

Debra Scoggins Ballentine focuses on ancient Israelite and Judean history, religion, and literature. She views literary and material data as social artifacts that reflect engagement with their contemporary contexts. In describing the scope of her field of study, she explains that, "Ancient Israel and Judah were situated geographically between more powerful and expansive empires in Mesopotamia and Egypt, and any study of biblical traditions must foreground this geo-political context. Because of this, Biblical Studies is necessarily comparative and interdisciplinary." In teaching courses such as the Hebrew Bible and Ancient Near Eastern Religions, Ballentine explores with students how ancient cultic traditions are thoroughly embedded in their historical setting, yet resonant with many cross-cultural social dynamics: "Whether my students are familiar with biblical traditions or not, they find that these ancient texts really come to life when we study what types of political events or social controversies the authors were facing." Ballentine is currently submitting her first book to academic publishers. Broadly, she analyzes how ancient authors adapted traditional mythic themes of divine combat to further specific political and theological ideologies. This summer Ballentine will travel to Amsterdam to deliver a paper on ritual violence in the Hebrew Bible at the International Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature.

Professor Ballentine has a BA and MA from the University of Georgia, where she studied Religion, Anthropology, and Biology. She received an MA and her PhD from Brown University in Religious Studies.