

SYLLABUS
RUTGERS UNIVERSITY
HEBREW BIBLE/OLD TESTAMENT
FALL 2011

Instructor: Dr. Terry A. Smith
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Office Hours: Weds: 2:30-4:00 pm,
Loree Office Bldg- Rm 132, Douglas Campus

Day/Time: MW: 5:00 pm – 6:20 pm
Location: BE219, Livingston Campus

Course Description and Objectives/Outcomes

This course serves as a general introduction to the various books of the Old Testament, also known as the Hebrew Bible. As an introductory course, we will survey the content and context associated with the book's formation. This includes a survey of the historical, cultural and religious traditions of ancient Israel, a study of the archaeological, historical and literary methods of research and a survey of the role of the people "Israel" in the Ancient Near East as offered in the book's prose and poetry. During this semester students will

- Develop a basic understanding of the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) and will begin to comprehend some of the major issues, questions and concerns associated with its study.
- Gain an understanding of the traditions and history of ancient Israel from the narrative accounts of creation to the Post-Exilic period.
- Think critically about the ways in which the texts of the Hebrew Bible were significant for their historical communities in shaping their culture and religious traditions/beliefs.
- Become familiar with the literary and rhetorical character of selected texts of the Hebrew Bible.
- Begin to critique some of the social, economic, literary and cultural origins and content of the Hebrew Bible as well as address questions of how this literature (and its society) has influenced western culture.

Required Texts

The Green Bible, New Revised Standard Version, HarperCollins Publishers

Michael D. Coogan, *A Brief Introduction to the Old Testament: The Hebrew Bible In Its Context*, Oxford University Press

Course Requirements

A. Class Preparation and Participation

Students are expected – besides punctuality, to be in full attendance at all sessions. *Attendance will be taken. Any absence not explained in writing to the instructor will be counted as unexcused. Even excessive excused absences will lower your grade.* As a courtesy to your fellow students, please turn off cell phones prior to entering class. If a cell phone rings or the student is observed texting, tweeting, etc., the student in possession will be dismissed from class and assessed an absence. In order to advance our conversations, **laptop/ipad usage in class** will be limited to accessing electronic files and images that are under discussion, and taking only the most critical of notes. Checking/sending email and surfing the web during class are prohibited except under unusual circumstances and with express permission of the instructor. If your laptop/ipad usage hinders in anyway your class participation (contribution or careful listening), laptop/ipad privileges will be revoked. Please note:

- If you miss a class, the missing information should be obtained by borrowing another student's class notes.
- An absence when an exam is scheduled will result in a zero for the exam unless the cause is illness (supported by a doctor's note or official supporting document) or family emergency (documented).
- The instructor must be notified of any religious holiday (according to University Regulation on Attendance, Book 2, 2.47B) in writing in advance by each student who wishes to have the holiday recognized as an excused absence. If an exam must be missed the instructor must be notified prior to the scheduled exam time to avoid a zero on the exam.
- The instructor reserves the right to consider a student absent from any exam if s/he does not check in during the first ten minutes of the exam.

B. Written Assignments and Examinations

Reflection papers: For this class students will submit two (2) written reflections consisting of 250-300 words for the first assignment and 650-700 words for the 2nd assignment, excluding references. **(10 points each)**. Each assignment must be submitted as a word document and uploaded to **Sakai** on or before the due date. Late assignments will receive **half credit**. The content for these papers will be presented in the form of one or two questions requiring the student to reflect on the biblical text and its interpretative significance. Points are allotted as follows: 2 points for thesis statement, 5 points for integration of assigned readings including a critical assessment of the interpretive significance on western culture, and 3 points for clarity and conciseness. These exercises are intended to help students think through and express what they are learning about a particular text or topic. **Before submitting the first written assignment, students are encouraged to read the guide "How to Write a Substantive Paragraph or Essay" under resources on Sakai.**

Mid-Term (20 points) and Final Exam (30 points): Both the Mid-Term and Final Exam will consist of multiple-choice questions. For the Mid-Term, students will only be responsible for material covered to this point in the semester. Similarly, only the material covered after the Mid-Term will appear on the Final-Exam. The Final Exam is university

assigned and will be held on Thursday, *Dec. 22nd*, 4:00-7:00 pm.

Group Project – One group project/presentation will count for 20 points. The class will be divided into groups and some class time will be allotted to plan for this project. Groups will present their projects during the class, beginning Wednesday, Nov. 2nd. The project will involve meeting as small groups to prepare a presentation on a topic for which the Hebrew Bible is utilized in wider society. Each group will have 15 minutes to present its material to the class. Grades for the presentation will apply to the entire group, so full participation is expected for full credit. Students who do not participate with their assigned groups will be penalized for non-participation. The presentation may take any form: a panel discussion, a skit, a report, video, or PowerPoint demonstration. Your entire group must be present on the day of its presentation. **Group assignments and presentation guidelines are outlined under Resources on Sakai.**

C. Assessment

- Regular attendance and active participation in class discussions 10%
- Written responses to assigned readings 20%
- Mid-Term and Final Exam, 20% and 30% respectively
- Group Project 20%

Grade Scale Percentages

94-100 –	A
89-93 –	B+
84-88 –	B
78-83 –	C+
70-77 –	C
60-69 –	D
0-59 –	F

Note: This Class has a supporting Sakai page (<http://sakai.rutgers.edu>) where resources and assignments have been made available. Students will be responsible for material posted on Sakai. Access to Sakai should be obtained early in the semester to avoid any missed assignment penalties.

CLASS SCHEDULE AND ASSIGNED READINGS

*Week One: Introduction to the Course – Labor Day September 5th No Class
Classes begin Wednesday, September 7th and Thursday, September 8th*

Class Discussion

- Introductions
- Syllabus Review
- Discussion: What is the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament? What kind of literature are we reading?
- Read: Introductory essays in *The Green Bible* (pgs. 17-64)

Assignment for Week Two

- Read Coogan, *ABIOT* pgs. 3-26

Week Two: History and Archaeology – September 12th and 14th

Class Discussion

- History, Historiography, and Ancient Israel
 - Geographical and historical background of the biblical world
 - The role and function of Archaeology and its illumination of Ancient Israel
 - Knowing the difference: history versus rhetoric

Assignment for Week Three

- Read: Genesis 1-11 (Creation, Pre-History)
- Read: Genesis 12-50 (The Patriarchal Narratives)
- Read: Coogan, *ABIOT* pgs. 27-76

Reflection Assignment 1: In 250-300 words reflect and respond to the following question.

Can History and Archaeology tell the whole story? Why or Why Not? (Be sure to support your answer)

Week Three: The Book of Genesis – September 19th and 21st

Class Discussion –

- Whose story is it? How does Israel understand its beginnings?
- Israelite religion, identity and communal memory
- Ancient Israel and its neighbors

1st Reflection Assignment Due September 21st

Assignment for Week Four

- Read: Exod 1-5, 7-12, 14-15, 20, 32; Lev 1-7, 10, 16-19, Num 11-14, 22-24, Deut 12-15
- Read: Coogan, *ABIOT* pgs. 78-158

Week Four: The Exodus Narrative, The Book of the Covenant, The Decalogue, The Levitical and Deuteronomic Codes – September 26th and 28th

Class Discussion

- The call of Moses and preparation for the Exodus from Egypt
- Deliverance, revelation, instruction and obligation
- What Torah continues to mean

Assignment for Week Five

- Read Joshua 1-12, 23-24; Judg 1, 4-5, 13-16
- Read Coogan, *ABIOT* pgs. 160-188

Week Five: The Deuteronomistic History, Conquest and the Formation of the Israelite Confederation – October 3rd and October 5th

Class Discussion

- Promises fulfilled and the allocation of land
- Joshua, the successor of Moses
- The formation of statehood: Moving toward monarchy

Note: The last 20 minutes of class on October 5th will be allotted for working on group projects

Assignment For Week Six

- Read 1 Sam 8-10, 16-17, 28, 31; 2 Sam 1, 7, 11-12, 15, 18
- Read Coogan, *ABIOT* pgs. 193-218

Week Six: – From Confederation to Dynastic Kingdom - October 10th and October 12th

Class Discussion

- Leadership under Samuel
- The Confederation: Trials and Tribulations of Saul
- The Rise and Election of David as King
- The Davidic Promise

Assignment For Week Seven

- Read Amos 1-7, Hos -3, Isa. 1-11, Mic 4-6
- Read Coogan, *ABIOT* pgs. 243-250 (beginning at Prophets and Prophecy)

***Week Seven: Introduction to Prophecy and the Biblical Prophets
October 17th and October 19th***

Class Discussion

- Understanding the prophetic tradition of ancient Israel
- The first writing prophets

MID-TERM EXAM (excluding reading material for week seven)

Assignment For Week Eight

- Read 1 Kgs 1-3, 10-12, 17-19, 22; 2 Kgs 1-9, 16-19, 22-25
- Read Coogan, *ABIOT* pgs. 220-243, 252-285

Week Eight: The Divided Monarchy
October 24th and October 26th

Class Discussion

- Conflict and Dis(unity): Israel and Judah split
- The Fall of Samaria
- The Fall of Jerusalem

Note: The last 20 minutes of class on October 26th - group project check-up

Assignment For Week Nine

- Read Isa 40-55; Nah; Hab; Zeph; Jer 1, 7-11, 15-20, 31; Ezek 1-10, 37
- Read Coogan, *ABIOT* pgs. 287-308, 312-326

Week Nine: Judeans and The Babylonian Exile
October 31st and November 2nd

Class Discussion

- Judeans in a strange land
- Theological Crisis and Response
- The voices of prophecy in the 6th century – shifting viewpoints
- Contrasting responses to the Fall of Jerusalem (Jeremiah/Ezekiel)

Group 1 Presentation – Nov. 2nd

Assignment For Week Ten

- Read Ezra; Neh; 1 Chron 15-17, 29; 2nd Chron 29-36
- Read Coogan, *ABIOT* pgs. 327-337, 349-353

Week Ten: Judeans and the Post-Exilic Period
November 7th and November 9th

Class Discussion

- The Persian Empire and the Edict of Cyrus
- Diaspora returnees and reconstruction
- Conflicting Factions

Group 2 Presentation – Nov. 7th

Group 3 Presentation – Nov. 9th

Assignment For Week Eleven

- Read Joel, Hag, Zech 1-8, Obad, Mal
- Read Coogan, *ABIOT* pgs. 341-344, 346-349, 353-358

Week Eleven: Post-Exilic Prophets and Prophecy
November 14th and November 16th

Class Discussion

- Prophetic concerns
- Restoration and inner-communal conflict

Group 4 Presentation – Nov. 14th

Group 5 Presentation – Nov. 16th

Week Twelve: No Classes November 21st and November 23rd

Assignment For Week Twelve

- Read Job, Ruth, Esther, Song of Solomon and Lamentations
- Read Coogan, *ABIOT* pgs. 380-397

Work on Reflection Assignment 2: Due Nov. 23rd

Question 1 (300-350 Words): Compare the theology of Job with the theology of Deuteronomy. Significant differences?

Question 2 (300-350 Word): Discuss the relevant significance of Ruth, Esther, Song of Solomon and Lamentations for this ancient community.

Assignment For Week Thirteen

- Read Psalms 8, 22, 23, 29, 42-43, 51, 69, 72, 82, 89, 91, 104, 107, 121-122, 139, 145, 150; Proverbs 1, 3, 8, 10, 30 and Ecclesiastes
- Read Coogan, *ABIOT* pgs. 360-378

Week Thirteen: The Psalms and Wisdom Literature
November 28th and November 30th

Class Discussion

- The Psalms as Liturgy
- Classification of Psalms
- The wisdom tradition and its function

Group 6 Presentation – Nov. 28th

Group 7 Presentation – Nov. 30th

Assignment For Week Fourteen

- Read Daniel
- Read Coogan, *ABIOT* pgs. 398-415

Week Fourteen: Daniel and Apocalyptic
December 5th and December 7th

Class Discussion

- The Second Temple period
- Greek culture and its influence on Judaism

- Subversion and resistance in Apocalyptic literature

Group 8 Presentation – Dec. 5th

Group 9 Presentation – Dec. 7th

December 12th Final Class Session

Class Discussion

- Continuing the conversation – what happens next?

FINAL EXAM – December 22nd 4:00 – 7:00 pm

Important: In all your written work, you are expected to put your ideas in your own words. Whenever you do use the ideas or words of anyone else, whether a written source or a verbal one, great care should be taken to identify all quotations as such, to document the source of each quotation, and to document sources used but not quoted *verbatim* when that is appropriate. If you have questions regarding what constitutes plagiarism, please consult the section “Academic Integrity” in the University’s catalogue. Refer to www.libraries.rutgers.edu (RefWorks, Son of Citation Machine) for proper formatting of research sources and citation guidelines.

Topics covered on an individual day are subject to change.