Hammurabi's Law Code

Honors 340
The Invention and Power of
Writing
Syracuse University Fall 2023

Time: 3:45-5:05 on Mondays & Wednesdays
Place: Bowne Hall 306D

Instructor: [Jim Watts](#) (PhD)
Office: Hall of Languages 501
Chat with the Prof: M 2:30-3:30 pm and by appointment, in person or on Zoom
E-mail: jwwatts@syr.edu
Office Phone: 443-5713

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, including religious scriptures such as the Torah of Judaism and the Bible of Christianity. The course will include the religious and legal motives behind the collections of Roman law by Christian emperors that laid the basis for Western national law, as well as how writing empowered colonialism. The semester concludes with a prolonged discussion of debt, and the power of written records of debts, to shape class differences and social power. 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.

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 and Interdisciplinary Breadth.

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 the past and in 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 10 am on days with reading assignments	15%
Three papers due by 8 am on Sep 27, Oct 30, and Dec 19	25% each
Attendance and participation	10%

The grading scale is: A+ = 100, A = 95, A- = 92, B+ = 88, B = 85, B- = 82, C+ = 78, C = 75, C- = 72, D+ = 68, D = 65, D- = 62, F = 55. 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*.

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 I expect different opinions among class members, but always express your ideas with respect for those who may disagree with you or have different life experiences from yours.
- 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.

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 are 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 are present and prepared, and you offer thoughtful questions and comments that demonstrate your preparation for discussion and attention to readings and lectures.

ADEQUATE: You are 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.")

Academic Integrity: Syracuse University's Academic Integrity Policy reflects the high value that we, as a university community, place on honesty in academic work. The policy holds students accountable for the integrity of all work they submit and for upholding course-specific expectations, as well as university-wide, academic integrity expectations. The policy governs citation and use of sources, the integrity of work submitted in exams and assignments, and truthfulness in all academic matters, including course attendance and participation. The policy also prohibits students from: 1) submitting the same work in more than one class without receiving advance written authorization from both instructors and, 2) using websites that charge fees or require uploading of course materials to obtain exam solutions or assignments completed by others and presenting the work as their own. Under the policy, instructors who seek to penalize a student for a suspected violation must first report the violation to the Center for Learning and Student Success (CLASS). Students may not drop or withdraw from courses in which they face a suspected violation. Instructors must wait to assign a final course grade until a suspected violation is reviewed and upheld or overturned. Upholding Academic Integrity includes abiding by instructors' individual course expectations, which may include the protection of their intellectual property. Students should not upload, distribute, or otherwise share instructors' course materials without permission. Students found in violation of the policy are subject to grade sanctions determined by the course instructor and non-grade sanctions determined by the School or College where the course is offered, as outlined in the Violation and Sanction Classification Rubric. Students are required to read an online summary of the University's academic integrity expectations and provide an electronic signature agreeing to abide by them twice a year during pre-term check-in on MySlice.

The Violation and Sanction Classification Rubric establishes recommended guidelines for the determination of grade penalties by faculty and instructors, while also giving them discretion to select the grade penalty they believe most suitable, including course failure, regardless of violation level. Any established violation in this course may result in course failure regardless

of violation level. In this course, students found cheating on a test or assignment will receive zero (0) credit for that test or assignment and may result in further disciplinary action. For more information and the complete policy, see the Center for Learning and Student Success (CLASS) in Bird Library or at http://class.syr.edu/.

Academic Integrity Online: All academic integrity expectations that apply to in-person quizzes and exams also apply to online quizzes and exams. In this course, all work submitted for quizzes and exams must be yours alone. Discussing quiz or exam questions with anyone during the quiz or exam period violates academic integrity expectations for this course. Using websites that charge fees or require uploading of course material (e.g., Chegg, Course Hero, ChatGPT) to obtain exam solutions or assignments completed by others and present the work as your own violates academic integrity expectations in this course and may be classified as a Level 3 violation, resulting in suspension or expulsion from Syracuse University.

This class will use the plagiarism detection and prevention system Turnitin. You will have the option to submit your papers to Turnitin to check that all sources you use have been properly acknowledged and cited before you submit the final paper through Turnitin, which compares submitted documents against documents on the Internet and against student papers submitted to Turnitin at Syracuse University and at other colleges and universities. Turnitin also assess whether text was written by AI software. I will take your knowledge of the subject matter of this course and your writing level and style into account in interpreting Turnitin's originality report. Keep in mind that all take-home tests you submit for this class will become part of the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. In addition, **all essays submitted for this course must reflect some of its specific reading assignments and class discussions in order to earn a passing grade.**

In this course, students found cheating on an assignment will receive zero (0) credit for that test or assignment and may result in further disciplinary action. For more information and the complete policy, see the Center for Learning and Student Success (CLASS) in Bird Library or at http://class.syr.edu/.

Discrimination or Harassment:

The University does not discriminate and prohibits harassment or discrimination related to any protected category including creed, ethnicity, citizenship, sexual orientation, national origin, sex, gender, pregnancy, disability, marital status, age, race, color, veteran status, military status, religion, sexual orientation, domestic violence status, genetic information, gender identity, gender expression or perceived gender.

Any complaint of discrimination or harassment related to any of these protected bases should be reported to Sheila Johnson-Willis, the University's Chief Equal Opportunity & Title IX Officer. She is responsible for coordinating compliance efforts under various laws including Titles VI, VII, IX and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. She can be contacted at Equal Opportunity, Inclusion, and Resolution Services, 005 Steele Hall, Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY 13244-1120; by email: titleix@syr.edu; or by telephone: 315-443-0211.

Federal and state law, and University policy prohibit discrimination and harassment based on sex or gender (including sexual harassment, sexual assault, domestic/dating violence, stalking, sexual exploitation, and retaliation). If a student has been harassed or assaulted, they can obtain confidential counseling support, 24-hours a day, 7 days a week, from the Sexual and Relationship Violence Response Team at the Counseling Center (315-443-4715, 200 Walnut Place, Syracuse, New York 13244-5040). Incidents of sexual violence or harassment can be reported non-confidentially to the University's Title IX Officer (Sheila Johnson Willis, 315-443-0211, titleix@syr.edu, 005 Steele Hall). Reports to law enforcement can be made to the University's Department of Public Safety (315-443-2224, 005 Sims Hall), the Syracuse Police Department (511 South State Street, Syracuse, New York, 911 in case of emergency or 315-435-3016 to speak with the Abused Persons Unit), or the State Police (844-845-7269).

I will seek to keep information you share with me private to the greatest extent possible, but as a professor I have mandatory reporting responsibilities to share information regarding sexual misconduct, harassment, and crimes I learn about to help make our campus a safer place for all.

Religious Observances Policy: SU religious observances policy, found at 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: If you believe that you need accommodations for a disability, please contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) located at 804 University Avenue, third floor or go to the ODS website at disabilityservices.syr.edu and click current students tab to register on-line. You may also call 315.443.4498 to speak to someone regarding specific access needs. ODS is responsible for coordinating disability-related accommodations and will issue 'Accommodation Letters' to students as appropriate. Since accommodations may require early planning and are not provided retroactively, please contact ODS as soon as possible.

Syracuse University values diversity and inclusion; we are committed to a climate of mutual respect and full participation. My goal as your instructor is to create learning environments that are useable, equitable, inclusive, and welcoming. If there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in barriers to your inclusion or accurate assessment or achievement, I invite you to meet with me to discuss additional strategies beyond accommodations that may be helpful to your success.

Required Textbooks:

Graeber, David. *Debt: The First 5,000 Years*. New York: Melville, 2011.
E-Book Available through Bird Library: Robinson, Andrew. *Writing and Script: a very short introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

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 your read and make notes.
- **Textbook** = readings by page numbers from required books by Robinson and Goody
- **Pdf** = pdf files available in Blackboard > Content.
- **Online** = online readings hotlinked in the syllabus in Blackboard > Content.
- **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	**Pdf** Liverani, "Historical Overview"
Mon Sep 4	Labor Day	**NO CLASS**
Wed Sep 6	Origins of Writing	**Online** How to Write Cuneiform; BBC First Accountants **Pdf** Schmandt-Besserat, "Record Keeping Before Writing" **Textbook** Robinson 5-8 "Clay Tokens"
Mon Sep 11	Origins of Cuneiform	**Textbook** Robinson 8-16 "Pictograms" & "… Full Writing" **Pdf** Cooper, "Babylonian beginnings"
Wed Sep 13	Origins of Egyptian Hieroglyphics	**Textbook** Robinson 74-91 "How Writing Systems Work" **Pdf** Baines "The Earliest Egyptian Writing"
Mon Sep 18	Diffusion and Disappearance of Writing	**Textbook** Robinson 17-51 "Chapter 2: Development and Diffusion of Writing" and "Chapter 3: Disappearance of Scripts"; History of Writing Hieroglyphics to Squiggles
Wed Sep 20	Origins of the Alphabet	**Online** Illiterate Egyptian Miners, Who Really Invented the Alphabet, Phoenician Alphabet **Textbook** Robinson 92-109 "Chapter 6: Alphabets"
Mon Sep 25	Writing Chinese and Japanese	**Textbook** Robinson 110-122 "Chapter 7: Chinese and Japanese"
Wed Sep 27 **MEET in Special Collections, Bird**	Material Texts: SU's cuneiform tablet collection **Bring laptop and download**	**Textbook** Robinson 123-134 "Chapter 8: Scribes and Materials" **Pdf** "Little Pepi" **Online** What can fingerprints tell us?

Mon Oct 2	**No class**	**First Paper DUE at 5:00 p.m.**
Wed Oct 4	Writing and Politics	**Online** Mieroop, "Before and After Babel" Zhakevich, "From Texts to Scribes"
Mon Oct 9	Fall Break	**NO CLASS**
Wed Oct 11	Libraries with Sebastian Modrow	**Online:** Stauffer & Modrow, *Libraries, Archives, Museums … Through the Ages* (2021), chapters 1 & 2
Mon Oct 16	Contracts, treaties, covenants	**Online** Babatha's Marriage Contract **Online** Succession Treaties of Esarhaddon **Bible** Exodus 24 **Online** Hundley, "The Making of Monotheism"
Wed Oct 18	Torah as law and ritual text	**Bible** Exodus 19:1-8; Leviticus 1, 11, 19; Deuteronomy 31:9-13 **Pdf** Watts, "Political and Legal Uses"
Mon Oct 23	Christian Scripture	**Bible** Romans 7:1-8:9; Matthew 5-7; **Pdf** Verheyden, "New Testament Canon" **Pdf** Irenaeus
Wed Oct 25	Cuneiform Law Codes	**Pdf** Hammurabi's Law Code
Mon Oct 30	**Christian Roman Law**	**Online** Roman Law and Justinian's Code **Pdf** Humfress, "Judging by the Book"
Wed Nov 1	Medieval canon law	**Pdf** Hoeflich and Grabher, "The Establishment of Normative Legal Texts"
Mon Nov 6	**No class**	**Second Paper Due at 5:00 p.m.**
Wed Nov 8 **MEET in Special Collections, Bird Library 6th floor**	Texts as Artifacts	**Online** Napoleon and the Scientific Expedition to Egypt **Pdf** Said, *Orientalism*, 79-87. **Online** Nicklin, "France fetes the man"
Mon Nov 13	Colonialism, Art, and Writing	**Pdf** MacDonald, "Egypt at the Petrie Museum" **Online**: Cotter, "'African Origin' Show at Met," *NYTimes,* Jan. 7, 2022. **Online** Porter, Benjamin W. Chap. 3 from *Handbook of Postcolonial Archaeology*, 2010.
Wed Nov 15	Currency as Text	**Textbook** Graeber, *Debt* 212-14, 268-70 **Pdf** Surowiecki, "A Brief History of Money" **Pdf** Rahmatian, "Money as a Normative Text"
Nov 19-26	Thanksgiving Break	
Mon Nov 27	Debt & Morality	**Textbook** Graeber, *Debt* 89-124, 182-97, 258-59
Wed Nov 29	Debt & Money	**Textbook** Graeber, *Debt* 144-66, 198-207

Mon Dec 4	Debt & Politics	**Textbook** Graeber, *Debt* 214-21, 251-57
Wed Dec 6	Debt & Religion	**Textbook** Graeber, *Debt* 73-87, 223-50, 266-68, 270-98
Mon Dec 11	Postscript	No assignment: answer orally usual reading questions about entire course. **Final Paper Due by 3:45.**

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