

Syllabus

RUTGERS UNIVERSITY Department of Religion OLD TESTAMENT/HEBREW BIBLE Spring 2010

Introduction to the Old Testament
Religion 01:840:201:03
Class Schedule: M / Thur 9:15 a.m. - 10:35 a.m.
Douglas/Cook Campus
RAB Rm. # 204

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Course Objective

The purpose of this course is to introduce the student to the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible by means of its historical, literary, and religious perspectives. Topics to be covered include the primeval and patriarchal periods, the exodus, the conquest and monarchic traditions, the message of the prophets, and the exilic and post-exilic periods. Special attention will be given to the interpretative enterprise in general, to the authors and historical background of the individual books in the Old Testament, and to the relationship between the Old Testament and its broader cultural milieu in the Near East. We will also explore the theological dimensions of these ancient works, moving from the theoretical issues to the more practical matters of life and experience. This course does not assume any special degree of previous knowledge about the Bible on the part of the students. Those with previous knowledge of the content of the Bible will find this helpful, but those without such knowledge will not be at a disadvantage.

Textbooks

Primary Source: The most significant book in our course will be the Bible/Old Testament. For those interested in a study Bible, The New Oxford Annotated Bible With The Apocrypha: New Revised Standard Version (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991) is recommended. This college edition is available in the bookstore in a paperback version. Other translations that are acceptable for this class include the Revised Standard Version (RSV), the New International Version (NIV), The New American Bible (NAB), and the Tanak. I will teach out of the NRSV. It is always helpful to consult two versions, since translation is never an exact science.

Secondary Source: The following textbook is located in the bookstore: Understanding the Old Testament. Fifth Edition. by Bernhard W. Anderson (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Pearson Prentice-Hall), 2007.

Course Requirements

Attendance and participation. Class attendance and participation are expected and necessary

in order to accomplish the course goals. This course will emphasize class participation and discussion; consequently, I will take attendance each day. In addition to critical interaction with the class lectures, contributions from the assigned readings and your own reflections enrich the course and provide part of the basis for grading. This is 10% of your final grade.

Reading. You are expected to read all required readings from the Bible and the text book on time. For our purposes, “on time” means “before class on the day of the week for which the reading was assigned.” At the end of the course you will submit a reading report estimating the percentage of the required reading you have done on time. Your grade on this assignment will constitute 5% of your grade.

Map assignment. You will draw and label two maps-one of the Ancient Near East, and one of Ancient Israel. See attached page of this syllabus for details. You must do all your own work on this assignment. Your grade on the maps will constitute 10% of your final grade.

Examinations. Two exams, a Mid-Term (25%) and a Final (50%) will comprise approximately 75% of the course grade. These exams will not be cumulative. The Mid-Term exam will include readings and lecture material from the beginning of the course until the date of the Mid-Term exam. The Final exam will include only readings and lecture material following the Mid-Term exam to the end of the course. The exams will include essays and short definitions. The exam will be discussed approximately one week prior to the scheduled exam date. The students will be furnished with material that may appear on the exam, but will not know how many or which particular questions will be asked. I will select the questions for the exams on the test day.

Course Schedule and Readings

Thursday, January 21: Introduction to the Course; Introductions of Each Student; Professor Introduction and Background.

Monday, January 25: The Historical-Critical Method & the University Study of Religion (its backgrounds, history, current and past applications); Explanation of the Historical Chronology and Time Line (Diagram of the various historical periods)

Thursday, January 28: Creation; The Mesopotamian Flood Story (Enuma Elish; Gilgamesh Epic

Assignments: Genesis 1:1-2:25

Anderson: Introduction

Monday, February 1: Oral Tradition and Documentary Hypothesis: The Nature of Biblical Sources.

Assignments: Anderson chapter 1

Genesis 12-50

Thursday, February 4: The Exodus Tradition; Scholarly Views and Historical Geography of the Exodus Route.

Assignments: Anderson chapter 2

Exodus 1-15

Monday, February 8: The Exodus Continued: Covenant and Ancient Law in the Bible and the Ancient Near East. What was in the Ark of the Covenant?

Assignments: Anderson chapter 3

Exodus 19-24, 32-34

Maps Due

Thursday, February 11: Life in the Wilderness and Conquest of the Land: Archaeological Evidence and Theories. Formation of the Tribal Confederacy: The Role of Shechem. What did the Israelites do when they wandered?

Assignments: Anderson chapter 4

Numbers 11-14, 18-24; Joshua 1-12, 24

Monday, February 15: Discussion & Lecture on Jericho: Archaeological Theory and History of the Excavations. The Further Development of Historical & Theological Epic. Did the walls of Jericho really fall down?

Assignments: Anderson chapter 5

Thursday, February 18: Life During the Period of the Judges: Two Models: Jephthah's Daughter & Samson.

Assignments: Anderson chapter 6

Judges 2:6-16:31, I Samuel 1-12

Monday, February 22: Saul, David, and Solomon: Theories and Development of kingship. (Israelite and Canaanite Kingship: Historical, Anthropological & Sociological Reconstructions of the Israelite Monarchy)

Assignments: Anderson chapter 7

I Samuel 13-31, II Samuel, I Kings 1-11

Thursday, February 25: King David (Lecture and Discussion on the historical David. Who were the Philistines-their origins, history, and appearance).

Monday, March 1: Israelite Prophecy; Elijah the Premier Prophet: Sources for the reconstruction of prophecy (Sociological, Theological, and Historical factors for the interpretation of historical events).

Assignments: Anderson chapter 8

I Kings 12-II Kings 8

Thursday, March 4: Amos; The Fall of the Northern Kingdom: The beginning of the Literary

Prophets. Social Location of Amos and the Northern Prophets.

Assignments: Anderson chapter 9

Amos, Hosea, II Kings 9-17

Monday, March 8: Review and Further lecture on the role and importance of the prophets. The role of women prophets.

Assignments: Study for Midterm

Thursday, March 11: MIDTERM EXAM

March 13 - March 21: Spring Break

Monday, March 22: Judah's Covenant with death: Historical Factors concerning the divided monarchy. History of the surrounding nations. The Siege of Lachish; Theological interpretation of the prophet as opposed to the king and populace.

Assignments: Anderson chapter 10

Isaiah 1-11, 28-32; Micah; II Kings 15:32-20:21

Thursday, March 25: Continue Lecture on the Assyrian Advance.

Monday, March 29: The Rediscovery of the Mosaic Torah and the Deuteronomic Reformation; Further factors concerning the writing of the Bible. (What was discovered inside the wall? Who placed it there?)

Assignments: Anderson chapter 11

II Kings 21-23

Deuteronomy 4:44-26:19

Thursday, April 1: Jeremiah and the Fall of the Southern Kingdom: The History of the Fall of Jerusalem; Recent Historical and Archaeological Discoveries concerning Jerusalem's Fall and the authorship of the Bible. Why did Jeremiah cry so much?

Assignments: Anderson chapter 12

Jeremiah 4-25; II Kings 24-25; Lamentations

Monday, April 5: Ezekiel and the Babylonian Exile: The Development from Israelite Religion to Judaism; What did the Israelites do in Exile?

Assignments: Anderson chapter 13

Ezekiel 1-24, 33-39

Thursday, April 8: Ezekiel: Part Two: Further Theological and Historical Ramifications. What did Ezekiel see inside the temple?

Monday, April 12: A New Era: II and III Isaiah: The Reinterpretation of History through the lens of prophecy: Did 2nd Isaiah succeed or fail? Ezra-reformer or sexist?

Assignments: Anderson chapter 14
Isaiah 40-66

Thursday, April 15: The Rebuilding of Jerusalem: The Temple-Community Theory and its implications. The Edict of Cyrus.

Assignments: Anderson chapter 15
Ezra and Nehemiah

Monday, April 19: The development of Apocalyptic: Lecture and Introduction

Thursday, April 22: The Book of Psalms. Who wrote Psalms?

Assignments: Anderson chapter 16
Selections from the Psalms

Monday, April 26: The Beginning of Wisdom.

Assignments: Anderson chapter 17
Proverbs 1-9; Ecclesiastes; Job 1:1-3:26 & 38:1- 42:17

Thursday, April 29: The End of the Hebrew Bible and Beyond: Daniel; the Son of Man.

Assignments: Anderson chapter 18 & Daniel

Monday, May 3: Beyond the Hebrew Bible: Continued-The formation of the Canon, Into the New Testament and Judaism of the Mishnah and Talmud. How does the New Testament relate to the Hebrew Bible? Why does the Hebrew Bible end?

Final Exam: Tuesday, May 11, 2010, 8:00 – 11:00 p.m. , RAB: Rm. # 204

Map Assignment

Due Monday, Feb. 8, 2010 - Draw each map on separate sheets of unlined 8 ½ x 11 paper.

Locate the following on a map of the Ancient Near East

Bodies of water

Mediterranean Sea	Sea of Galilee
Jordan River	Dead Sea
Nile River	Tigris River
Euphrates River	Red Sea

Geographical regions

Cis-Jordan	Trans-Jordan
Anatolia	Sinai
Mesopotamia	Arabian Desert
Palestine/Canaan	

Political entities (not all of these were present at the same time)

Egypt	Hittite Empire
Assyria	Sumer
Persia	Aram (Syria)
<i>Cities</i>	
Damascus	Mari
Ugarit	Ur
Babylon	Haran
Tyre	Ninevah
Jerusalem	Samaria

Locate the following on a map of Ancient Israel

Bodies of water

Mediterranean Sea	Sea of Galilee
Jordan River	Dead Sea
Lake Huleh	

Geographical regions

Cis-Jordan	Trans-Jordan
central hill country	coastal plain
Galilee	Negev
Judean Wilderness	

Political entities (not all of these were present at the same time)

Israel (Northern Kingdom)	Judah (Southern Kingdom)
Aram (Syria)	Moab
Edom	Ammon
Phoenicia	Philistia

Cities

Damascus	Tyre
Sidon	Jerusalem
Samaria	Bethel
Ashqelon (or Ashkelon)	Dan
Beersheba	Ramoth-Gilead
Shiloh	Hebron
Shechem	Jericho
Hazor	Gaza