COURSE SYLLABUS

RELS 6000
Pluriform Multilingual Zechariah
M 6:30-9:20
Dr. John C. Reeves
204B Macy
Office hours: M 5:00-6:15; TR 12:30-1:30; or by appointment
jcreeves@uncc.edu
Home Page of John C. Reeves

‘The prophecy of Zechariah is exceedingly opaque, for there are contained therein dreamlike visions
which are given an interpretation, but we are unable to pronounce definitively regarding its
interpretation until the advent of a “true teacher” (מַרְאֵ֖ה דְּדִ֣י).’ – Rashi, introduction to his
commentary on Zechariah.

‘Prophetic ability was ebbing and weakening, and this is why the visions of Zechariah are so obscure;
it was (in fact) with Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi that prophecy ceased.’ – Radaq ad Zech 5:3.

Course description: A collective critical reading and translation of biblical, non-biblical, and postbiblical
Hebrew, Greek, Aramaic, and Syriac prose and poetical texts. We will engage in a collaborative production of
what could be termed a ‘reception-history commentary’ to the prophet Zechariah in all of his guises. This
task will involve, in addition to the reading and translation of the Masoretic textual tradition for Zechariah,
the constant consultation and careful consideration of a wide variety of manuscript and exegetical resources
pertinent to the historical, literary, and textual background of the biblical book and to all the scriptural and
paraspruitual characters who bear that name. Each student (in accordance with their abilities and
competencies) will bear responsibility for at least one of the ancient or medieval versions or commentaries to
the biblical book. Such a procedure will enrich our understanding of the text, and should have the pedagogic
virtue of exposing everyone to the wide variety of biblical, paraspruitual, and modern critical resources that
are available to advanced critical students of the Tanakh and its reception-history.

Required textbooks:

A Zechariah Reader (An instructor-distributed PDF file whose contents appear here).

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

Course requirements:

a. Diligent attendance and preparation. 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 group study comprises practically the entirety of every class session. The
instructor’s assessment of one’s attendance, class preparation, and recitation constitutes 100% of the final
course grade.

[1] This specific course requires as its minimum prerequisite: (1) the successful completion at UNC Charlotte
of FORL 1201 and 1202, or 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.
b. **Final class.** A **required** final class will be held on the date and at the time officially mandated for the final examination for this course by the UNC Charlotte administration. Further details regarding the class will be provided later in the semester.

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:

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<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>91-95+</td>
<td>A = demonstrable mastery of material—outstanding performance</td>
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<tr>
<td>81-90</td>
<td>B = satisfactory performance of assignments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71-80</td>
<td>C = inadequate and/or faulty understanding of material</td>
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<tr>
<td>0-70</td>
<td>U = unacceptable graduate-level work</td>
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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 missing work is averaged as a 0 in the computation of the course grade.

2) All written work falls due on the dates scheduled in the syllabus, or on the date announced by the instructor in class (usually the next class meeting). ‘Late’ work will not be accepted from students who were privy to its oral evaluation and discussion (i.e., you were present while we ‘went over it’ but you neglected to do it beforehand). In the event of one’s absence, ‘late’ submissions bear the following penalties: one day late/one letter grade; two days late/two letter grades; three or more days late/U. Please note: these ‘days’ are calendar days, not class meeting days. For accounting purposes, letter grades bear the following values: A=95; A-=92; B+=88; B=85; B-=82; C+=78; C=75; C-=72; U=35. Seminar papers are assessed according to the following formulae: √+ = A; √ = B; √- = U. An untyped seminar paper or final project automatically receives the grade U, as do those typed submissions which violate the required parameters or which the instructor deems physically unacceptable and/or grammatically incomprehensible.

3) 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.

4) **Policy regarding Audits:** the instructor expects auditors (whether formally enrolled as such or not) to meet the same attendance, preparation, and oral participation standards as those students who are taking the course for credit. The instructor does not expect auditors to prepare and submit any written assignments.

c. The Cuneiform Studies Laboratory (located in Macy 216) houses a number of lexical and grammatical aids (both print and electronic) for the close study of biblical and postbiblical Hebrew, Greek, Aramaic, and Syriac. Please consult with the instructor for access to this learning resource and the regulations regarding its use.

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.
RESOURCES FOR THE STUDY OF ZECHARIAH AND ZECHARIAH TRADITIONS

In addition to the Codex Leningradensis (= BHS) edition of the biblical book of Zechariah, we will be giving close attention to the following manuscripts, versions, commentaries, etc.:

1. Old Greek and LXX witnesses to Zechariah, including Rahlfs; the Minor Prophets Scroll (8HevXIlg) from Qumran (= DJD VIII): 1:1-4, 12-14; 2:2-4, 7-9, 11-12, 16-17 (LXX 1:19-21; 2:3-5, 7-8, 12-13); 3:1-2, 4-7; 8:19-21, 23; 9:1-5; the Swete edition of LXX (so-called ‘smaller Cambridge’); and Codex Sinaiticus.


5. Hebrew fragments of Zechariah from the Cairo Geniza.


8. Isolated quotations from Zechariah in classical and medieval rabbinic sources.

9. Modern Western critical commentaries. I advise consulting these three:


We will simultaneously give close attention to presumably contemporaneous works as well as the narrative, folkloric, and aggadic traditions about the figure(s) of Zechariah and the components of his prophetic vita which are related in a variety of scriptural and parascriptural sources emanating from Jewish, Christian, and Islamic circles. These will include:

1. Other Second Temple biblical texts presumably pertinent to Zechariah: Isaiah 56-66; Haggai; Malachi; Ezra-Nehemiah; Chronicles; Esther; Daniel; select Psalms.

2. Other Second Temple, Roman, Byzantine, and early Islamic era Jewish texts that mention Zechariah legends or quote from his writings.


4. Other early Christian and patristic citations or traditions, such as the entries sub voce ‘Zechariah’ in the Greek and Syriac Lives of the Prophets.


6. Zechariah in the Qur’ān: Q 3:37-41; 6:85; 19:2-15; 21:89-90. N.b.: Zakariyyā’ is here the father of John the Baptist (cf. Lk 1:5ff., 3:2) and arguably a prophet (cf. Q 19:58; 6:89), but this qur’ānic character is frequently confused and/or conflated in subsequent Islamic traditions with the earlier biblical prophet(s).

7. traditions about Zechariah in Isrā’īlīyyāt collections as transmitted by tradents like Ibn Qutayba, Ya’qūbī, Ţabarī, etc.

8. later Muslim ‘tales of the prophets’ (qiṣṣas al-anbiyā’) collections.
SUPPLEMENTAL BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR ASSESSING ‘ZECHARIAH’


Joseph Heinemann, “Zechariah (bib. fig., h. pr.) in the Aggadah,” *Encyclopaedia Judaica*.


