Religion 23A. TAP, D2: What is the Bible? Research Project
Fall 2017

This project will focus on learning how to define a research question, finding materials about your subject matter, and distinguishing between the different kinds of material that you find. The project is focused on an examination of one theme or issue relevant to one of these texts: the Babylonian Epic of Creation (*Enuma Elish*) or the book of Genesis. You must use the resources available at Bailey/Howe to locate three sources (books, book chapters, journal articles, encyclopedia articles, websites) that deal with your chosen topic. **Do not limit your search to Google and websites**—use ATLA Religion Database, the CATQuest version of the Library Catalog, the references in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, etc. **Do not use the first three sources that you find.** Instead, select three sources that allow you to discuss the different perspectives and goals of each. For example, you may select one theological, one historical, and one literary source that will allow for a fairly easy comparison, although sometimes these categories overlap. To find appropriate sources, you will have to read bibliographical information carefully, and skim contents quickly. **In selecting your sources, you must include at least two scholarly sources.**

Use the Library Research Guide <http://researchguides.uvm.edu/rel023afall2017> to help you locate the resources, to search the CATQuest version of the Library Catalog and ATLA Religion Database effectively, and to cite your sources correctly using MLA Style. Also, Pat Mardeusz is available for research consultations: Patricia.Mardeusz@uvm.edu

Possible topics:
- Concept of divinity in Genesis *or Enuma Elish*
- Concept of human nature in Genesis *or Enuma Elish*
- Gender or sexuality in Genesis
- Composition of Genesis *or Enuma Elish* (key term that might be helpful: documentary hypothesis)
- Covenant in Genesis
- Any particular story in Genesis (e.g., story of Cain and Abel, of Dinah, of Jacob’s wrestling match, of the Tower of Babel, etc.)

Here are some questions that can help you think about the author’s perspective:
- Was the source written for a scholarly or popular audience? (What is the publisher—a scholarly press, a religious press, a personal website? Does it presuppose an in-depth knowledge of specialized fields such as ancient languages or history? Does it use technical jargon?)
- When was it published? (Is there reason to think that the author’s ideas are out-of-date?)
- Is the concern of the source about the text in its ancient context or the text’s relevance in today’s world?
- Does the author assume that the stories in the text are true or false?
- Does the author assume that the beliefs or values in the text are true or false?
Can you discern any other perspectives? (For example, that it is feminist, is anti-Jewish, is primarily concerned with poetry, that it is moralistic or normative, etc.)

You will produce three pieces of writing about your research:

1. An annotated bibliography of your sources. For directions on the annotated bibliography, see below. This annotated bibliography is due in class on Friday, October 6. These bibliographies will be returned with comments by Friday, October 13. When you submit your essay, you must staple this original copy of the annotated bibliography with my comments to the back of your essay.

2. An essay in which you consider how those three sources contributed to your understanding of Enuma Elish or Genesis. In particular, consider how the author’s audience or the goal shaped his or her work, and whether that perspective made the work more or less helpful for you in understanding the ancient community that produced the text. The essay must have a brief meaningful title that refers to your main idea. This essay should be 2-4 pages in length, word-processed or typed, double-spaced, revised for spelling and grammar. It should include a bibliography of your three sources, in correct MLA format. This new bibliography should not include annotations from your Annotated Bibliography; instead, it should include just the citations. Staple your original annotated bibliography with my comments to the paper. This essay is due in class on Friday, October 27. These papers will be returned by November 3, with suggestions for revision. When you submit your revised essay, you must staple this original copy of your essay with my comments, plus the original annotated bibliography with my comments.

3. A revised essay based on suggestions made and any further research needed. This revision is due on Friday, November 17. When you submit your revised essay, staple your original version of the essay plus original annotated bibliography to it.

Review the “Writing Tips” document on Blackboard to make sure that you avoid typical writing pitfalls. All written assignments must be word-processed, double-spaced, and checked for grammar, spelling, and clear communication. Staple the pages together (pages may be printed back-to-back). Pages must be numbered. Do not include a title page and do not use folders or covers. Put your name and date at the top, left side of the first page. Number all other pages.

About writing an annotated bibliography:
Give a title or at least a designation of your subject matter. Then, for each of your three sources, write an annotation. Organize the annotations in alphabetical order according to the author’s last name. Each annotation must contain the following elements:

- a complete bibliographic citation in MLA format (see below).
- a brief description of how you found that source (e.g., by a search in ATLA using the keyword ____________; by following a bibliographic reference in The Anchor Bible Dictionary; by a Google search using the keyword ____________, by skimming chapter titles in books in the relevant section of the library, etc.).
• a summary of the main ideas and information. To summarize, use your own words to describe (not just refer to) the main ideas and information in the source.
• an evaluation of the author’s perspective. In a separate paragraph, assess the author’s perspective and goals, using the questions above to help you think about bias, audience, and goals. This step is crucial. The relevance of the author’s argument or information will depend in part on the author’s perspective.

The annotations should be written in paragraph form and should not exceed one page per annotation.

About MLA format. MLA format is not the same style as the citations found in the Library Catalog or the databases. For a comprehensive presentation, see *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* (many copies in the library). Or consult the brief, practical discussion with examples at the Purdue University Online Writing Laboratory Website at [https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/](https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/) or the MLA Style Center at [https://style.mla.org](https://style.mla.org).