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OT 702 Ugaritic

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OT 702: UGARITIC

Spring Semester, 2004

Tuesdays, 2:30 – 5:15

Instructor: Dale F. Walker

I. Course Description:

Since the discovery of ancient Ugarit in 1928, the study of the Ugaritic language has become one of the important topics concerning the Ancient Near Eastern world, helping to establish the linguistic and cultural context for the world of the Old Testament. Although the days of rapid new discovery of Ugaritic texts are probably over, many new studies in the past few years point to the continuing need for evaluation and reinterpretation of past work.

In much writing on the Hebrew language, as well as interpretation of the religious and cultural backgrounds of the Israelites and the Canaanites, a knowledge of the Ugaritic language and Ugaritic literature is presupposed. Thus, the study of Ugaritic has become vitally important for Old Testament studies in general.

This course will introduce intermediate and advanced students of Hebrew to the language, literature and culture of Ugarit. Students will gain experience with the texts and their previous interpretations and applications in Old Testament studies, with a goal of evaluating previous discussion as well as extending the understanding of the mutual symbiosis of Ugaritic and Hebrew studies.

II. Course Objectives:

1. Students will gain a basic understanding of the Ugaritic language: its phonology, grammar and vocabulary.
2. Students will be able to apply the principles of Comparative Semitics through the comparison of the Ugaritic language and Biblical Hebrew, with the purpose of deepening their understanding of Hebrew, particularly in its historical development.
3. Students will be introduced to the corpus of Ugaritic literature and its place in the cultures of the Ancient Near East.
4. Students will gain the tools necessary to assess the contributions of Ugaritic studies to biblical interpretation.

III. Textbooks:

Required:

Stanislav Segert, *A Basic Grammar of the Ugaritic Language: With Selected Texts and Glossary*. Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1998.

Recommended:

Simon B. Parker, ed, *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry*. Atlanta: Scholars, 1997.

Mark S. Smith, *Untold Stories: The Bible and Ugaritic Studies in the Twentieth Century*. Peabody: Hendrickson, 2001.

N. Wyatt, *Religious Texts from Ugarit: The Words of Ilimilku and his Colleagues*. Sheffield: Academic, 1998

Other resources will be available on the reserve shelf and in the reference area of the seminary library.

IV. Course Procedures and Requirements:

1. Method of instruction:

Lecture material will be minimal, consisting mainly of introductions to the various topics. Much of the classwork during weeks 1-8 will be working through Segert's grammar and the short readings included there. The remainder of the semester will be in a seminar format, with extended readings in the three major cycles of Ugaritic literature: Baal, Krt, Aqhat.

2. Assignments:

a. Daily: There will be daily assignments of reading text, vocalization, translation, grammar. Each class period students will be expected to present parts of their outside preparation. Class attendance is absolutely necessary.

b. Written papers: Two will be assigned:

1). A presentation on the relevance of Ugaritic studies, prepared for a lay group with general interest in the Bible. The presentation may use any media; its length will be for a 30 minute oral presentation. It is due at mid-term.

2). A research paper on one of the shorter important texts, selected in consultation with the instructor. The paper will include transliteration, vocalization and translation of the Ugaritic text, along with needed grammatical and semantic explanations, commentary on the text's meaning and significance, and interaction with others who have studied that text. The length of the paper can be about 20 pages. Provisional parts of this work may be presented to the class during the final weeks of the semester. The completed paper is due during exam week.

c. There will be no special examinations. Each day's classwork is a kind of oral exam.

d. Student evaluation:

Class preparation and performance:	50%
First paper:	15%
Research paper:	35%

V. Weekly Class Schedule:

(This schedule of class materials is very tentative; the approximate order of materials will be followed, but the weekly readings may vary according to the amount of material covered during each weekly session. Each week a determination will be made of the exact material to be prepared for the following session).

February 10: Session 1: Introduction to the language and readings in Segert.

February 17: Session 2: Continuation of Segert's grammar and readings.

February 24: Session 3: Continuation of Segert's grammar and readings.

March 2: Session 4: Continuation of Segert's grammar and readings.

March 9: Session 5: Continuation of Segert's grammar and readings.

March 16: Session 6: Continuation of Segert's grammar and readings.
The first paper is due during this week.

March 23: Session 7: Continuation of Segert's grammar and readings.
Or readings from the KRT epic.

April 6: Session 8: Readings from the KRT epic.

April 13: Session 9: Readings from the KRT / BAAL epics.

April 20: Session 10: Readings from the BAAL epic.

April 27: Session 11: Readings from the BAAL / AQHAT epics.

May 4: Session 12: Student presentations of other texts.

May 11: Session 13: Student presentations of other texts.

May 10-12: Finals Week: Research paper is due.

VI. Bibliography:

As in many fields of academic research, the bibliography of books and articles on various aspects of Ugaritic language, literature and culture is immense. Some appreciation of the extent of this can be gained from the notes in Mark Smith's *Untold Stories*, though unfortunately, the referenced studies are not put into bibliographic form.

An excellent collection of studies summarizing the whole area of Ugaritic studies is: W.G.E Watson & N. Wyatt, *Handbook of Ugaritic Studies*, Leiden: Brill, 1999. This large volume (892 pp.) includes a 70 page list of references used. The volume will be on reserve in the library during this semester.

Other reference works will be on reserve or in the reference area of the library, and will be pointed out as needed. A list of these will be available at the beginning of the semester.

For general orientation to the field of Ugaritic study, the best book on a somewhat popular level is: Peter Craigie, *Ugarit and the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1983. (It would be helpful for students to read this before the first class session). In addition, look at the articles on Ugarit and Ugaritic in *IDB* and *ABD*.