

SACRIFICE: FROM MOSES TO THE MODERN ERA

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1879 Hall, Room 243

Tuesdays 1:30-4:20

Course Description and Objectives

This course is an interdisciplinary introduction to the idea of sacrifice in the ancient world. We will examine sacrifice as a religious practice through literature, history, archaeology, and theology. Students will also study material artifacts related to sacrifice, and learn about the histories of excavating, acquiring, and curating those artifacts for public display. The focus of this course will be on ancient Israelite religion, but we will also discuss related Mesopotamian, Hindu, Greek, Christian, and Jewish materials. At the end of the course, we will critically analyze multiple representations of sacrifice and temples in the modern world.

Course Expectations

This class is structured as a conversation: a conversation amongst ourselves and a conversation between us and the materials we will be analyzing. The class depends on your preparation: you will be asked to read the assigned texts for every class and to be prepared to engage in a discussion about them. This means not just understanding the content and arguments of the texts we read, but also considering the worldviews that underlie them.

This class will also require you to visit the Metropolitan Museum of Art on 5th Avenue in New York City. There are a number of artifacts related to sacrifice and temples in the ancient Near Eastern collection, as well as an entire Egyptian temple (Dendur) in the Met's collection. These artifacts provide a tangible connection to the concept of sacrifice in the ancient world and are an important element of the course.

Course Requirements

Attendance and Participation – 30%

Preparation and Active Participation in discussion – 20%

Class Expert Preparation – 10%

Tour of the MET – 10%

Artifact Paper – 25%

Paper (2-4 pages): 15% – **Due March 29 at 11:59pm**

Presentation: 10% – **In Class on April 2**

Final Project – 35%

Option 1: Research Paper (10-12pp)

1 page Proposal: 10% – **Due on April 9 in class**

Paper: 25% – **Due on Dean's Date (May 7)**

Option 2: Virtual Museum Exhibit

Proposal: 10% — **Due on April 9 in class**

Exhibit: 25% — **Due on Dean's Date (May 7)**

Course Schedule

TUE JAN 30 INTRODUCTION; WHAT IS SACRIFICE?

Required Readings:

- McClymond, "Introduction" in *Beyond Sacred Violence*, pp. 1–24.

Optional Reading:

- Reed, "From Sacrifice to the Slaughterhouse: Ancient and Modern Approaches to Meat, Animals, and Civilization," 1–44.

TUE FEB 6 SACRIFICE AND MYTHOLOGY IN MESOPOTAMIA AND THE MEDITERRANEAN

Primary Texts:

- Atrahasis (pp. 450–452 in Context of Scripture)
- Hesiod, *Theogony* (excerpts included in Vernant reading)

Secondary Texts:

- Lambert & Millard, *Atra-ḫasīs: The Babylonian Story of the Flood*, pp. 1–24.
- Vernant, "At Man's Table: Hesiod's Foundation Myth of Sacrifice," in *The Cuisine of Sacrifice Among the Greeks*, pp. 21–86.

TUE FEB 13 SACRIFICE AND MYTHOLOGY IN THE HEBREW BIBLE

Primary Texts:

- Selections from the biblical priestly source (see Canvas for PDF)

Secondary Texts:

- McClymond, "Reimagining Sacrifice," pp. 25–43, focusing especially on pp. 35–43

Optional:

- Gilders, "Sacrifice before Sinai in the Priestly Narrative," pp. 57–72
- Feldman, *The Consuming Fire*, pp. 15–52

TUE FEB 20 PURITY AND SACRED SPACE IN THE BIBLE

Primary Texts:

- Exodus 40
- Leviticus 4, 9–16

Secondary Texts:

- King and Stager, “Religious Institutions,” in *Life in Biblical Israel*, 319–353 [includes many photos]
- Milgrom, Jacob. "Israel's Sanctuary: The Priestly Picture of Dorian Gray." *Revue Biblique* 83 (1976): 390-399.
- Klawans, “Concepts of Purity in the Bible,” in *The Jewish Study Bible*, 2041–2045.

TUE FEB 27 ANCIENT HINDU SACRIFICE (GUEST: DR. BENJAMIN FLEMING)

- Readings TBD

TUE MAR 5 MATERIAL CULTURE AND MUSEUM COLLECTIONS

Secondary Texts:

- Brodie, “Introduction,” in *Archeology, Cultural Heritage, and the Antiquities Trade*, pp. 1–24.
- Brodie, “Congenial Bedfellows: The Academy and the Antiquities Trade,” (pp. 408-437, focus especially on example on pp. 420-421).
- Thompson, “[That Robby Hobby](#)” in *Slate*, October 4, 2021.
- [The UNESCO 1970 Convention](#)

Optional:

- Feldman, “The Idea and Study of Sacrifice in Ancient Israel,” in *Religion Compass*, pp. 1–14

SPRING RECESS MARCH 8–17

TUE MAR 19 VISIT TO THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

(DAY/TIME TBD IN CONSULTATION WITH STUDENTS)

Secondary Texts:

- Mendelsohn, “[How the Met Convinced the U.S. Government](#) that the Temple of Dendur Belonged in New York,” *Artsy*, April 26, 2017.
- Students should each find one newspaper article from the last 10 years that addresses the MET and its acquisitions practices or antiquities collection. We will create a shared folder of these articles for students to review in advance of this visit.

TUE MAR 26 **FOOD AND FESTIVALS**

Primary Texts:

- Selections of Exodus 16
- Exodus 29:38–46
- Leviticus 3
- Numbers 28–29
- Bel and the Dragon

Secondary Texts:

- Lambert, “Donations of Food and Drink to the Gods in Ancient Mesopotamia,” in *Ritual and Sacrifice in the Ancient Near East*, 191–201.
- Haran, “XVI: Pilgrim-Feasts and Family Festivals,” in *Temples and Temple Service in Ancient Israel*, 289–316.

Optional:

- Hendel. "Table and Altar: The Anthropology of Food in the Priestly Torah," pp. 131–148.

ARTIFACT PAPERS DUE APRIL 1, 2024 AT 11:59PM ON CANVAS

TUE APR 2 **SACRIFICE BEYOND THE (JERUSALEM) TEMPLE +**
STUDENT ARTIFACT PRESENTATIONS

Primary Texts:

- Deuteronomy 12
- Exodus 20:20–23

Secondary Texts:

- Faust, Avraham. "Israelite Temples: Where Was Israelite Cult Not Practiced and Why." *Religions* 10, no. 2: pp. 1–26
- Jodi Magness. 2016. “Were Sacrifices Offered at Qumran? The Animal Bone Deposits Reconsidered.” *Journal of Ancient Judaism* 7: pp. 5–34.
- Meyers: “Feast Days and Food Ways: Religious Dimensions of Household Life” in *Family and Household Religion*, 225–250.

Optional Texts:

- SKIM (enough to get a sense of the diversity of cultic sites)
 - Schmitt, “Diversity and Centralization of the Temple Cult in the Archaeological Record from the Iron IIC to the Persian and Hellenistic Periods in Judah,” in *Text and Ritual in the Pentateuch*: 151–171.

TUE APR 9

**THE “END OF SACRIFICE?” SACRIFICE AND THE TEMPLE IN
POST-70 JUDAISM (GUEST: DR. RA’ANAN BOUSTAN)**

Primary Sources:

- Review the photos of the [Sephhoris Synagogue Mosaics](#) on the PBS website
- Review the images of wall paintings at [Dura Europos Synagogue](#)
- Look at image of [Akedah mosaic](#) in Beit Alpha synagogue (“lower part and inscriptions” image)

Secondary Texts:

- Hutt, Curtis. "A Threefold Heresy: Reassessing Jewish, Christian, and Islamic Animal Sacrifice in Late Antiquity." *History of Religions* 58, no. 3: pp. 251–264. (Focus only on the “Judaisms” section of this article this week)
- Levine, *The Ancient Jewish Synagogue*, pp. 230–236
- Boustan, “The Dislocation of the Temple Vessels: Mobile Sanctuary and Rabbinic Rhetorics of Space,” (pp. 135–146)
- Weiss, “Were Priests Communal Leaders in Late Antique Palestine? The Archaeological Evidence” (pp. 91–111; many photos)

TUE APR 16

**SACRIFICE AFTER 70 CE BEYOND JUDAISM: SAMARITANS,
CHRISTIANITY, AND ISLAM**

Primary Texts:

- Exodus 12

Secondary Texts:

- Chalmers, “Samaritans, Biblical Studies, and Ancient Judaism: Recent Trends,” (only pp. 29–33, read section on Samaritan Origins and Samaritan Identity)
- Smith, “[Tiny Samaritan Community marks Passover sacrifice as numbers grow](#),” *Times of Israel*, April 19, 2019.
- Hutt, Curtis. "A Threefold Heresy: Reassessing Jewish, Christian, and Islamic Animal Sacrifice in Late Antiquity." *History of Religions* 58, no. 3: pp. 264–276. (Focus only on the “Christianities” and “Islams” section of this article this week)
- Nasrallah, “The Embarrassment of Blood: Early Christians and Other on Sacrifice, War, and Rational Worship,” (pp. 142–166).

TUE APR 23

**MODERN RECONSTRUCTIONS (AND REIMAGININGS) OF THE
JERUSALEM TEMPLE**

Primary Sources:

- Peruse the [website of the Temple of Solomon in Sao Paolo](#) (it’s in Portuguese, but look at the photos)

- Look at the slides at the “[A Day in the Holy Temple](#)” slides on the Temple Institute website and pay attention to what is highlighted and how animal sacrifice is presented

Secondary Texts:

- Romero, “[Temple in Brazil Appeals to a Surge of Evangelicals](#),” *New York Times*, July 24, 2014.
- Marx, “The Missing Temple: The Status of the Temple in Jewish Culture following its Destruction,” pp. 61–78.

Optional:

- Branham, “The Temple that won’t Quit: Constructing Sacred Space in Orlando’s Holy Land Experience Theme Park,” pp. 358–382.

FINAL PROJECTS DUE ON DEAN’S DATE (MAY 7, 2024)