OBJECTIVE:

The course looks at some recent and classic studies of ritual space (temples, shrines, land, etc.) in the Hebrew Bible and the ancient Near East. It augments this with examination of some studies on ritual space from a comparative and theoretical context. The goals are twofold: (1) to make students aware of the data and various approaches that should be considered and (2) to critique and problematize how the issue is studied in regard to biblical and near eastern data.

LEARNING GOALS:

• Familiarize students with recent and classic studies of ritual space
• Help them understand how to use different corpora and data sets in making argument
• Develop their abilities in comparative study
• Develop their abilities in theoretical analysis
• Develop their abilities to critique and problematize arguments
• Develop their abilities in oral presentation
• Develop their abilities as teachers
• Develop their abilities in writing critical reviews of secondary literature

BOOKS:

We will read the following books over the course of the semester (in this order):

Biblical and Near Eastern Context:


Theoretical and Comparative Context:


SCHEDULE:

Class meetings: Jan 12, 16, 19, 23, 26, 30, Feb 2, 6, 9, 13, 16, 20, 23, 27, (break Mar 30–Apr 6), Apr 10, 13, 17, 20, 24, 25! (a Brandeis Friday) (We’ll make adjustments for the Yale-Brown-Harvard-Brandeis Day and regional SBL.)

The course has seven units (see below). Units I–VI study the books listed above. For these units, a different student will lead the discussion each class session. (Assignments for these presentations will be made the first day of class.) Each student will have a few (three?) such assignments. A presentation should summarize evidence, describe the study’s conclusions, provide critique, and promote discussion in class. (See the study questions below.) A presenter should also identify (and provide if necessary) a primary text or group of texts (no more than about a biblical chapter in total length) that all students should read in preparation. Use these texts to illustrate points and to promote discussion in class. These texts will typically be those that the book draws upon for its argument. A presenter should provide a one-to-two page outline of the reading and a list of about ten discussion questions three days before their assigned class sessions. All students are expected to have read the reading assignment and the assigned primary text before class and to contribute to the discussion.

For unit VII, students will each read a different a book that relates to issue of ritual space from a non-biblical comparative or theoretical point of view (based on a bibliographic search and consultation with the instructor) and do a presentation on this in class. Bring this book into dialogue with the previously read common readings. Provide students with about 50+ pages from your book for students to read in preparation.

Units and dates:
   I. Hurowitz: Jan 12 (intro), 16, 19, 26, 30
   II. Hundley: Jan 30, Feb 2, 6
   III. Haran: Feb 9, 13, 16, 27
   IV. George: Mar 2, 6, 9
   V. Smith: Mar 13, 16, 20
   VI. Cole: Mar 23, 27
   VII. Individual readings: Apr 10, 13, 17, 20, 24, 25

STUDY QUESTIONS:

What is the primary evidence that the study is considering and using in its argument?
If a study uses textual (biblical) data, to what extent does it use and correlate other sorts of data (archaeological, comparative, etc.)?

What are an author’s views, conclusions, or suppositions about the dating of the text and the historical value of the text for reconstructing the period and practices in question?

How does a given study differ from those of other authors read in the course or with other scholarship with which you are familiar?

What are the strengths and weaknesses in the arguments presented?

How would you interpret the data differently?

To what extent does the author bring in theoretical models?

What other perspectives and models lead to a different (better) articulation and assessment of the evidence?

What are the new perspectives and conclusions that the study provides, broadly and specifically?

To what extent has a study entertained questions about gender, social class, disability, political power, etc.?

To what extent has the study entertained a variety of voices—and is this important or necessary?

What broader set of facts or worldview colors the arguments and prioritizes interpretation of the evidence?

**WORK FOR THE COURSE:**

*Presentations (35% total):* See above, on the schedule.

*Four book reviews (30%):* Write individual, RBL-like reviews for the Hurowitz, Hundley, Haran, and George books (each at least 500 words; due 1 week after we finish reading the book).

*Final comprehensive book review (25%):* For the final project, write a *New York Review of Books*-type review on all the books as a group. Focus specifically on tying perspectives from the Smith, Cole, and your individually chosen book with Hurowitz, Hundly, Haran, and George.

*Participation (10%):* Students are otherwise expected to have prepared the readings and engage in discussion of the readings for each class session.
BOOKS ON ISRAELITE/BIBLICAL RELIGION READ IN PAST VERSIONS OF THIS COURSE (FYI):


**POLICIES:**

*Preparation time:* Success in this 4 credit hour course is based on the expectation that students will spend a minimum of 9 hours of study time per week in preparation for class (readings, papers, discussion sections, preparation for exams, etc.).

*Academic Honesty:* You must complete all assignments alone. In your writing, you must follow rules of attribution. Examples of penalties for a student found responsible for an infringement of academic honesty are no credit for the work in question, failure in the course, and the traditional range of conduct sanctions from disciplinary warning through permanent dismissal from the University.

*Students with documented disabilities:* Students with disabilities certified by the Coordinator of Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities in the Office of Undergraduate Academic Affairs and First Year Services will be given reasonable accommodations to complete required assignments. Disabilities that are not documented and approved by the Office of Academic Affairs will not be given accommodations.

*Late Work:* Assignments will be docked 1% per day late. Incompletes will not be given this semester except for reason of personal emergency.

adapted from http://biblicalisraeltours.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/IMG_4147.jpg