

# **BSBB9405 READINGS IN NORTHWEST SEMITIC LITERATURE**

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## **SEMINAR DESCRIPTION**

This seminar is designed to introduce the student to the extant literature of Northwest Semitic language family which are comparable to the Hebrew of the Old Testament. The study includes a comparative analysis of Northwest Semitic grammar, syntax, and other linguistic issues. Epigraphic materials in Hebrew, Ugaritic, Phoenician, Aramaic, Syriac, Moabite, Ammonite, and Edomite are translated and interpreted.

## **GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

1. Students will read a variety of extant literature from NW Semitic dialects of Ugaritic, Phoenician, Ammonite, Moabite, Edomite, Aramaic & Syriac, and Hebrew, derived from archaeological research and other historical sources. Students will interact with background history of the languages, cultures, and documents.
2. Students will be able to analyze the major comparative elements of grammar and syntax of the NW Semitic language family via textbook, chart studies, and inductive research.
3. Students will translate a variety of NW Semitic texts (varied languages & literary types) for inductive grammatical application and literary analysis.
4. Students will develop facility in philological analysis of Hebrew terminology through NW Semitic comparisons via translation of texts and lexical study. This will enhance the student's ability to utilize advanced lexical aids such as Hebrew and cognate language dictionaries as well as the Chicago Assyrian Dictionary.
5. Students will enhance their knowledge of Hebrew grammar & syntax through comparative linguistic analysis, facilitating further reading and research in the Hebrew-Aramaic Bible.

## **TEXTBOOKS**

**Alger F. Johns, *A Short Grammar of Biblical Aramaic* (St. Andrews Univ. Press)**

**Wheeler Thackson, *Introduction to Syriac* (Ibex Publishers)**

**Robert Hezron, *The Semitic Languages* (ppb) (Routledge Language Family)**

## **Recommended**

**Freedman, David Noel; A. Dean Forbes; and Francis I. Andersen. *Studies in Hebrew and Aramaic Orthography*. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1992.**

**Moscatti, Sabatino. *An Introduction to the Comparative Grammar of the Semitic Languages: Phonology and Morphology*. Port Linguarum Orientalium. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1964.  
(Out of Print.)**

**Selected texts and readings.**

## **SEMINAR PROCEDURE**

1. The seminar structure will consist of alternating weeks of discussion related to the grammar of a given NW Semitic language dialect and translation of selected texts in that language. In the first term of the semester, the professor will lead both the discussion of the grammar and the translation. In the second half of the seminar, the students will lead the translation dialogue.
2. Students will translate and analyze important grammatical structures in NW Semitic texts, distributing to seminar participants copies of the work at least three days in advance of the seminar meeting. Students should also search out and read articles in the library related to the given language and text discussed in class.
3. Each student will investigate a text not translated in the seminar for a research paper presentation during the final weeks of the course. The research shall consist of translation, textual analysis, historical & grammatical study, and comparative linguistic inquiry. Seminar participants will be provided copies of the research papers at least one week in advance.

## **WEEK      CONTENT FOCUS**

- |    |                                                                             |
|----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1  | INTRODUCTION TO NW SEMITIC LANGUAGE FAMILY                                  |
| 2  | INTRODUCTION TO BIBLICAL & IMPERIAL ARAMAIC                                 |
| 3  | READINGS IN DANIEL & EZRA & ELEPHANTINE PAPYRI                              |
| 4  | RDGS. IN NABATEAN ARAMAIC PRAYERS & SAMARITAN OSTRACA                       |
| 5  | INTRODUCTION TO SYRIAC                                                      |
| 6  | SYRIAC TEXTS                                                                |
| 7  | SYRIAC TEXTS                                                                |
| 8  | HEBREW OSTRACA: LACHISH LETTERS, ARAD TEXTS                                 |
| 9  | INTRODUCTION TO MOABITE LANGUAGE                                            |
| 10 | TRANSLATION OF THE MESHA STELE                                              |
| 11 | INTRODUCTION TO AMMONITE LANGUAGE                                           |
| 12 | TRANSLATION OF AMMONITE TEXTS AND INSCRIPTIONS<br>& DEIR 'ALLA BALAAM TEXTS |

- 13 INTRODUCTION TO UGARITIC
- 14 TRANSLATION OF BAAL-ANATH #67
- 15 TRANSLATION OF THE KERET EPIC
- SEMINAR PAPERS

## SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

### *General Semitic Literature*

- Bergstrasser, Gotthelf. *Introduction to the Semitic Languages: Text Specimens and Grammatical Sketches*. Translated with Notes and Bibliography and an Appendix on the Scripts by Peter Daniels. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1983.
- Driver, G. R. *Semitic Writing From Pictograph to Alphabet*. London: Oxford University Press, 1948.
- Fleisch, Henri. *Introduction a L'Etude des Langues Semitiques*. Paris: Libraire D'Amerique et D'Orient, 1947.
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- Gordon, Cyrus; Gary Rendsburg; and Nathan H. Winter. *Eblaitica: Essays on the Ebla Archives and Eblaite Language*. 4 vols. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1987-2002.
- Levin, Saul. *The Indo-European and Semitic Languages: An Exploration of Structural Similarities Related to Accent, Chiefly in Greek, Sanskrit, and Hebrew*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1971.
- Moscatti, Sabatino, ed. *An Introduction to the Comparative Grammar of the Semitic Languages: Phonology and Morphology*. Port Linguarum Orientalium. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1964.
- Naveh, Joseph. *Early History of the Alphabet: An Introduction to West Semitic epigraphy ad Palaeography*. Jerusalem: Hebrew University, Magnes Press; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1982.

### *Ammonite*

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- Jackson, Kent P. *The Ammonite Language of the Iron Age*. Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983.

### *Aramaic and Syriac*

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- Sokoloff, Michael, ed. *Aramaicans, Aramaic, and the Aramaic Literary Tradition*. Ramat-Gan, Israel: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1983.
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- 2 BIBLICAL & IMPERIAL ARAMAIC GRAMMAR AND TEXTS
- 3 READINGS IN DANIEL & EZRA
- 4 ELEPHANTINE ARAMAIC PAPYRI
- 5 HEBREW OSTRACA: LACHISH LETTERS, ARAD TEXTS  
& SYRO-PHOENICIAN SCRIPT
- 6 DEAD SEA SCROLLS
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