

ANGRY GOD: Violence and Warfare in the Bible and Ancient Near East

RS 3030F, Wed 9:30-12:20

Dr. T. M. Lemos Associate Professor of Hebrew Bible Faculty of Theology	E-Mail: tlemos@uwo.ca Office: A219 Hours: If you need to talk to me for any reason, email and we can set up a zoom meeting
--	--

This course will examine the very prominent biblical theme of violence and warfare, situating biblical texts in their ancient Near Eastern context. Over the course of millennia, the ancient Near East experienced countless changes. Empires rose and then fell from dominance, city-states were built and then razed, gods once paramount sank into obscurity. Through these and other changes, however, one thing remained constant in the societies of the region: the centrality of warfare and violence. Whether one looks at the brutal punishments imposed in biblical law codes, the widespread practice of mutilating transgressors and marching them naked into exile, or the biblical statute mandating that conquered groups be completely annihilated, it is more than apparent that violence was not merely present in the ancient Near East, it was widely legislated and viewed as having been commanded by God. The exercise of violence was pivotal to establishing and maintaining the authority of kingship, to the display of masculinity, to the reckoning of justice, and to the forging of political relations. The omnipresence of violent behaviors in these cultures raises many questions, among them: What is violence? Was there an ethics of violence in the ancient Near East? Were there limits on violence? Who benefitted from violent behaviors, and in what ways? Texts examined in the course will include various books of the Hebrew Bible, including Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, and Ezekiel; Hammurapi's Code; numerous ancient Near Eastern inscriptions; various apocalyptic texts; and a selection of texts from the New Testament.

Course Objectives

In this course, students will:

- Examine and analyze evidence related to violence from the ancient Near East
- Compare ancient and modern occurrences of violence
- Think critically and constructively about issues of biblical violence
- Develop their ability to think creatively and generate ideas regarding moral questions
- Address issues of violence from different perspectives and using different media

- Develop writing abilities, especially the ability to write in a clear, well organized, thesis-driven fashion

Course Requirements

Class Participation

Attendance at all classes is both expected and necessary to succeed in this course, as is reading all of the assigned materials. Students are allowed one absence. Each absence beyond that will result in a ten point deduction in your course participation grade. Regular lateness to class may also result in deductions. I highly recommend that you participate in class discussions *every class*. See more on this component of your grade below.

Assignments

You will be required to complete the following assignments:

Creative project: worth 20% of your grade; project will be in medium of your choice and will address some issue or topic related to violence

Paper related to creative project: 5-7 pages, worth 30% of grade

Final exam: 30% of grade; 24-hour take-home exam; consisting of ten or fewer identifications; eight or fewer short answer questions, and two essay questions.

General class participation: 20% of grade; students are expected to attend and participate in synchronous class sessions, including any workshops or subgroups; view or listen to any asynchronous content that is posted; make a 100-word post and 50-word reply to another's post in online discussions for at least ten weeks of the semester (posts will be graded with a check/no check rather than numeric or letter grade)

Things to keep in mind

- Please read this syllabus carefully. I will expect you to be familiar with its contents, that is, with course requirements, assigned readings, due dates, etc.
- Unless you request and receive permission for an extension, late papers will be penalized 5 points per day.
- I will send out emails regularly in this course. I expect that you will check your email at least once a day. Failure to check your email regularly will not be considered an excuse for failing to complete an assignment or for failing to do so according to specified directions.
- If you email me, please follow proper letter-writing etiquette.

- Students are expected to treat others with respect in this course; disruptions and other rude behavior will not be tolerated.
- Be more concerned with the quality of your work than with your grade. A grade is an indication of quality, not the other way around.
- I do not grade inflate. You will not receive an A in this course unless you have truly earned it, i.e., unless your work is of extraordinary quality, above the level of most university students.

Required books

Foster, Benjamin, translator. *Epic of Gilgamesh*. New York: Norton, 2001.

Kelle, Brad E. *Ancient Israel at War 853-586 BC*. London: Osprey, 2007.

Lemos, T. M. *Violence and Personhood in Ancient Israel and Comparative Contexts*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017. Available on library website.

Niditch, Susan. *War in the Hebrew Bible*. New York: Oxford, 1995. Available on library website.

Roth, Martha T. *Law Collections from Mesopotamia and Asia Minor*. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997. Available on library website.

A Study Bible that uses the NRSV translation, e.g., the *New Oxford Annotated Bible* or the *Harper Collins Study Bible*.

All books available at the bookstore or on Amazon.

Online readings marked with (O).

Course Schedule

N.B. While exam dates are fixed, the dates on which particular topics are covered in class may shift somewhat from what is listed below.

Week 1

Sept. 9 – Introduction to the course; Introduction to ancient Near Eastern history, culture, and texts

Week 2

Sept. 16 – Why Make War: Contrasting Views on the Origins and Nature of Warfare
Read: Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (O)

Jean Jacques Rousseau, "A Dissertation on the Origin and Foundation of the Inequality of Mankind," and "The Second Part," in *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality* (O)
Jonathan Haas, "Origins of War and Ethnic Violence" (O)

Week 3

Sept. 23 – Warfare in the Ancient Near East

Read: Kelle, *Ancient Israel at War*, 7-59, 64-69

Niditch, *War in the Hebrew Bible*, introduction

Heroes and Strongmen: Idealizing Violence and Masculinity

Read: "Epic of Gilgamesh," tablets 1-5

Week 4

Sept. 30 – Heroes and Strongmen

Read: "Epic of Gilgamesh," 6-11

Judges 13-16; 1 Samuel 1-15 (skim), 16-31, 2 Samuel 1

Niditch, *War in the Hebrew Bible*, chap. 4

Week 5

Oct. 7 – Gendered Violence and Wartime Humiliation

Read: Judges 1:1-7; Judges 4-5; Judges 19-21; 1 Samuel 10:27-11; 2 Samuel 10;

Judith, particularly chaps.13-14

"Kurkh Monolith" (O)

"Suhu Annals #2" (O)

"The Annals of Sennacherib," excerpts (O)

T. M. Lemos, "Shame and Mutilation of Enemies in the Hebrew Bible." (O)

Erika Bleibtreu, "Grisly Assyrian Record of Torture and Death." (O)

Examine carefully the reliefs found in the Bleibtreu article and the Kelle book.

Week 6

Oct. 14 – Inscribing Domination: The Ancient Near Eastern Treaty

Read: "The Sefire Treaties" (O)

"The Treaty between Aššurnerai V and Mati'ilu of Arpad" (O)

"The Esarhaddon Succession Treaties" (O)

Lemos, Chapter 2, pp. 28-50

Gods Who Destroy: Theologies of War and Conquest

Read: "Epic of Creation" (O)

"Ba'al Cycle" (O)

"The Annals of Thutmose II" (O)

"The Battle of Qadesh – The Poem" (O)

“Black Obelisk Inscription” (O)
“Sennacherib: The Capture and Destruction of Babylon” (O)
1 Samuel 4-6; 2 Kings 25:1-21; Exodus 14-15;
Psalm 29; Psalm 74

Week 7

Oct. 21 – The Ethic of Total Annihilation

Read: “Mesha Stela” (O)

Exodus 12:43-49; 23:23-33; Numbers 15:14-16; 31; Deuteronomy 7; 20; 23:9-14;
Josh 1-12; Psalm 137; Amos 9; Ezra 9; Nehemiah 13;

Niditch, *War in the Hebrew Bible*, chaps. 1-2

Lemos, Chapter 2, pp. 50-57

Week 8

Oct. 28 – They Were Asking For It: Violence and Culpability in the Hebrew Bible

Read: Amos 1-4; Isaiah 5, 8, 10, 19-20, 24, 29; Jeremiah 2-3;

Ezekiel 1, 5, 8-11, 16, 18, 23, 36; Lamentations 1-5

Week 9

Nov. 4 – Reading Week

Week 10

Nov. 11 – Unequal before the Law: Legislating and Punishing Violence

Read: The Laws of Hammurapi

The Middle Assyrian Laws

Exodus 20-23:22; Numbers 35; Deuteronomy 5, 12-15, 19, 21-22, 24-25, 27

Read: Lemos, Chapter 3, pp. 61-80

Week 11

Nov. 18 – Visiting the Iniquity of the Father on the Son: Violence against Slaves and Children

Find and read: three texts from the Hebrew Bible that include violence against slaves and three that include violence against children

Read: Lemos, Chapter 4 or 5

Week 11

Nov. 25 – Presentation of Creative Projects

Week 12

Dec. 2 – The Final Battle: The Rise of Apocalyptic Literature

Read: Daniel 7-12; 1 Maccabees 1-5; 2 Maccabees 2:19-10:38; Enoch (excerpts; O);
Revelation

Due: Papers

Bonus assignment, due before Dec. 8: Find two texts from the Hebrew Bible and two texts from the New Testament that critique violence; analyze together with Lemos, chapter 6, in a paper of no more than 3 pp. (will add maximum of 10 points to your final exam grade)

Take-home date to be announced.

Please note: All of the remote learning sessions for this course will be recorded. The data captured during these recordings may include your image, voice recordings, chat logs and personal identifiers (name displayed on the screen). The recordings will be used for educational purposes related to this course, including evaluations. The recordings may be disclosed to other individuals participating in the course for their private or group study purposes. Please contact the instructor if you have any concerns related to session recordings. Participants in this course are not permitted to record the sessions, except where recording is an approved accommodation, or the participant has the prior written permission of the instructor.

Additional Statements:

1. Statement on Use of Electronic Devices

It is not appropriate to use technology (such as, but not limited, to laptops, PDAs, cell phones) in the classroom for non-classroom activities. Such activity is disruptive and is distracting to other students and to the instructor, and can inhibit learning. Students are expected to respect the classroom environment and to refrain from inappropriate use of technology and other electronic devices in class.

2. Statement on Academic Offences:

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following web site:
[http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholoff.pdf.](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholoff.pdf)

3. Plagiarism-detecting Software/ Computer Marking:

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>). Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams, if used, may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating.

4. Support Services:

- UWO Registrar's Office: <http://www4.registrar.uwo.ca>
- Huron's Faculty of Theology, Office of the Dean:
http://www.huronuc.on.ca/faculty_of_theology/info_for_current_students
- srice@uwo.ca, 519-438-7224, ext. 289
- Huron's Writing Skills Centre: http://www.huronuc.on.ca/student_life/writing_services
- UWO Student Support and Development Services:
http://communications.uwo.ca/current_students/student_services.htm

5. Accommodation for absences:

If documentation is required for either medical or non-medical academic accommodation, then such documentation must be submitted by the student directly to your Faculty's Dean's office (or academic counselor), and not to the instructor. For the Faculty of Theology, all such documentation must be submitted to room A227. It will be the Dean's office that will determine if accommodation is warranted.

Non-medical absences and late work:

Students are each allowed two absences without penalty (excluding exam dates and assignment due dates). Each absence beyond two will result in a ten-point deduction from the student's participation grade. Late written assignments will be penalized five points per day.

Medical absences: See also the Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness – Undergraduate Students, at <http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/medical.pdf>

For work representing 10% or more of the overall grade for the course, a student must present documentation indicating that the student was seriously affected by illness and could not reasonably be expected to meet his/her academic responsibilities. Documentation must be submitted as soon as possible to your Faculty Dean's office (Huron Arts & Social Science students should take their documentation to the Academic Counsellor, through the Academic Services Centre at Huron), together with a Request for Relief specifying the nature of the accommodation requested. The request and documentation will be assessed and appropriate accommodation will be determined by the Dean's office in consultation with the instructor(s). Academic accommodation will be granted ONLY where the documentation indicates that the onset, duration and severity of the illness are such that the student could not reasonably be expected to complete his/her academic responsibilities.

The UWO Student Medical Certificate (SMC) and Request for Relief are available at the Student Centre website (<https://studentservices.uwo.ca/secure/index.cfm>), Huron University College Academic Counselling website (www.huronuc.on.ca) or from the Dean's Office or Academic Services Centre at Huron.

Appendix to Course Outlines**Prerequisite Information**

Students are responsible for ensuring that they have successfully completed all course prerequisites. Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enrol in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

Conduct of Students in Classes, Lectures, and Seminars

Membership in the community of Huron University College and the University of Western Ontario implies acceptance by every student of the principle of respect for the rights, responsibilities, dignity and well-being of others and a readiness to support an environment conducive to the intellectual and personal growth of all who study, work and live within it. Upon registration, students assume the responsibilities that such registration entails. The academic and social privileges granted to each student are conditional upon the fulfillment of these responsibilities. In the classroom, students are expected to behave in a manner that supports the learning environment of others. Students can avoid any unnecessary disruption of the class by arriving in sufficient time to be seated and ready for the start of the class, by remaining silent while the professor is speaking or another student has the floor, and by taking care of personal needs prior to the start of class. If a student is late, or knows that he/she will have to leave class early, be courteous: sit in an aisle seat and enter and leave quietly. Please see the *Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities* at: http://www.huronuc.ca/students/student_life/student_policies

Plagiarism Plagiarism is an academic offence and will be treated as such. Students who are in doubt as to the nature of this offence should consult their instructor, Department Chair or the Dean, as well as the Huron University College Statement on Plagiarism, available at the reference desk in the HUC Library and at <http://www.huronuc.ca/library/Citing/>. In addition, students may seek guidance from a variety of current style manuals available at the Reference Desk in the HUC Library. Information about these resources can be found in LibGuides on the main page: <http://www.huronuc.ca/library>.

Students found guilty of plagiarism will suffer consequences ranging from a grade reduction to failure in the course to expulsion from the university. In addition, a formal letter documenting the offence will be filed in the Dean's Office, and this record of the offence will be retained in the Dean's Office for the duration of the student's academic career at Huron University College.

Statement on Academic Offences: Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following web site: <http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholoff.pdf>

Policy on Special Needs

Students who require special accommodation for tests and/or other course components must make the appropriate arrangements with the Student Development Centre (SDC). Further details concerning policies and procedures may be found at: http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/ssd/?requesting_acc

Additional Statements:

1. Statement on Use of Electronic Devices during Tests and Exams

It is not appropriate to use technology (such as, but not limited to, laptops, PDAs, cell phones) in the classroom for non-classroom activities. Such activity is disruptive and is distracting to other students and to the instructor, and can inhibit learning. Students are expected to respect the classroom environment and to refrain from inappropriate use of technology and other electronic devices in class.

2. **Statement on Academic Offences:** Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following web site: <http://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/2014/pg113.html>.

3. **Plagiarism-detecting Software/Computer Marking:** All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

B) Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating.

4. Support Services:

- UWO Registrar's Office: <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>
- Huron's Faculty of Theology, Office of the Dean: http://www.huronuc.on.ca/faculty_of_theology/info_for_current_students
- Faculty of Theology office: srice@uwo.ca, 519-438-7224, ext. 289
- Bachelor's Academic Advising at Huron: <http://www.huronuc.ca/CurrentStudents/AcademicAdvisorsandServices>
- Huron's Writing Skills Centre: http://www.huronuc.on.ca/student_life/writing_services
- UWO's Mental Health website: <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to this website for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.
- UWO Student Support and Development Services: http://communications.uwo.ca/current_students/student_services.htm
- Services provided by Western University Student Council: <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

5. Accommodation for absences:

If documentation is required for either medical or non-medical academic accommodation, then such documentation must be submitted by the student directly to your Faculty's Dean's office (or academic counselor), and not to the instructor. For the Faculty of Theology, all such documentation must be submitted to room A227. It will be the Dean's office that will determine if accommodation is warranted.

a) **Medical absences:** See also the Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness

—Undergraduate Students, at <http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/medical.pdf>)

For work representing 10% or more of the overall grade for the course, a student must present documentation indicating that the student was seriously affected by illness and could not reasonably be expected to meet his/her academic responsibilities. Documentation must be submitted as soon as possible to your Faculty Dean's office (Huron Arts & Social Science students should take their documentation to the Academic Counsellor, through the Academic Services Centre at Huron), together with a Request for Relief specifying the nature of the accommodation requested. The request and documentation will be assessed and appropriate accommodation will be determined by the Dean's office in consultation with the instructor(s.) Academic accommodation will be granted ONLY where the documentation indicates that the onset, duration and severity of the illness are such that the student could not reasonably be expected to complete his/her academic responsibilities.

The UWO Student Medical Certificate (SMC) and Request for Relief are available at the Student Centre website (<https://studentservices.uwo.ca/secure/index.cfm>), Huron University College Academic Counselling website (www.huronuc.on.ca) or from the Dean's Office or Academic Services Centre at Huron.