

**COLLEGE OF THE HUMANITIES
RELIGION PROGRAM: RELI 4850H/5850W**

Historical Fiction and the Study of Ancient Religions

Instructor: Shawna Dolansky

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Office hours: Zoom Thurs 10:00-11:00 & by appt.

Seminar: Tues 2:35pm-5:25pm via Zoom

<https://carleton-ca.zoom.us/j/95951846047>

This seminar is about reconstructing life in the biblical world based on historical research into the social, cultural, religious, political, geographical, and economic context from which biblical texts emerged. Students will choose a biblical character and then spend the semester learning about his or her historical circumstances toward the production of a short fictional piece describing an event or a short time period in the character's life. The piece can take the form of any type of creative writing (e.g. a short story, a day in the life, a diary, poetry) or a graphic novel. The goal is for the historical fiction to realistically reflect the situated perspective of the character, while students simultaneously reflect on the historiographical process of reconstruction. Class presentations of research and drafts, and peer feedback are important components of the course. The final writing assignment will be a concluding reflection on the work and the limitations and rewards of "experiencing" someone else's life in the context of an ancient culture.

We have four related foci: to reconstruct the historical contexts of biblical texts; to learn the theories and methods of effecting such reconstructions; to reflect on the nature of historiography and its kinship with the writing of historical fiction; and to produce short fictional pieces that provide authentic, accurate, and realistic portraits of fictionalized biblical characters in their ancient contexts.

Course Format

This will be a blended class that combines synchronous (live) discussion in a seminar style, with group-work and asynchronous components required outside of class.

Course Objectives – students in this course will learn:

- How to read the Bible from an historical-critical perspective;
- How to conduct research on ancient cultures, reconciling and interpreting written and material remains;
- How historians and religionists select evidence, make arguments, and construct their subjects;
- To appreciate diverse perspectives on Self, Other, the world, history, and religion, and the challenges and limitations inherent in scholarly reconstructions of other cultures.

Program Level Learning Outcomes – after this course, students will be able to:

- Appraise the integral role of religion as a category helping to shape cultures, identities, political systems, and public life;
- Make connections between theoretical approaches used in the academic study of religion and their real-world implications and applications;
- Formulate positions consistent with the academic study of religion, which stresses outsider discourse, methodological atheism, and the ability to differentiate between advocacy and the critical study of religion.

Evaluation

1. Weekly blogs – see schedule (8 blogs Jan 19-Mar 16) @ 5% each = 40%
2. Active & constructive weekly seminar participation and peer feedback = 20%
3. Written drafts/analyses March 23, 30, April 6, & 13 @ 5% each = 20%
4. Take-home "exam" = 20%

Notes on attendance:

- The seminar format depends on student preparedness and attendance. More than 2 absences over the course of the semester will result in a grade of F for the course.
- Leaving after the break, or arriving to class at the break, or engaging on your phone or computer with non-class-related content, will count as absences from class.
- If medical or other issues prevent you from attending, please provide documentation to the professor either in advance, or within 24 hours of your absence.

Notes on written work:

- An ongoing annotated bibliography will form the heart of your posts Jan 23 through Feb 13; be sure to demonstrate how your readings are helping (or not) to fill out the context for your fictional piece. Bibliography and citations must follow Chicago style.
- Spelling, grammar, structure, and style are all important components of any kind of writing and will figure in my assessment of all of your written work. Proofread your work carefully before posting/submitting it.
- All work in items 1 and 3 above is due by 2:35pm on the dates posted in the schedule below. Late work will be docked 4 marks out of 5 but must still be completed in order to pass the class.
- Take-home exam is due on the last day of finals by 11:55pm by e-submission with no exceptions. **Late exams will not be marked.**
- Please review the note on plagiarism on the “Regulations” page at the end of this course outline.

Schedule

Jan 12 Intro to the Course and the Bible

Before class complete this module on using CuPortfolio (it should take between 30 and 60 minutes): <https://co-opcareercourse.ca/cuportfolio/culearn/story.html>

Before class read these very short articles:

<http://www.bibleodyssey.org/tools/bible-basics/how-do-biblical-scholars-read-the-hebrew-bible.aspx>

<http://bibleodyssey.org/tools/bible-basics/does-the-bible-relate-to-history-meyers>

<http://bibleodyssey.org/tools/bible-basics/does-the-bible-relate-to-history-as-it-actually-happened>

and feel free to browse other articles here - <http://bibleodyssey.org/tools/bible-basics?StartIndex=0> – and on the bibleodyssey website in general, as they relate to your interests and the research you might do in this course.

IN CLASS: Intro to the course 2:35-4:15

Guest workshop/Q&A with Stacy Malloch, intro to CUPortfolio, 4:30-5:25

Jan 19 History & Historiography

Before class read: (all articles available on cuLearn)

Hayden White, “Introduction: Historical Fiction, Fictional History, and Historical Reality” *Rethinking History: The Journal of Theory and Practice*, 9:2-3, 147-157, 2005.

Joan W. Scott, “Storytelling,” Forum: Holberg Prize Symposium Doing Decentered History, *History and Theory* 50 (May 2011), 203-209.

Before class watch: lecture 1, Ancient Israel in Text and Archaeology (link available on CuLearn)

DUE: CuPortfolio set-up, with initial “About Me” reflection on who you are, your interest in this class, and what you hope to get out of it.

DUE: a thoughtful blog post reflecting on the discussions in the articles above. Consider: whether there are differences between writing history and writing well-researched historical fiction, and in what ways the modern author/historian is hampered in her ability to reconstruct the lives of ancient people.

IN CLASS: Q&A on lecture material; discussion of blog post responses.

Jan 26 History & Historiography 2

Before class read:

Zeba Crook, “Fictionalizing Jesus: Story and History in Two Recent Jesus Novels,” *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus*, 5.1, 33-55, 2007.

Joshua Schwartz, review of Ben Witherington III *A Week in the Fall of Jerusalem*, in *Review of Biblical Literature* 06/2018.

Eliza Rosenberg, Review of *Perpetua's Journey: Faith, Gender, and Power in the Roman Empire* by Jennifer A. Rea and Liz Clarke (Mediterranean Studies, Volume 26, Number 1, 2018, pp. 119-123).

Before class watch Intro to the NT: Jews, Greeks, & Romans (link available on CuLearn)

- and start browsing other titles from the optional video lectures; e.g. if you're working in HB, start working through one of those series; if you're working in NT, start working through that one and/or the "Bible to Bar Kokhba" one. Report how far you get + relevant insights, in your blog on an ongoing basis.

DUE by email to professor: the name of the biblical character you wish to focus on this semester (first-come first-served).

DUE a thoughtful blog post reflecting on the discussions in the articles above. Consider what you wrote last week, what we discussed in seminar last week, and in what ways the modern historian/historical fiction writer's task is further complicated when the history and/or fiction in question draws its inspiration from biblical texts.

IN CLASS: **Guest lecture by Dr. Zeba Crook on writing historical fiction** (2:35-4:00 PM)

Seminar discussion 4:10-5:25 on blog post responses and guest lecture; Q&A on recorded lecture.

Feb 2 Context: Geography, Climate, Cultural Influences, Peoples of the Region

Readings TBD in consultation with group and professor the week before. See also: <http://bibleodyssey.org/places>, <http://bibleodyssey.org/tools/map-gallery>, and <http://bibleodyssey.org/tools/timeline-gallery>.

You should also be watching associated lecture videos at your own pace and reporting on them in your weekly blog

From 4:15-5:25 we will divide into HB/NT groups for directed group research and discussion; professor will consult with each group regarding suggested resources. Grad students will function as group leaders. Going forward, groups will prepare weekly presentations on topics listed, dividing up research equally (though grads will coordinate/provide overviews) and presenting contextual information to the class. Research results will be shared on cuPortfolio with the class, including annotated bibliographies and research summaries.

DUE: Blog posts on research to date, ideas for your story, research plan going forward.

Feb 9 Context: Religions in Text and Artifact

Readings TBD in consultation with group and professor the week before. See also <http://bibleodyssey.org/tools/bible-basics/in-what-ways-is-the-bible-a-religious-text> and <http://bibleodyssey.org/tools/bible-basics/in-what-ways-is-the-new-testament-a-religious-text-neufeld> as well as Ancient Israel: Ephraim Stern's "Pagan Yahwism" on CuLearn.

DUE: blog write-ups of individual research toward the group presentation, posted on cuPortfolio.

IN CLASS: **Guest lecture by Dr. David Dean on public history** (2:35-4:00 PM)

4:15-5:25 – Group presentations.

Feb 16 NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK

Feb 23 Context: Kinship, Community, Gender, the Body, and Individual Agency

Readings TBD in consultation with group and professor the week before. See also "Was Ancient Israel a Patriarchal Society?" by Carol Meyers, and optionally, an article I wrote in response.

DUE: write-ups of individual research toward the group presentation, posted on cuPortfolio.

IN CLASS: Group presentations.

Mar 2 Context: Economic & Political Organization (including food, trade, government, warfare, etc)

Readings TBD in consultation with group and professor the week before.

DUE: write-ups of individual research toward the group presentation, posted on cuPortfolio.

IN CLASS: Group presentations.

Mar 9 Guest lecture on writing historical fiction: Nino Ricci!

Read: <http://ninoricci.com/books/testament/on-writing-testament>

(additional readings TBA)

DUE: blog post on the readings above, where you're at, your thoughts on the research + creative process; and bring questions for Nino Ricci, since he's coming specifically to answer your questions!

IN CLASS: Nino Ricci short talk + Q&A 2:35-4:00

Mar 16 Optional meeting for consultations

Keep working on your first draft, and also on putting together critical reflections on the work so far.

DUE: a blog piece on where you're at, including how the fictional piece is shaping up and your critical reflections on the process.

Mar 23 First Drafts

DUE: post of first draft of fictional piece

IN CLASS: Individual presentations of works-in-progress for feedback

Mar 30 Critical Reflections

DUE: post of critical reflection on theory and method in reconstructing and fictionalizing history

IN CLASS: Individual presentations of problems, pitfalls; critical assessment of the historiographical enterprise in creating realistic fiction about ancient characters; class discussion.

Apr 6 Draft review

DUE: post of latest draft of fictional piece

IN CLASS: Individual presentations of works-in-progress for feedback

Discussion of what has changed, why, and ongoing improvements and/or difficulties.

Apr 13 Final Drafts

DUE: post of final draft of fictional piece

IN CLASS: Individual presentations of final drafts of fictional pieces.

TAKE-HOME "EXAM" due April 27 11:55pm – produce a concluding reflection on the work and the limitations and rewards of writing about “experiencing” someone else’s life in the context of a culture and worldview so different from our own. Give examples from your piece and draw on assigned readings as necessary to showcase what you have learned this semester both in terms of content and in terms of research theory and method.

4850: 15 pages double-spaced;

5850: 20 pages double-spaced – include a section on how this type of research and critical inquiry affects your ongoing and/or planned MRE research.



Humanities

University Regulations for All College of the Humanities Courses

Academic Dates and Deadlines

This schedule contains the dates prescribed by the University Senate for academic activities. Dates relating to fee payment, cancellation of course selections, late charges, and other fees or charges will be published in the [Important Dates and Deadlines section](#) of the Registration Website.

Online Learning Resources

While online courses offer flexibility and convenience, they also present unique challenges that traditional face-to-face courses do not. [On this page](#), you will find resources collected by Carleton Online to help you succeed in your online courses; Learning Strategies and Best Practices, Study Skills, Technology and Online Interaction and Engagement.

Copies of Written Work Submitted

Always retain for yourself a copy of all essays, term papers, written assignments or take-home tests submitted in your courses.

Academic Integrity at Carleton

The University Senate defines **plagiarism** as “*presenting, whether intentionally or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one’s own.*” This can include:

- reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else’s published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one’s own without proper citation or reference to the original source;
- submitting a take-home examination, essay, laboratory report or other assignment written, in whole or in part, by someone else;
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, or paraphrased material, concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;
- using another’s data or research findings;
- failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another’s works and/or failing to use quotation marks;

- handing in "substantially the same piece of work for academic credit more than once without prior written permission of the course instructor in which the submission occurs."

Plagiarism is a serious offence that cannot be resolved directly by the course's instructor. The Associate Dean of the Faculty conducts a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student, when an instructor suspects a piece of work has been plagiarized. Penalties are not trivial. They can include a final grade of "F" for the course

[Academic Integrity Policy](#)

[Academic Integrity Process](#)

Academic Accommodation Policy

Academic Accommodation

Carleton University is committed to providing access to the educational experience in order to promote academic accessibility for all individuals.

Parental Leave: The Student Parental Leave Policy is intended to recognize the need for leave at the time of a pregnancy, birth or adoption and to permit a pause in studies in order to provide full-time care in the first year of parenting a child or for health-related parental responsibilities.

Religious obligation: Carleton University accommodates students who, by reason of religious obligation, must miss an examination, test, assignment deadline, laboratory or other compulsory academic event.

Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:

Academic accommodation of students with disabilities is available through the [Paul Menton Centre](#) by evaluations that are carried out on an individual basis, in accordance with human rights legislation and University policy, and with the support of relevant, professional/medical documentation.

Survivors of Sexual Violence

Individuals who disclose that they have experienced sexual violence will be provided support services and will be treated with dignity and respect at all times by the University and its representatives. A person affected by sexual violence is not required to report an incident or make a complaint about sexual violence under the formal complaint process of the Sexual Violence Policy in order to obtain support and services, or in order to receive appropriate accommodation for their needs.

[Supports and services available at the University to obtain information about sexual violence and/or support.](#)

Accommodation for Student Activities

Carleton University recognizes the substantial benefits, both to the individual student and for the university, that result from a student participating in activities beyond the classroom experience. [More information.](#)

Grading System at Carleton University

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor, subject to the approval of the faculty Dean. Standing in courses will be shown by alphabetical grades. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean."

The [system of grades](#) used, with corresponding grade points and the percentage conversion, is listed below. Grade points indicated are for courses with 1.0 credit value.

Course Sharing Websites and Copyright

Classroom teaching and learning activities, including lectures, discussions, presentations, etc., by both instructors and students, are copy protected and remain the intellectual property of their respective author(s). All course materials, including PowerPoint presentations, outlines, and other materials, are also protected by copyright and remain the intellectual property of their respective author(s).

Students registered in the course may take notes and make copies of course materials for their own educational use only. Students are not permitted to reproduce or distribute lecture notes and course materials publicly for commercial or non-commercial purposes without express written consent from the copyright holder(s).

[More information](#)

Student Rights and Responsibilities at Carleton

Carleton University strives to provide a safe environment conducive to personal and intellectual growth, free of injustice and characterized by understanding respect, peace, trust, and fairness.

The [Student Rights and Responsibilities Policy](#) governs the non-academic behaviour of students. Carleton University is committed to building a campus that promotes personal growth through the establishment and promotion of transparent and fair academic and non-academic responsibilities.

[7 Student Rights and Responsibilities](#)

Deferred Term Work

In some situations, students are unable to complete term work because of illness or other circumstances beyond their control, which forces them to delay submission of the work.

1. Students who claim illness, injury or other extraordinary circumstances beyond their control as a reason for missed term work are held responsible for immediately informing the

instructor concerned and for making alternate arrangements with the instructor and in all cases this must occur no later than three (3.0) working days after the term work was due. The alternate arrangement must be made before the last day of classes in the term as published in the academic schedule. Normally, any deferred term work will be completed by the last day of term. In all cases, formative evaluations providing feedback to the student should be replaced with formative evaluations. In the event the altered due date must extend beyond the last day of classes in the term, the instructor will assign a grade of zero for the work not submitted and submit the student's earned grade accordingly; the instructor may submit a change of grade at a later date. Term work cannot be deferred by the Registrar.

2. In cases where a student is not able to complete term work due to illness or injury for a significant period of time/or long term, the instructor and/or student may elect to consult with the Registrar's Office (undergraduate courses) or Graduate Registrar (graduate courses) to determine appropriate action.

[More information of deferred Term Work](#)

Deferred Final Exams

Students who are unable to write a final examination because of a serious illness/emergency or other circumstances beyond their control may apply for accommodation. Normally, the accommodation for a missed final examination will be granting the student the opportunity to write a deferred examination. In specific cases when it is not possible to offer a deferred examination, and with the approval of the Dean, an alternate accommodation may be made.

The application for a deferral must:

1. be made in writing to the Registrar's Office no later than three working days after the original final examination or the due date of the take-home examination; and,
2. be fully supported by appropriate documentation and, in cases of illness, by a medical certificate dated no later than one working day after the examination, or by appropriate documents in other cases. Medical documents must specify the date of the onset of the illness, the (expected) date of recovery, and the extent to which the student was/is incapacitated during the time of the examination. The University's preferred medical form can be found at the Registrar's Office [here](#).

[More information on Final Exam Deferrals](#)

Financial vs. Academic Withdrawal

Withdrawn. No academic credit, no impact on the CGPA. WDN is a permanent notation that appears on the official transcript for students who withdraw after the full fee adjustment date in each term (noted in the Academic Year section of the Calendar each term). Students may withdraw on or before the last day of classes.

Important dates can be found [here](#). Make sure that you are aware of the separate deadlines for

Financial and Academic withdrawal!

Making registration decisions in Carleton Central involves making a financial and academic commitment for the courses you choose, regardless of attendance. If you do not attend – you must withdraw in Carleton Central within the published deadlines to cancel your registration. You can do this via the [MyCarleton Portal](#). A fee adjustment is dependent on registration being canceled within the published [fee deadlines](#) and dependent on your course load.

Department Contact Information

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Digital Humanities (Undergraduate Minor) 300 Paterson Hall
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