

COURSE SYLLABUS

RELS 6000
Readings in Jewish Aramaic
R 3:30-6:15
Dr. John C. Reeves
Macy 204B
Office hours: WR 2:30-3:30; or by appointment
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[Home Page of John C. Reeves](#)

Course description: This course provides an introduction to the Aramaic language for those graduate students who are already reasonably conversant with the linguistic structures of biblical Hebrew.¹ We will learn the basic principles of Aramaic grammar, vocabulary, and syntax while simultaneously reading and translating Aramaic texts drawn from the Bible, the Dead Sea Scrolls, Jewish epigraphic inscriptions, and rabbinic literature.

Required textbooks:

Frederick E. Greenspahn, *An Introduction to Aramaic* (2d ed.; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003).
Marcus Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature* (reprinted, New York: Judaica Press, 1980). It is available online [here](#).

Most Aramaic texts will be reproduced and distributed as needed by the instructor from the following works:

Klaus Beyer, *Die aramäischen Texte vom Toten Meer* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984).
Gustaf Dalman, ed., *Aramäische Dialektproben* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1896).
Adalbertus Merx, ed., *Chrestomathia Targumica* (Berlin: H. Reuther, 1888).
Jul. Henr. Petermann, ed., *Brevis Linguae Chaldaicae* (2d ed.; Berlin: G. Eichler, 1872).
Hermann L. Strack, *Grammatik des biblisch-aramäischen* (6th ed.; München: C. H. Beck, 1921).

Recommended purchases: (* = not available at UNC Charlotte bookstore)

*Franz Rosenthal, *A Grammar of Biblical Aramaic* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1961), or later reprints.
*Joseph A. Fitzmyer & Daniel J. Harrington, *A Manual of Palestinian Aramaic Texts* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1978).
*Michael Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic* (2d ed.; Ramat-Gan: Bar Ilan University Press, 2002).

Supplementary readings and/or exercises will be assigned or distributed by the instructor as needed.

¹ This specific course requires as its minimum prerequisite: (1) the successful completion at UNC Charlotte of LACS 1201 and 1202; i.e., 'Introduction to Biblical Hebrew I' and 'II'; or (2) an equivalent sequence of introductory biblical Hebrew courses at another institution of higher learning; i.e., amounting to two semesters, three quarters, or one year; or (3) the verbal permission of the instructor.

Course requirements:

a. *Diligent attendance.* Almost perfect attendance is an essential requirement for this course. Each class session builds upon the knowledge gained and skills acquired during previous meetings. Moreover, oral recitation and discussion of assigned readings comprises a significant portion of almost every class session; if you are not present to recite or otherwise participate, a value of 0 for this portion of your grade is the inevitable result. The instructor’s assessment of one’s attendance, class preparation, homework exercises,² performance on quizzes (should such be required), and oral recitation will constitute 100% of the final course grade.

b. *Critical discussions.* Almost every week during a portion of the class period students will orally expound and collectively discuss the content of at least one secondary article or essay that has been previously assigned by the instructor. Individual students may be asked to present and guide our discussions. The readings will initially come from the bibliography of articles listed below. The instructor’s evaluation of the student’s contributions to these assignments will be factored into the class preparation component of the final course grade.

c. Each student is responsible for all lectures, class discussions, assignments, and announcements, whether or not he/she is present when they occur.

Miscellaneous information:

a. The grading scale used in this course is as follows:

91-100	A
81-90	B
71-80	C
0-70	U

b. One of the requirements of this course is to complete the work of the course on time. Sometimes there are legitimate reasons for late work—an illness or other emergency. ‘Emergency,’ however, does not include your social involvements, travel plans, job schedule, disk and/or printer failures, the state of your love life, your obligations to other courses, or general malaise over the state of the world. The world has been in a mess as long as anyone can remember, and most of the world’s work is done by people whose lives are a mass of futility and discontent. If you haven’t learned yet, you had better learn now to work under the conditions of the world as it is. Therefore:

1) All assignments are due at their announced dates and times. In other words (and please note well!), there will be NO MAKEUP OPPORTUNITIES scheduled. All missed assignments (these include weekly oral recitations!) will be averaged as a 0 in the computation of the course grade. No exceptions will be considered or granted.

2) Written homework exercises for which a roman font is used must be typed and double-spaced; apart from Aramaic print or script, no handwritten exercises will be accepted. Written homework exercises are assessed according to the following formulae: $\sqrt{+} = A$; $\sqrt{ } = B$; $\sqrt{-} = U$.

3) For accounting purposes, letter grades bear the following values: A=95; A-=92; B=85; C+=78; C=75; U=35.

4) Since your diligent physical participation is critical for the success of this course, attendance at class meetings will be monitored by the instructor. One absence is regrettable; two absences are the limit of tolerability. Three (3) or more absences will result in an automatic U for the course. Please note that the instructor does not distinguish ‘excused’ from ‘unexcused’ absences. Unsanctioned late arrivals and early departures will be tallied as absences.

² Almost every class meeting will conclude with the assignment of readings and homework drawn initially from Greenspahn. Unless stated otherwise, such assignments fall due at the next class meeting.

c. Attendance at class meetings will be monitored by the instructor. Please note that the instructor does not distinguish ‘excused’ from ‘unexcused’ absences. Unsanctioned late arrivals and early departures will be tallied as absences and graded accordingly.

d. Assistance and solicitation of criticism is your right as a member of the class. It is not a privilege to be granted or withheld. Do not hesitate to request it nor wait too late in the course for it to be of help.

e. A number of additional Aramaic lexical and grammatical aids are available for student consultation in the [Cuneiform Studies Laboratory](#) (Macy 216). For assistance, please see the instructor.

f. A very important online resource for all things Aramaic is the [Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon](#).

ARAMAIC LANGUAGE AND CULTURE BIBLIOGRAPHY

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