

**REFORMED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY  
NEW YORK CITY**

**COURSE SYLLABUS**

Introduction to Syriac – 09ON6110

**Spring Semester, 2023**

1 credit (13 hours of instruction)

4:45-5:45 Thursdays, Feb. 2-May 11 (no class Apr. 7)

INSTRUCTOR: Rev. William Fullilove, Ph.D.

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703-581-2015

NOTE: Please do not email or text for questions on assignments or to request extensions. The following contacts should be via Canvas:

- 1) Extension requests must be made in the individual comment section where the student would submit that assignment on Canvas.
- 2) Questions about assignments should be made in the general comments section regarding that assignment (visible to all).
- 3) More general class questions should be made in the Professor/Student discussion forum in Canvas.

If the issue is not covered by these three categories, then please email me. You are welcome to have my cell phone, but please only text me for emergencies. The three categories above are not emergencies.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

An introduction to the language and grammar of Syriac, an Aramaic dialect and the language of many early Christian texts, especially in many early Eastern Christian communities.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES:**

1. To glorify God by and while learning to read Syriac, including selections from both the Peshitta (Old and New Testament portions) and early Christian writers.
2. To enable the student to read and translate from portions of the Syriac Old and New Testament and to understand their use in text critical work.
3. To enable the student to read and translate Syriac documents for the sake of early Christian studies and history of interpretation work.

**REQUIRED Texts:**

- Takamitsu Muraoka, *Classical Syriac for Hebraists* (Harrassowitz: Wiesbaden, 1987).
- W.M. Thackston, *Introduction to Syriac* (IBEX: Bethesda, MD, 1999)
- Sebastian Brock, *An Introduction to Syriac Studies: Third Edition* (Gorgias: Piscataway, NJ, 2017).
- Sebastian Brock, *The Bible in the Syriac Tradition: Third Edition* (Gorgias: Piscataway, NJ, 2006).
- An additional Syriac lexicon is not required, though Payne Smith's *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary*, M. Sokoloff's *A Syriac Lexicon*, or Costaz's *Syriac/French/English Dictionary* may prove helpful.

## **REQUIREMENTS:**

*Prerequisites:* Hebrew 1&2 or Biblical Aramaic or permission of the instructor.

*Class preparation:* Students are required to prepare the assigned section **BEFORE in-person sessions each week**. Students should prepare the text using both Vance *et al* and Cook as aids. Students should come prepared to read the text out loud and discuss areas of translation and grammatical questions.

*Attendance:* Students are required to attend class sessions with the professor each Thursday. If you know you cannot make it to a class session, you must notify the instructor **in advance**. Failure to attend a significant number of classes (*with “significant” being defined at the discretion of the instructor*) may result in a grade reduction or failure of the class.

*Final:* There will be a take-home final exam covering the texts covered in this class. Students will be responsible for parsing, vocabulary, and analysis of the text.

## **TOTAL GRADE:**

Class Performance (60%)

Attendance (10%)

Final Exam (30%)

The instructor reserves the right to adjust grades based on each student's attendance at class and participation in classroom exercises.

## **OFFICE HOURS:**

Thursdays at 4:15. I am always also available by appointment, including before or after class or by phone.

## **SCHEDULE:**

Feb. 2

- Read \* sections of Muraoka (see preface)
- Read Brock ISS p.1-24
- Class Preparation: Begin Peshitta Gen. 39:7-23 (Muraoka Chrestomathy #1)

Feb. 9

- Read Brock BST ch.1
- Class Preparation: Complete Peshitta Gen. 39:7-23 (Muraoka Chrestomathy #1)

Feb. 16

- Class Preparation: Peshitta Deut. 4:1-14 (Muraoka Chrestomathy #2)

Feb. 23

- Read Brock BST ch.9
- Class Preparation: Peshitta Matt 6:5-15 (Muraoka Chrestomathy #3)

Mar. 2

- Class Preparation: Aphrahat, “On Love” (Muraoka Chrestomathy #4)

Mar. 9

- Read Muraoka sections 1-8
- Class Preparation: Aphrahat, “On Fasting” (Muraoka Chrestomathy #5)

Mar. 16

- Read Muraoka sections 9-22
- Read Brock BST ch.4-5
- Class Preparation: Ephrem on Gen 39:7-23 (Muraoka Chrestomathy #6)

Mar. 23

- Read Muraoka sections 23-32
- Class Preparation: Ishodad of Merv’s Commentary on Gen. 39 (Muraoka Chrestomathy #7)

Mar. 30

- Read Muraoka sections 33-43
- Read Brock BST ch.2
- Class Preparation: Gen 39:7-12 (Syro-Hexapla) (Muraoka Chrestomathy #8)

Apr. 6 – NO Class – Maundy Thursday

Apr. 13

- Read Muraoka sections 44-56
- Class Preparation: Luke 15:11-32, Vetus Syra Sinaitica (Muraoka Chrestomathy #9)

Apr. 20

- Read Muraoka sections 57-69
- Class Preparation: Two humorous anecdotes of oriental origin (Muraoka Chrestomathy #10)

Apr. 27

- Read Muraoka sections 70-90
- Class Preparation: From a Syriac Grammar by Jacob of Edessa (Muraoka Chrestomathy #11)

May 4

- Read Muraoka sections 91-111
- Class Preparation: TBD

May 11

- Read Brock ISS 71-93
- Class Preparation: TBD
- **Final Exam taken on student's own schedule – due May 15**

## Appendix: Student Learning Outcomes

<b>MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes</b> <i>In order to measure the success of the MDiv curriculum, RTS has defined the following as the intended outcomes of the student learning process. Each course contributes to these overall outcomes. This rubric shows the contribution of this course to the MDiv outcomes.</i> <i>*As the MDiv is the core degree at RTS, the MDiv rubric will be used in this syllabus.</i>		<b>Rubric</b> ➤ Strong ➤ Moderate ➤ Minimal ➤ None	<b>Mini-Justification</b>
<b>Articulation (oral &amp; written)</b>	Broadly understands and articulates knowledge, both oral and written, of essential biblical, theological, historical, and cultural/global information, including details, concepts, and frameworks.	Moderate	Broadens theological focus and areas of inquiry
<b>Scripture</b>	Significant knowledge of the original meaning of Scripture. Also, the concepts for and skill to research further into the original meaning of Scripture and to apply Scripture to a variety of modern circumstances. (Includes appropriate use of original languages and hermeneutics; and integrates theological, historical, and cultural/global perspectives.)	Strong	Ability to grow in both text critical and history of interpretation skills; Church fathers writing in Syriac often focused devotionally and exegetically
<b>Reformed Theology</b>	Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.	Minimal	Engage theologically when appropriate, but Reformed Theology is not written in Syriac
<b>Sanctification</b>	Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student's sanctification.	Moderate	Church fathers writing in Syriac often focused devotionally and exegetically
<b>Desire for Worldview</b>	Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God.	Minimal	Material is taught within and analyzed against redemptive-historical worldview
<b>Winsomely Reformed</b>	Embraces a winsomely Reformed ethos. (Includes an appropriate ecumenical spirit with other Christians, especially Evangelicals; a concern to present the Gospel in a God-honoring manner to non-Christians; and a truth-in-love attitude in disagreements.)	Moderate	Discussion and evaluation of other church traditions to enable better dialog
<b>Preach</b>	Ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm.	Minimal	Exegetical work that forms the

			backbone of strong preaching
<b>Worship</b>	Knowledgeable of historic and modern Christian-worship forms; and ability to construct and skill to lead a worship service.	Strong	Gains an understanding of early church devotion and worship context in eastern church
<b>Shepherd</b>	Ability to shepherd the local congregation: aiding in spiritual maturity; promoting use of gifts and callings; and encouraging a concern for non-Christians, both in America and worldwide.	Minimal	Discussion as applicable
<b>Church/World</b>	Ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues.	Minimal	Discussion as applicable