Comparative Study (Senior Seminar)  
REL 4933.0008, Fall 2015  
MWF 4 (10:40-11:30), AND 34

**Professor:** Robert Kawashima  
**office hours:** Mon 1:45-2:45; Wed 11:40-12:40; or by appointment  
**email:** rsk@ufl.edu  
**office:** 120 Anderson

**Course Description:**
The comparative method, practiced in varying forms in a number of disciplines (biology, linguistics, literature, etc.) compares, say, species, languages, and texts, in an attempt to account for both what unites as well as differentiates these objects of study. Generally speaking, they either arise from an historical relation. According to comparative grammar, for example, the Romance languages all descend historically from Latin. Or they arise from certain universal properties intrinsic to the objects under consideration. According to Chomsky, for example, all natural human languages derive formally (not historically) from an innate mental faculty he calls “universal grammar,” so that even wholly unrelated languages still share a core of crucial grammatical features. Comparative religion, in the same way, might be said to identify and account for the similarities and differences that exist between religions. What is religion? And what similarities, both historical and non-historical in origin, exist between religions?

In this seminar, we will approach these problems through the lens of Foucault’s project, “the archaeology of knowledge.” We will conceptualize and analyze religions as discourses, realized in various beliefs, rituals, institutions, and so forth. We will specifically compare the religious traditions of what might be thought of, broadly speaking, as the ancient Mediterranean world: Mesopotamia, Canaan (including Israel), and Greece. Given the nature of our primary evidence, we will need to confront certain theoretical issues involved in the critical analysis and interpretation of ancient literature. (Thus, we will also read a selection of secondary texts addressing these problems of method.) Our comparative analyses will not only trace religious evolution through history, but chart religious variation across geography as well. In particular, we will discover two “epistemic breaks” or “ruptures.” The first underlies what is generally (and unsatisfactorily) known as the “monotheistic revolution” of ancient Israel — which led, as we will see, to homologous developments in other religious traditions as well. The second underlies the appearance of Jewish apocalypticism, out of which Christianity itself would eventually emerge. By thus using the comparative method, in conjunction with critical analytical and interpretive tools, we will seek to gain some sense of historical and theoretical perspective within the diversity of ancient religious traditions.

**Required Texts:**
*HarperCollins Study Bible* — or other approved translation  
Michael David Coogan, *Stories from Ancient Canaan*  
Stephanie Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia*  
Homer, *The Odyssey*, trans. Richmond Lattimore

**additional** secondary readings, course materials, and information will be made available through Canvas at e-Learning Support Services: https://lss.at.ufl.edu/
Accommodations for students with disabilities: students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation.

Course Requirements:

**Attendance is mandatory**

Participation — 10%

2 Exams — 45%

2 Essays (6 pages) — 45%

Make-up exams must be approved by instructor beforehand, or justified afterward by providing appropriate documentation (medical, etc.).

**Grade scale:**

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**Schedule:**

**Week 1**

8/24 **Introduction:** syllabus; general background

8/26 **Creation Myth:** Dalley, “Epic of Creation”

8/28 **Creation “History”:** Genesis 1-3

**Week 2**

8/31 **Creation “History”:** Genesis 1-3

9/2 **Myth versus History:** Eliade, “Sacred Time and Myths”


**Week 3**

9/7 **Labor Day (no class)**

9/9 **The Disenchanted World:** Genesis 1-11; Psalms 19 and 29; Frymer-Kensky, “Israel and the Master of the Universe”


**Week 4**

9/14 **Nature:** “Homeric Hymn to Demeter”; Dalley, “Descent of Ishtar”; Coogan, “Baal”; Genesis 1-3, 6-9; Bottéro, “Religious Representations,” 77-95

9/16 **Culture and Cosmic Balance:** Hesiod *Theogony*, 19-21; *Works and Days*, 38-40; Genesis 2-11; Vernant “The Myth of Prometheus in Hesiod”

9/18 **Discussion:** TBA
Week 5
9/21 Flood Myth: Dalley, “Atrahasis”
9/23 Flood “History”: Genesis 6-9

Week 6
9/30 The Human Condition: Exodus 19-24; Deuteronomy 5-11, 27-34; Kawashima, “Covenant and Contingence”
10/2 Discussion: TBA; PAPER 1 due in class

Week 7
10/5 The Hero: Iliad 1, 9; Coogan, “Aqhat” and “Kirta”; Detienne, “The Memory of the Poet”
10/7 The Patriarch: Genesis 12-50; Auerbach, “Odysseus’ Scar”
10/9 Discussion: TBA

Week 8
10/12 EXAM 1 (8/26 to 10/9)
10/14 Genealogy of the Self: Odyssey 19-20; Genesis 22; 1 Samuel 24; 2 Samuel 11-12; Aeneid 2; Vernant, “Some Aspects of Personal Identity in Greek Religion”
10/16 Discussion: TBA

Week 9
10/19 Death: Odyssey 11; Aeneid 6; 1 Samuel 28; Dalley, “Nergal and Ereshkigal”; Vernant, “Three Ideologies of Death”
10/21 Divine Abode: Deuteronomy 33; Judges 5; Habakkuk 3; Psalm 68; Exodus 19; Deuteronomy 4; 1 Kings 8, 19
10/23 Discussion: TBA

Week 10
10/26 Sacred Space: Kawashima, “Priestly Tent of Meeting”
   Exodus 35-40; Leviticus 10; Numbers 1-3, 9:15-23;
   Exodus 33:6-11; Numbers 11:16-17, 12:4-10; Deuteronomy 31:14-15;
   Genesis 28, 35; 2 Samuel 24
10/28 Temple: Exodus 35-40; 1 Kings 6-8
10/30 Discussion: TBA

Week 11
11/2 Divine Presence: Exodus 3, 24-25, 32-33; 1 Samuel 4:1-7:2; Eilberg-Schwartz, “The Averted Gaze”
11/4 Sacred Time: Genesis 1; Exodus 12, 23:10-17, 31:12-17, 34:18-24; Leviticus 23; Numbers 28-29; Deuteronomy 16
11/6 Homecoming (no class)
Week 12
11/9 **Sacrifice:** review Hesiod and “Atrahasis”; Vernant, “Hesiod’s Foundation Myth of Sacrifice”
11/11 **Veteran’s Day (no class)**
11/13 **Sacrifice:** Genesis 4, 6-9, 22; Exodus 12-13; Leviticus 1-10, 16; Deuteronomy 12, 16, 21

Week 13
11/16 **Oracles and Prophecy:** Exodus 19-20, 24; 1 Kings 18; Amos 4-5; Exodus 28:15-30; Leviticus 8:8; Numbers 27:21; 1 Samuel 14:36-42, 28:3-20;
11/18 **From Autochthon to Alien:** Genesis 11-23, 31-35, 50; Exodus 1-12; Deuteronomy 12, 26; Joshua 12-21; Aeneid 12
11/20 **Discussion:** TBA; **PAPER 2 due in class**

Week 14
11/23 **Class canceled (due to conference)**
11/25 **Thanksgiving (no class)**
11/27 **Thanksgiving (no class)**

Week 15
11/30 **History:** Hesiod, *Works and Days*, 40-42; “KingList” and “Hammurabi Law Code”; Deuteronomy 17:14-20; 1 Samuel 1-10; 2 Samuel 5, 7; Psalm 2
12/2 **Apocalypticism (Space):** “The Astronomical Book” (1 Enoch 72-82); Auerbach, “Figura”
12/4 **Discussion:** TBA

Week 16
12/7 **Apocalypticism (Time):** “Jubilees,” excerpts; Mark 13-14; Auerbach, “Figura”
12/9 **EXAM 2** (10/14 to 12/7)