

Religion 840:303:01
Hebrew Prophets
Spring 2013

Class Meeting: T, F 11:30-12:50
Frelinghuysen Hall – A1

Professor Debra Ballentine
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Loree Building, office 132
Office Hours: Thursdays 9:30-10:30

Fifteen books within the biblical anthology are ascribed to prophets; biblical accounts portray prophets contributing to central political and religious institutions throughout the history of ancient Israel and Judah; the foundational narrative of ancient Israelite self-understanding presents Moses as the paradigmatic prophet; and early Jewish and Christian writers utilized biblical prophetic texts as well as the notion of prophecy in creative ways. In this course, we study biblical prophetic traditions within the context of a range of ancient Near Eastern divinatory specializations. Throughout the semester, we discuss how biblical prophets contributed to immediate social, religious, and political movements. We analyze how the authors of biblical prophetic texts reinterpreted traditional motifs to generate (sometimes controversial) theological explanations for current events. In turn, we consider how early Jewish and Christian writers cited biblical prophets, producing yet another reinterpretation of traditional materials. Through critical analysis of ancient texts, you will gain understanding of the historical contexts and immediate contributions of biblical prophets as well as the subsequent interpretation of biblical traditions of prophecy.

Required books:

Joseph Blenkinsopp, *A History of Prophecy in Israel* (revised and enlarged)

Robert Wilson, *Prophecy and Society in Ancient Israel*

The New Oxford Annotated Bible with Apocrypha: New Revised Standard Version. We will discuss various versions of the Bible in class. I recommend the NJPS or NRSV. It can be interesting to have several versions for comparison, and I will consult the Hebrew text as well. Bring your copy of the Bible to every class meeting.

I will post additional (short) readings to Sakai.

Course requirements:

- 15% Participation. You should come to class prepared to answer questions, discuss readings, and ask thoughtful questions. Participation presupposes attendance.
- 15% In-class presentation of a relevant scholarly publication (book list to be provided).
- 30% Midterm exam; Friday, 3/15
- 40% Final exam; Thursday, 5/9 12-3pm

We will adhere to the University's Policy on Academic Integrity.

Provisional Schedule, Topics, and Readings:

- Week 1 T 1/22 The academic study of religion; Critical study of the bible; Some key terms

F 1/25 Overview of ancient Near Eastern geography and biblical history
Read: J. J. Collins, "Israel," 181-188 in *Religions of the Ancient World* (sakai)
- Week 2 T 1/29 Ancient Near Eastern and Greco-Roman Divination and Prophecy
Read: "Divination and Prophecy," 370-91 in *Religions of the Ancient World* (sakai)

F 2/1 Starting to define biblical prophecy
Read: Blenkinsopp, 1-39
- Week 3 T 2/5 Moses, the paradigmatic prophet; Balaam the prophet
Read: Blenkinsopp, 40-48; Exod 1-4; Num 22-24; Deir Alla inscription (sakai)

F 2/8 Call narratives; "False" prophets
Read: Isa 6; Jer 1:1-10; 2 Kgs 9:1-13; 1 Kgs 22:15-28; Jer 23:16-22
- Week 4 T 2/12 Samuel, prophetic authority and political leadership
Read: Blenkinsopp, 48-55; 1 Sam 1-15, 28

F 2/15 Court prophets under David
Read: 2 Sam 7, 11-12; 1 Kings 11, 14
- Week 5 T 2/19 Elijah and Elisha
Read: Blenkinsopp, 55-64; 1 Kings 17-22; 2 Kings 1-14

F 2/22 Assyrian expansion; Amos; Hosea
Read: Blenkinsopp, 65-90; Amos; Hosea
- Week 6 T 2/26 Micah; Isaiah of Jerusalem
Read: Blenkinsopp, 91-110; Micah; Isa 1-39

F 3/1 Babylonian expansion; Nahum; Zephaniah; Habakkuk
Read: Blenkinsopp, 111-129; Nahum, Zephaniah, Habakkuk
- Week 7 T 3/5 Babylonian exile; Jeremiah
Read: Blenkinsopp, 129- 147; Jeremiah

F 3/8 Responses to the crisis of exile; Ezekiel; Exilic Deuteronomist
Read: Blenkinsopp, 148-180; Ezekiel
- Week 8 T 3/12 Second and Third Isaiah
Read: Blenkinsopp 181-193; Isaiah 40-66

Provisional Schedule, Topics, and Readings:

F 3/15 midterm exam

Week 9: T 3/19, F 3/22 Spring Break

Week 10 T 3/26 Restoration

Read: Blenkinsopp, 194-212; Haggai; Zechariah; Malachi; Joel; Obadiah

F 3/29 Prophecy and Apocalyptic; Jonah

Read: Blenkinsopp, 212-240; Daniel; Isa 24-27; Blenkinsopp, 240-247; Jonah

Week 11 T 4/2 “Prophecy and Society,” considerations in research, modern and ANE data
Read: Wilson, 1-134

F 4/5 “Prophecy and Society,” Ephraimite Tradition

Read: Wilson, 135-252

Week 12 T 4/9 “Prophecy and Society,” Judean Tradition
Read: Wilson, 253-309

F 4/12 Consolidation of “The Prophets” as a section of the Hebrew Bible;

Citation of “The Prophets” in early Jewish and Christian literature

Read: select passages (sakai)

Week 13 T 4/16 Interpretation of biblical prophets in early Jewish and Christian literature
Read: select passages (sakai)

F 4/19 Prophets and divination in early Jewish and Christian literature

Read: select passages (sakai)

Week 14 T 4/23 Student Presentations
F 4/26 Student Presentations

Week 15: T 4/30 Student Presentations

F 5/3 Concluding discussion; Defining biblical prophecy

Read: Blenkinsopp, 1-39; “Divination and Prophecy,” 370-91 in *Religions of the Ancient World* (sakai)

Final exam Thursday, May 9, 12-3pm