

Syllabus

RUTGERS UNIVERSITY
Department of Religion/Jewish Studies
OLD TESTAMENT/HEBREW BIBLE
Spring 2012

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

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Office Hours: Monday 1- 2 p.m.

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. The 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 purpose, “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 multiple choice questions.

Course Schedule and Readings

Thursday, January 19: Introduction to the Course; Introduction of Each Student; Professor Introduction and Background.

Monday, January 23: 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 26: Creation; the Mesopotamian Flood Story (Enuma Elish; Gilgamesh Epic.
Assignment: Genesis 1.1 - 2.25
Anderson: Introduction

Monday, January 30: Oral Tradition and the Documentary Hypothesis: The Nature of Biblical Sources.
Assignments: Genesis 12-50
Anderson chapter 1

Thursday, February 2: The Exodus Tradition; Scholarly Views and Historical Geography of the Exodus Route.

Assignments : Exodus 1-15

Anderson chapter 2

Monday, February 6: The Exodus Continued: Covenant and Ancient Law in the Bible and the Ancient Near East. What was in the Ark of the Covenant?

Assignments: Exodus 19-24, 32-34

Anderson chapters 3

Maps Due

Thursday, February 9: 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: Numbers 11-14, 18-24; Joshua 1-12, 24

Anderson chapter 4

Monday, February 13: 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 chapters 5

Thursday, February 16: Life During the Period of the Judges: Two Models: Jephthah's Daughter & Samson.

Assignments: Judges 2.6-16.31

Anderson chapter 6

Monday, February 20: Saul, David, and Solomon: Theories and Development of Kingship. (Israelite and Canaanite Kingship: Historical, Anthropological & Sociological Reconstructions of the Israelite Monarchy).

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

Anderson: chapter 7

Thursday, February 23: King David (Lecture and Discussion on the historical David. Who were the Philistines-their origins, history, and appearance).

Monday, February 27: Israelite Prophecy; Elijah the Premier Prophet; Sources for the reconstruction of prophecy (Sociological, Theological, and Historical factors for the interpretation of historical events).

Assignments: I Kings 12 - II Kings 8

Anderson: chapter 8

Thursday, March 1: Amos; The Fall of the Northern Kingdom: The beginning of the Literary Prophets. Social Location of Amos and the Northern Prophets.

Assignments: Amos, Hosea, II Kings 9-17

Anderson: chapter 9

Monday, March 5: Further lecture on the role and importance of the Prophets. The role of women prophets.

Thursday, March 8:

Midterm Exam

Spring Recess: March 10th - March 18th

Monday, March 19: Judah's Covenant with death: Historical Factors concerning the divided monarchy. History of the surrounding nations. The Siege of Lachish; Theological interpretation of the prophets as opposed to the king and populace.

Assignments: Isaiah 1-11, 28-32; Micah; II Kings 15.32-20.21

Anderson: chapter 10

Thursday, March 22: Continue Lecture on the Assyrian Advance.

Monday, March 26: 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: II Kings 21-23; Deuteronomy 4.44-26.19

Anderson: chapter 11

Thursday, March 29: 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: Jeremiah 4-25; II Kings 24-25; Lamentations

Anderson chapter 12

Monday, April 2: Ezekiel and the Babylonian Exile: The Development from Israelite Religion to Judaism; What did the Israelites do in Exile?

Assignments: Ezekiel 1-24, 33-39

Anderson chapter 13

Thursday, April 5: Ezekiel : Part Two: Further Theological and Historical Ramifications. What did Ezekiel see inside the temple?

Monday, April 9: 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: Isaiah 40-66

Anderson: chapter 14

Thursday, April 12: The Rebuilding of Jerusalem: The Temple-Community Theory and its implications. The Edict of Cyrus.
Assignments: Ezra and Nehemiah
Anderson: chapter 15

Monday, April 16: The Development of Apocalyptic: Lecture and Introduction.

Thursday, April 19: The Book of Psalms. Who wrote Psalms?
Assignments: Psalms
Anderson: chapter 16

Monday, April 23: The Beginning of Wisdom.
Assignments: Proverbs 1-9; Ecclesiastes; Job 1.1-3.26 & 38.1-42.17
Anderson chapter 17

Thursday, April 26: The End of the Hebrew Bible and Beyond: Daniel; the Son of Man.
Assignments: Daniel
Anderson chapter 18

Monday, April 30: 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 8, 2012, 8:00 p.m. - 11:00 p.m., RAB Rm. # 204

Map Assignment

Due Monday, Feb. 6, 2012 - 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

Jordan River

Nile River

Euphrates River

Sea of Galilee

Dead Sea

Tigris River

Red Sea

Geographical regions

Anatolia

Mesopotamia

Trans-Jordan

Sinai

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

Egypt	Hittite Empire
Assyria	Sumer
Persia	Aram (Syria)

Cities

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

Central hill country	Trans-Jordan
Galilee	Coastal plain
Judean Wilderness	Negev

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