Studies:

Blenkinsopp, “The Structure of P,” (275–292).

Römer and Brettler, “Deuteronomy 34 and the Case for a Persian Hexateuch,” (401–419).

Nihan, “The Current Discussion on P’s ending,” (20–30).

Guillame, “The Land in Joshua: The Conclusion of the Priestly Document,” (157–163).

Blum, “Pentateuch-Hexateuch-Enneateuch? Or: How Can One Recognize a Literary Work in the Hebrew Bible?” (43–71).

Optional:

Carr, “Scribal Processes of Coordination/Harmonization and the Formation of the First Hexateuch(s),” (63–83).

Goldstein, “Joshua 22:9–34: A Priestly Narrative from the Second Temple Period,” (43–81) [Hebrew].

von Rad, *Die Priesterschrift im Hexateuch: Literarisch Untersucht und Theologisch Gewertet*, (esp. 144–165).

FINALS WEEK

MAY 13–17, 2019

THE PRIESTLY NARRATIVE: A CONFERENCE!

Students will present their research in a 20-minute SBL-style talk, with 5 minutes for Q&A.