

REL 365 – The Book of Mormon

Claremont Graduate University – Spring 2019

Th 1:00-3:50 – McManus 33

Prof. Patrick Mason
Office hours by appointment

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Course Description and Student Learning Outcomes

With over 150 million copies printed since it first appeared in 1830, and with the runaway success of the eponymous Broadway musical, the Book of Mormon is arguably the most successful book of scripture to have its origins in the modern West. Yet until quite recently the book has been largely ignored or dismissed by scholars.

Designed for students with any level of previous familiarity with the book (ranging from considerable to none), this course will introduce students to the Book of Mormon's origins, content, reception history, and influence. In so doing, we will consider a number of broader themes, including the possibilities and limits of historical and religious studies methodologies; the influence of historical context and reading practices on the formation and maintenance of a scriptural community; scripture as literature (or literature as scripture); and the way that scripture produces gendered, racial, and ethical formations.

Students in this course will gain a sophisticated understanding of the origins and content of the Book of Mormon; will investigate the relationship between a text and its reception; will consider the processes and implications of scripturalization; and will develop critical reading, writing, and speaking skills by participating in seminar, working in small groups, and producing and presenting their own original research.

Required Readings (books available in Huntley Bookstore or online booksellers)

- Grant Hardy, ed., *The Book of Mormon: Maxwell Institute Study Edition* (Maxwell Institute, 2019)
- Terryl Givens, *The Book of Mormon: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press, 2009)
- Terryl Givens, *By the Hand of Mormon: The American Scripture that Launched a New World Religion* (Oxford University Press, 2002)
- John Christopher Thomas, *A Pentecostal Reads the Book of Mormon: A Literary and Theological Introduction* (CPT Press, 2016)
- *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* vol. 27 (2018) - available via electronic subscription at <https://www.press.uillinois.edu/journals/jbms.html>
- Other readings as assigned, accessible via link provided, electronic databases at Honnold Library, or Canvas

Course Requirements and Policies

A grade of A- in this class is yours to lose while an A is yours to gain. Students who satisfactorily complete all the required assignments and participate regularly in class discussion are thus assured of an A- grade. Failure to complete any component of the class, including turning in work late or incomplete or not following directions, will result in a lower grade. "Following directions" means completing all that is asked of you on each assignment and staying within the word count limit (neither more nor less).

In order to earn an A, your work in all of the required areas must be excellent. Your writing, presenting, and regular class participation must display insight, thoughtful engagement with class readings and discussions, and professionalism. Your written assignments must be characterized by clarity, precision, originality, and polish. For qualitative guidelines, see "Notes on Criteria" at the end of this syllabus.

Grades will be determined based on student performance in the following areas:

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| Reading responses (composite) | 20% |
| Annotated bibliography | 15% |
| Class presentation | 10% |
| Research paper | 35% |
| Class participation | 20% |

It should go without saying, but all submitted assignments are expected to be your own original work. Plagiarism of any kind will not be tolerated. Students who are suspected of plagiarized work will be confronted, with penalties ranging from failure on the assignment to failure for the course and even expulsion from the university. If you have questions about what constitutes plagiarism, please see me or consult resources such as CGU's "Understanding and Preventing Plagiarism":

<http://www.cgu.edu/pages/903.asp>. Another good resource is <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/589/01/>.

We are here to be a resource for you, both in this course and in your broader graduate studies. Please feel free to come see either of us during our office hours or by appointment.

Assignments

All students are expected to complete the following assignments. Failure to complete any major component of the course could result in an incomplete or failing grade.

Reading responses

You are required to submit a 500-750-word response for the three weeks in which we are reading the Book of Mormon text (Feb 21, 28, and March 7). You will then write a response to 5 of the other 9 weeks of assigned readings. Your responses should not be simply summarize but rather offer a thoughtful, scholarly reflection on the reading. Typically this will consist of engagement with the author's argument(s), but it may also be occasion for a short thought piece of your own, albeit solidly grounded in the week's reading. Students are encouraged to make connections between readings, whether from this class or with texts encountered in other courses. *Essays should be e-mailed to Caroline Kline no later than 11:00am on the day of class*, and will not be accepted late. Individual papers will be graded on a $\sqrt{-}$, $\sqrt{}$, or $\sqrt{+}$ basis; a composite grade for all the responses will be assigned at the end of the semester.

Annotated bibliography (due in class April 4)

Students will divide into groups of 2-3 to produce an annotated bibliography on a topic of their choice related to the Book of Mormon. The group will survey the relevant scholarship on the topic, with an eye toward analytical and theoretical debates and developments over time. Groups should look at both books and articles, especially since in many areas the scholarship is article-heavy. Each bibliographic entry should be annotated with a paragraph-length description of the nature of the work (including methodology), the positionality of the author, and the main argument(s) made by the author(s). Major books may merit lengthier annotations, but you should strive for concision and highlight arguments and significant contributions. Each bibliography should consist of at least 20 entries, and should convey what are the most significant or influential works in the field. Groups should bring enough copies of their completed bibliography to distribute to all class members on April 4, when they will give a brief presentation on their findings.

Class presentation (in class May 9)

Each student will give a 12-15-minute presentation to the class on the topic of their final research paper. Presentations may take various forms and include multimedia support, but should be polished and professional in both content and style.

Research paper (due May 16)

The major assignment for the semester is the completion of a 4000-5000-word essay based on original research and argumentation. You may choose any topic related to the Book of Mormon. We encourage you to discuss your topic with either instructor early in the research process. Papers should demonstrate facility with both primary and secondary sources, and should be fully and properly documented (preferably in Chicago style). Students should submit electronic copies of their papers to Patrick Mason no later than May 16.

All students will be required to turn in a first draft of their research paper to Caroline Kline by Monday, April 22. The draft should be at least 5 pages and cite at least three external sources.

Other Resources

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If you would like to request academic accommodations due to temporary or permanent disability, contact the CGU Dean of Students and Coordinator for Student Disability Services at DisabilityServices@cgu.edu or 909-607-9448. Appropriate accommodations are considered after you have conferred with the Office of Disability Services (ODS) and presented the required documentation of your disability to the ODS.

Mental Health Resources

Graduate school is a context where mental health struggles can arise or be exacerbated. If you ever find yourself struggling, please ask for help. If you wish to seek out campus resources, here is some basic information: <https://www.cuc.claremont.edu/mcaps/>

Monsour Counseling and Psychological Services (MCAPS) is committed to promoting psychological wellness for all students at the Claremont Colleges. Professional and well-trained psychologists, psychiatrists, and post-doctoral and intern therapists offer support for a range of psychological issues in a confidential and safe environment.

Phone (909) 621-8202

After hours emergency (909) 607-2000

Tranquada Student Services Center, 1st floor

757 College Way

Claremont, CA 91711

Title IX

If either professor learns of any potential violation of CGU's gender-based misconduct policy (e.g., rape, sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, or stalking) by any means, we are required to notify the CGU Title IX Coordinator at Deanof.Students@cgu.edu or (909) 607-9448. Students can request confidentiality from the institution, which we will communicate to the Title IX Coordinator. If students want to speak with someone confidentially, the following resources are available on and off campus: EmPOWER Center (909) 607-2689, Monsour Counseling and Psychological Services (909) 621-8202, and The Chaplains of the Claremont Colleges (909) 621-8685. Speaking with a confidential resource does not preclude students from making a formal report to the Title IX Coordinator if and when they are ready. Confidential resources can walk students through all of their reporting options. They can also provide students with information and assistance in accessing academic, medical, and other support services they may need.

Campus Security

Campus security can be reached 24 hours/day at (909) 607-2000.

Class Schedule (subject to change)

- Jan 24 Introduction, overview, and historical background
- Jan 31 The gold plates and history
- Primary sources
 - Joseph Smith, “History, circa Summer 1832”
<https://josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-circa-summer-1832>
 - Oliver Cowdery, “Letter VIII,” *LDS Messenger and Advocate*, Oct. 1835
<https://josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1834-1836/93>
 - Testimony of Three Witnesses, Book of Mormon (viii)
 - Testimony of Eight Witnesses, Book of Mormon (viii)
 - Testimony of Emma Smith, Book of Mormon (ix)
 - Testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith, Book of Mormon (xi)
 - Joseph Smith’s Statements on the Book of Mormon (611)
 - Stories of the Translation (616)
 - Dirkmaat and MacKay, “The Firsthand Witness Accounts of the Translation Process” <https://rsc.byu.edu/archived/coming-forth-book-mormon/firsthand-witness-accounts-translation-process>
 - Givens, *By the Hand of Mormon*, chaps. 1, 6
 - Bushman, “The Gold Plates as Foundational Text” [Canvas]
 - Hazard, “How Joseph Smith Encountered Printing Plates and Founded Mormonism” [Canvas]
- Feb 7 Religious studies approaches
- Ann Taves, “History and the Claims of Revelation,” *Numen* 61 (2014) [Honnold]
 - Robert Orsi, “Abundant History” *Historically Speaking* 9:7 (Sep/Oct 2008) [Honnold]
 - Orsi and Bushman, “Finding the Presence in Mormon History” [Canvas]
 - Taysom, “Abundant Events or Narrative Abundance” [Canvas]
 - Midgley, “No Middle Ground: The Debate over the Authenticity of the Book of Mormon” <https://rsc.byu.edu/archived/historicity-and-latter-day-saint-scriptures/7-no-middle-ground-debate-over-authenticity>
 - McDannell, “Mexicans, Tourism, and Book of Mormon Geography” [Canvas]
- Feb 14 Reading the Book of Mormon, part I
- Givens, *The Book of Mormon: A Very Short Introduction*, part I
 - Hardy, *Understanding the Book of Mormon*, chap. 1 [Canvas]
 - Hardy, *The Book of Mormon: A Reader’s Edition*, introduction [Canvas]
 - The Book of Mormon, 1 Nephi

- Feb 21 Reading the Book of Mormon, part II
- The Book of Mormon, 2 Nephi-Mosiah
- Feb 28 Reading the Book of Mormon, part III
- The Book of Mormon, Alma-Helaman
- Mar 7 Reading the Book of Mormon, part IV
- The Book of Mormon, 3 Nephi-Moroni
- Mar 14 The Book of Mormon in American literature and history
- Bushman, “The Book of Mormon and the American Revolution” [Canvas]
 - Nathan Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*, pp. 115-122 [Honnold]
 - Richard Brodhead, “Prophets in America Circa 1830: Emerson, Nat Turner, Joseph Smith,” *Journal of Mormon History* 29 (Spring 2003) [Honnold]
 - *Confessions of Nat Turner*, pp. 7-11
<https://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/turner/turner.html>
 - Elizabeth Fenton, “Open Canons: Sacred History and American History in *The Book of Mormon*,” *J19: The Journal of Nineteenth-Century Americanists* 1:2 (2013) [Honnold]
 - First 5 chapters of *Wieland*, <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/792/792-h/792-h.htm>
 - Bryant, “The Prairies,” <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/55341/the-prairies>
- Mar 21 Spring Break - no class
- Mar 28 No class - work on annotated bibliography
- Apr 4 *Annotated bibliography due*

Non-LDS readings

- Campbell, *Delusions: An Analysis of the Book of Mormon*
<https://archive.org/details/delusionsanalysis01camp>
- Thomas, *A Pentecostal Reads the Book of Mormon*, parts 3, 5, Afterword
- Stendahl, “The Sermon on the Mount and Third Nephi”
<https://rsc.byu.edu/archived/reflections-mormonism-judaean-christian-parallels/8-sermon-mount-and-third-nephi>
- Charlesworth, “Messianism in the Pseudepigrapha and the Book of Mormon”
<https://rsc.byu.edu/archived/reflections-mormonism-judaean-christian-parallels/7-messianism-pseudepigrapha-and-book>
- Jeffries, “Called and Ordained” [Canvas]

- Apr 11 Race
- Stevenson, “Reckoning with Race in the Book of Mormon,” *JBMS*
 - Mueller, “The Book of Mormon: A White Universal Gospel” [Canvas]
 - Jared Hickman, “The Book of Mormon as Amerindian Apocalypse,” *American Literature* 86:3 (Sep 2014) [Honnold]
 - Fenton, “Nephites and Israelites” [Canvas]
 - Thayne, “The Blood of Father Lehi,” chaps. 4-5 [Canvas]
 - Pulido on Margarito Bautista [Canvas]
- Apr 18 Book of Mormon Studies as an emergent field
- Guest speaker: Joseph Spencer, editor of *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*
- Givens, *By the Hand of Mormon*, chaps. 3, 5, 8, 9
 - “*The Book of Mormon at the University of Vermont*” (*JBMS* special section)
- Apr 22 *Paper drafts due*
- Apr 25 Gender
- Pearson, “Could Feminism Have Saved the Nephites?” [Canvas]
 - Williams, “Women in the Book of Mormon” [Canvas]
 - Fronk, “Desert Epiphany: Sariah and the Women of 1 Nephi” [Canvas]
 - Morrill, “Women and the Book of Mormon” [Canvas]
 - Clifford, “Chapter 2: Feminist Interpretations of the Bible” [Canvas]
 - Anderson, “Toward a Feminist Interpretation of Latter-day Scripture” [Canvas]
- Apr 27 *Mormon Studies Conference - “Millennial Mormons”*
- May 2 War and Peace
- Andrew Bolton, “The Book of Mormon: An Asset or Liability for Becoming a Peace Church?” *John Whitmer Historical Journal* 19 (1999) [Honnold]
 - England, “Why Nephi Killed Laban: Reflections on the Truth of the Book of Mormon” [Canvas]
 - Madson, “A Non-Violent Reading of the Book of Mormon” [Canvas]
 - Boyce, “A ‘Narrative’ Reading of the Book of Mormon” [Canvas]
 - Deane, “Offensive Warfare in the Book of Mormon and Defense of the Bush Doctrine” [Canvas]
 - Pulsipher, “Buried Swords: The Shifting Interpretive Ground of a Beloved Book of Mormon Narrative” [Honnold]
- May 9 Student Presentations
- May 16 *Research paper due (no class)*

Notes on Criteria

These criteria are used to evaluate students when taking their qualifying examinations. Although not all categories are equally applicable to coursework, they provide a helpful rubric for determining your progress in meeting the academic standards of the discipline.

Adequacy of research: How thorough was the research within the limits of the topic? Are all relevant and appropriate sources researched? Were the sources representative of the field of the topic? Is the research done with appropriate discernment and evaluation of the validity and/or credibility of the sources? Does the work show appropriate documentation?

Mastery of material: How well was the researched material comprehended and utilized? Does the work contain misunderstandings and misinterpretations? Does it show sufficient awareness of the historical background and larger implications of the material comprehended?

Coherence of organization: Is the thesis/project/dissertation coherently organized? Is there logical and material coherence between different chapters? Is there an ordered, logical relationship between different parts, or does the work simply ramble? Are the transitions from one part to another coherent or arbitrary?

Development of thesis: Is the main thesis or claim clearly stated? Is it developed through appropriate elaboration, analysis, and argumentation, or is there a tendency to merely state a series of unsubstantiated claims? Is the argument developed with appropriate rigor, critical sensitivity, and fairness to the parties to the debate?

Originality of thesis: Does the thesis/project/dissertation as a whole contain originality and insights that can be regarded as a contribution to the progress of human knowledge in the field, or is it largely a repetition of the conventional interpretations, claims, and assumptions prevalent in the field?

Clarity of communication: Is the writing and/or oral defense clear and intelligible or confusing and difficult to follow? Is it written and/or delivered in a persuasive manner? Is the material communicated with variety, emphasis, complexity, and diction appropriate to the main thesis? Does the form of communication indicate intellectual maturity appropriate to the master's or doctoral level?