



Hammurabi's Law Code

**Honors 340**  
**Writing**  
**Scripture**  
**Law**  
**Syracuse University**  
**Fall 2017**

**Time:** 3:45-5:05 on Mondays  
& Wednesdays

**Place:** Bowne Hall 306D

**Instructor:** [Jim Watts](#) (PhD)

*Office:* Hall of Languages 501

*Office Hours:* TTh 2-3 pm and  
by appointment

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**Course Description:** Written texts direct our behavior every day. Whether the U.S. Constitution or the syllabus for this class, we regularly grant normative authority to writing on paper. This course explores how and why writing gained such normative power. We will focus on the ancient history of writing and of normative texts, starting with the invention of writing in ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt. We will examine the growing authority of ritual texts, and then turn to religious scriptures, especially the Torah of Judaism and the Bible of Christianity. The course will conclude by examining the religious and legal motives behind the collections of Roman law by Christian emperors that laid the basis for later Western national law. Throughout the course, we will engage the social power of writing in economics, law and religion, and we will also pay close attention to the social impact of the material forms and visual displays of written texts. The course includes a field trip to the Metropolitan Museum of Art's collections of ancient texts and artifacts in New York City.

**Audience:** Students interested in law, literature, history, political science and religion, and the humanities generally.

**Honors Attributes:** Completing this course counts towards Honors Program attributes in the Humanities, Global Awareness, and Interdisciplinarity.

**Course Objectives:** The goals of this course goals are to have students

1. gain sufficient familiarity with evidence for the origins of writing to be able to assess the original and secondary functions of written texts;
2. develop an understanding of how written texts shape individual and social behavior;
3. recognize the social possibilities and dangers of normative textuality in past and contemporary societies.

**Course Requirements:** The course consists of class discussions, student study and research, and, most of all, readings. This course is a *reading* course, and students' completion of all reading assignments is essential for their success. Assignments, discussions, lectures and tests all presuppose that students have read carefully and on schedule the assigned readings. Questions to guide students' reading can be found in the schedule below.

**Evaluations of students work:**

Daily reading responses due at 12:00 noon on days with assignments	15%
Three papers due by 3:45 pm on Oct 2, Nov 6 and Dec 15	25% each
Attendance and participation	10%

The grading scale is: A+ = 100, A = 95, A- = 92, B+ = 88, B = 85, B- = 82, etc. The grades of late assignments will be reduced by one grade level (e.g. B to B-). Incidents of plagiarism or cheating result in no credit (0) for the test or assignment and may result in further disciplinary action (see academic integrity statement below). Students may check their grades online through the [Blackboard Learning System](#).

**Are YOU participating?**

Attendance isn't enough. To succeed in this class, you must fully engage in activities and discussions. These criteria determine your participation grade.

**EXCELLENT:** You're present, prepared, and engaged. You consistently refer to the readings, lectures, and class discussions from other weeks. You encourage others' comments and questions in a productive and respectful manner.

**GOOD:** You're present and prepared, and you offer thoughtful questions and comments that demonstrate your preparation for discussion and attention to readings and lectures.

**ADEQUATE:** You're present and prepared, but limit your contributions to several surface-level observations or clarifying questions about lectures or readings.

**MINIMAL:** You usually make a single comment during discussions in response to another student's observations or insights. ("I agree with them.")

**Class-room Behavior:** A successful learning experience depends on students' behavior in class, as much as on the quality of their work and on the teacher's presentations.

- I encourage energetic discussion of relevant topics and expect different opinions among class members, but always express your ideas with respect for those who might disagree with you.
- Arrive on time. If you must be late, enter quietly. Do not leave during class except for emergencies.
- Turn off cell phones, laptops, and tablets. If you need to use an electronic device for class work (notes, assignments), you *must sit where I can see the screen*. Texting, e-mailing or web browsing during class are grounds for being dismissed from that day's class.

**Academic Integrity:** The Syracuse University Academic Integrity Policy holds students accountable for the integrity of the work they submit. Students should be familiar with the Policy and know that it is their responsibility to learn about instructor and general academic expectations with regard to proper citation of sources in written work. The policy also governs the integrity of work submitted in exams and assignments as well as the veracity of signatures on attendance sheets and other verifications of participation in class activities. Serious sanctions can result from academic dishonesty of any sort. In this course, students found cheating on a test or assignment will receive zero (0) credit for that test or assignment. For more information and the complete policy, see <http://academicintegrity.syr.edu>.

**Religious Observances Policy:** SU religious observances policy, found at [http://supolicies.syr.edu/emp\\_ben/religious\\_observance.htm](http://supolicies.syr.edu/emp_ben/religious_observance.htm), recognizes the diversity of faiths represented among the campus community and protects the rights of students, faculty, and staff to observe religious holidays according to their tradition. Under the policy, students are provided an opportunity to make up any examination, study, or work requirements that may be missed due to are religious observance provided they notify their instructors before the end of the second week of classes. For fall and spring semesters, an online notification process is available through *MySlice/StudentServices/Enrollment/MyReligiousObservances* from the first day of class until the end of the second week of class.

**Disability-Related Accommodations:** Students who are in need of disability-related academic accommodations must register with the Office of Disability Services (ODS), 804 University Avenue, Room 309, 315-443-4498. Students with authorized disability-related accommodations should provide a current Accommodation Authorization Letter from ODS to the instructor and review those accommodations with the instructor. Accommodations, such as exam administration, are not provided retroactively; therefore, planning for accommodations as early as possible is necessary. For further information, see the ODS website, Office of Disability Services <http://disabilityservices.syr.edu/>.

**Required Textbooks:**

Robinson, Andrew. *Writing and Script: a very short introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Goody, Jack. *The Logic of Writing and the Organization of Society*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.

**Other required readings** are available through the Blackboard System or online by links imbedded in the syllabus.

**Schedule of Topics and Assignments:**

- Reading assignments must be completed by class on the day listed. Keep the reading questions in mind as you read and make notes.
- **Textbook** = readings by page numbers from required books by Robinson and Goody
- **Pdf** = pdf files available [here](#) and in Blackboard > Information.
- **Online** = online readings hotlinked in the syllabus in Blackboard > Information.
- **Bible** = readings from the Bible by book name, chapter (before any colon) and verses (after the colon).

Dates	Topics	Assignments
Mon Aug 28	Introductions	
Wed Aug 30	Ancient Near Eastern History	<b>Pdf</b> Liverani, "Historical Overview"
<b>Sep 4 AND Sep 6 NO CLASS</b>		
Mon Sep 11	Texts as Artifacts	<b>MEET in Special Collections, Bird Library 6<sup>th</sup> floor</b> <b>Online</b> Haaretz, <a href="#">Truly Ancient Bibles</a> <b>Textbook</b> Robinson 123-134
Wed Sep 13	Origins of Writing	<b>Online</b> BBC <a href="#">First Accountants</a> <b>Pdf</b> Schmandt-Besserat, "Record Keeping Before Writing" <b>Textbook</b> Robinson 5-8
Mon Sep 18	Origins of Cuneiform	<b>Textbook</b> Robinson 9-16 <b>Pdf</b> Cooper, "Babylonian beginnings"
Wed Sep 20	Origins of Egyptian Hieroglyphics	<b>Textbook</b> Robinson 82-91 <b>Pdf</b> Baines "The Earliest Egyptian Writing"
Mon Sep 25	Diffusion of Writing	<b>Textbook</b> Robinson 17-35
Wed Sep 27	Origins of the Alphabet	<b>Online</b> USA Today, <a href="#">Illiterate Egyptian Miners</a> <b>Textbook</b> Robinson 92-109
Mon Oct 2	The Functions of Writing	<b>First Paper DUE</b>
Wed Oct 4	Cuneiform Law Codes	<b>Online</b> <a href="#">Hammurabi's Code</a> (read beginning and end, and scan the laws)

Mon Oct 9	Torah as law and ritual text	<b>Bible</b> <a href="#">Exodus 19:1-8</a> ; <a href="#">Leviticus 1, 11, 19</a> ; <a href="#">Deuteronomy 31:9-13</a> <b>Pdf</b> Watts, "Political and Legal Uses"
Oct 11 AND Oct 16 NO CLASS		
Wed Oct 18	Classical History	Planning for the Met: <b>Online:</b> download the <a href="#">museum map</a> , find the ancient Near Eastern, Egyptian and Greek & Roman galleries. <b>Online:</b> Read <a href="#">Assyrian Sculpture Court</a> , <a href="#">Artisan's Tomb</a> , <a href="#">Temple of Dendur</a> ,
<b>SATURDAY Oct 21 Trip to New York to the Metropolitan Museum of Art</b>		
Mon Oct 23	Art versus Writing	<b>Textbook</b> Robinson 74-91
Wed Oct 25	Christian Scripture	<b>Bible</b> <a href="#">Romans 7:1-8:9</a> ; <a href="#">Matthew 5-7</a> ; <b>Pdf</b> Verheyden, "New Testament Canon" <b>Pdf</b> Irenaeus
Mon Oct 30	Christian Roman Law	<b>Online</b> <a href="#">Roman Law and Justinian's Code</a> <b>Pdf</b> Humfress, "Judging by the Book"
Wed Nov 1	Medieval canon law	<b>Pdf</b> Hoeflich and Grabher "The Establishment of Normative Legal Texts"
Mon Nov 6	Written Law	<b>Second Paper DUE</b>
Wed Nov 8	Contracts, treaties, covenants	<b>Online</b> <a href="#">Succession Treaties of Esarhaddon</a> <b>Bible</b> <a href="#">Exodus 24</a> <b>Online</b> <a href="#">Babatha's Marriage Contract</a>
Mon Nov 13	Files and Documentation	<b>Pdf</b> Vismann, <i>Files</i>
Wed Nov 15	Currency as Text	<b>Online</b> Surowiecki, " <a href="#">A Brief History of Money</a> " <b>Pdf</b> Rahmatian, "Money as a Normative Text"
Mon Nov 27	Writing and Government	<b>Textbook</b> Goody 1-45
Wed Nov 29	Writing and Economy	<b>Textbook</b> Goody 45-86
Mon Dec 4	Writing and Administration	<b>Textbook</b> Goody 87-126
Wed Dec 6	Writing as Law	<b>Textbook</b> Goody 127-185
Friday, Dec 15		<b>Final Paper DUE</b>

### **Bibliography:**

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- Schmandt-Besserat, Denise. "An Ancient Token System: The Precursor to Numerals and Writing." *Archaeology* (November/December 1986), 32-9. OR in *CANE*
- Verheyden, Joseph. "The New Testament Canon," in *The New Cambridge History of the Bible*, vol. 1 (ed. Joachim Schaper and James Carleton Paget; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 389-411.
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