

GE Course Assessment Plan (Faculty/Instructor Version)

Please submit your GE course assessment plan to your chair as soon as possible. All plans need to be received by the chair of the GE Board, Dr. Lynn Spangler, by **Friday, October 1, 2010**. The assessment plan should be emailed to spanglel@newpaltz.edu with a hard copy to her at Liberal Arts and Sciences, JFT 608.

Course Instructor LINK

Course Number EN355

Course Name THE BIBLE

Particular Section(s) 01

Area (GE Category or Competency) WEST

1. Describe the assignment(s) that will be used to assess each Board of Trustees learning outcome (objective) for this area, and state when in the semester the assignment will occur. The objectives can be found at <http://www.newpaltz.edu/GE/Guidelines%20for%20the%20Approval%20of%20SUNY%20GE%20Requirement%20Courses.pdf>

The following long answer / short essay questions will be posed on a take home midterm (assigned at roughly the mid-point of the semester):

I. Genesis 1 Comparison Essay (2-4 pages): Creation in Cross-Cultural Context (60 points)

In class, we compared and contrasted material in Genesis 1 with selections from the *Enuma Elish* (Babylonian Creation Myth—see Blackboard). Please re-read these texts and read also the brief selection below from the *Rig Veda* (a Hindu sacred text):

RIG-VEDA, BOOK X, HYMN CXXIX. Creation. (Dominic Goodall translation)

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| 1. Then neither Being nor Not-Being was,
Nor atmosphere, nor firmament, nor what is beyond.
What did it encompass? Where? In whose protection?
What was the water, the deep, unfathomable? | 5. Their cord was extended athwart:
Was there a below? Was there an above?
Casters of seed there were, and powers;
Beneath was energy, above was impulse. |
| 2. Neither death nor immortality was there then,
no sign of night or day.
That One breathed, windless, by its own energy:
Nought else existed then. | 6. Who knows truly? Who can here declare it?
Whence it was born, whence this emanation.
By the emanation of this the gods
Only later [came to be].
Who then knows whence it has arisen? |
| 3. In the beginning was darkness swathed in darkness;
All this was but unmanifested water.
Whatever was, that One, coming into being,
Hidden by the void,
Was generated by the power of heat. | 7. Whence this emanation hath arisen,
Whether [God] disposed it, or whether he did not, —
Only he who is its overseer in highest heaven knows.
[He only knows,] or perhaps even he knows not! |
| 4. In the beginning this [One] evolved,
Became desire, first seed of mind.
Wise seers, searching within their hearts,
Found the bond of Being in Not-being. | |

⇒ Write a thoughtful analytical essay response (2-4 pages, 5 pages MAX) answering one of the following:

1. What specific textual similarities are shared by **all three** texts? (Use direct citations to indicate **at least three** such similarities.) What historical circumstances might account for the particularly close correspondences between Genesis and the *Enuma Elish*? What *non*-historical (i.e., existential, psychological, phenomenological, etc.) circumstances might explain the appearance of such similarities in creation myths across cultures (including that of the Hindu tradition)?
2. Discuss in detail how the Genesis account is distinctly different from the *Enuma Elish*. (Use direct citations to illustrate.) What do such differences reflect about the respective worldviews (social, ethical, theological, etc.) of these competing ancient cultures? Does comparison of these two texts from the Ancient Near East with the selection from the *Rig Veda* help to sharpen their theological or ideological differences, or does it instead highlight their similarities as texts emerging in close proximity to one another? Explain.
3. *Closely* compare and contrast Genesis 1 with the *Rig Veda*. How is the so-called “Priestly” (P) account of creation, despite similarities well worth noting, essentially different from the Vedic text? What is the overriding theological, philosophical, or spiritual “message” of each? In your reading, what kinds of questions does each text set out to answer? What answers are provided? You are invited to refer briefly to the *Enuma Elish* as a potentially useful counterpoint in your discussion of similarities and differences between the biblical and Vedic accounts.

Answer one of these questions (or a combination of them) with a thoughtful, well-supported essay response (using complete sentences, good grammar, and direct citations from the primary texts for support/illustration). In the course of your essay discussion, you should effectively employ *at least* one technical term from our course thus far (e.g., cosmogony, theogony, anthropomorphism, parallelism, etc.). You may (but need not) refer to other passages within the Bible (i.e., beyond Genesis 1) in support of your discussion. Any use of additional textual sources, including secondary sources in print or online, requires proper bibliographic citation (i.e., avoid plagiarism—including “unintentional” plagiarism—by citing ALL sources used).

II. LONG ANSWER/SHORT ESSAY (1-3 pages): ANSWER ANY ONE (1) OF THE FOLLOWING FIVE QUESTIONS (40 points)

1. With specific reference to passages in **Genesis, Exodus, and at least one additional book in the Bible** (i.e., at least three direct quotations), write a short essay (1-2 pages maximum) about the relationship between Israel and Egypt. The shape/thesis of the essay is up to you. (You may wish to focus on a discussion of the meaning of specific plagues or on the character of Moses or on the Passover episode and its repercussions. Or you might pose a broader thematic question: e.g., Is the relationship between Israel and Egypt fundamentally like or radically unlike—i.e., more complicated than—the sibling rivalries described in Genesis? Explain.) Support your discussion with textual evidence.
2. Identify, compare, and contrast two or more scenes of *theophany* in the Bible. (To whom does God appear? What is the nature of the divine appearance? How are the scenes similar? How are they different? Support your comparison/contrast with specific details from the text. In the course of your discussion, briefly treat one or more of the “problems” of theophany in the biblical tradition, which clearly indicates conflicting ideas about God, God’s image, and the modes of (direct?) divine-human communication.
3. *Torah* means “law,” but does so in a broad variety of ways. Identify, illustrate, and compare three distinct aspects of *torah* (e.g., three different “kinds” of law, three separate illustrations, etc.) in order to demonstrate the rich and extended meaning of this term. Are the various aspects of *torah* that you identify in harmony with one another? In conflict? (Both?) Explain and support your discussion with direct reference to the Bible (use some direct quotations).
4. Write a **short** essay (1.5-3 pages) on the role of women in the Pentateuch with reference to at least three separate female characters (and reference to at least two different biblical books). The shape/thesis of the brief essay is up to you, but you are urged to be thoughtful and even-handed in your treatment. (Is the

biblical tradition *exclusively* patriarchal or even misogynistic? Or, by contrast, does the very preservation of stories concerning strong female characters indicate at least *some* special regard for the role and significance of women?) Provide a well-developed thesis and support your discussion with textual evidence.

5. What is surprising or problematic about the injunction within the Pentateuch to “love the alien as yourself” (Lev 19)? Be specific and support your discussion with 2-3 significant examples/illustrations from the Bible.

2. Attach a rubric that describes the level of student performance that constitutes “Exceeds,” “Meets,” “Approaches,” and “Does Not Meet” for each learning outcome. (Be sure to design assignments and rubrics so that clear distinctions can be drawn among the four levels.) For assessment in the Strengthened Campus Based Assessment (SCBA) category of Critical Thinking/Systematic Inquiry, the rubric found at the following site must be used: http://www.newpaltz.edu/GE/ad_rubrics.html

SEE ATTACHED. Learning Outcome #1 will be assessed over the entire two-part essay exam. Learning Outcome #2 will primarily be assessed with respect to the explicitly comparative Part I (“Creation in Cross-Cultural Context”).

3. How will you ensure that the rubric will be applied consistently by different instructors?(This is “inter-rater reliability.” For example, samples of student work could be provided and instructors could evaluate assignments together in a “norming” or “calibration” session. If there is no one with whom you can norm, “intra-rater reliability” can be done. Assess a few papers, set them aside, and assess later to see if you are consistent. Do this until you are satisfied with the reliability of the results). Please describe in a few sentences how you will achieve reliability.

Since I am the only instructor of this course, consistency of assessment results will be achieved through intra-rater reliability. Student responses will be assessed carefully according to the terms of the rubric on two separate occasions, with a period of no less than 48 hours between assessments. Results of the two assessments will be recorded separately, then compared, and any discrepancies in assessment values will trigger a close third assessment of those individual student responses (if any) judged differently across the two sessions. These two assessment sessions will be completed separately from the grading of the take-home exam as coursework (at a reasonably later date) and, moreover, will be performed using copies of student responses with names removed for anonymity and enhanced objectivity. Numbers will be assigned to the student responses for the practical purpose of comparing end results, though these numbers will remain “blind” (i.e., noted on the back) during the actual reading and assessment of each exam.