

BIBL105 Old Testament Literature & Interpretation

Syllabus (3 units) Fall 2023 Mon & Wed: 11:40 AM – 1:05 PM

INSTRUCTOR

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Office hours: Appointment Only

COURSE DESCRIPTION

For the purpose of this course, we will refer to the Old Testament as the Hebrew Bible. This course includes two curricular focuses. First, as an introduction to *Hebrew Bible Literature*, this course equips students with an overview of the storyline of the Hebrew Bible, its historical and cultural background, and its relevance for today. Second, as an introduction to the *Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible*, this course offers students an introduction to several approaches used to interpret the literature of the Hebrew Bible.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

At the end of this course, students will be able to:

- (1) Appreciate what is involved in responsibly interpreting the Hebrew Bible within its original historical and cultural context, as well as its literary context and features.
- (2) Discern and communicate the main purpose and themes of the three divisions of the Hebrew Bible. Those divisions are the Law (*Torah*), the Prophets (*Nevi'im*), and the Writings (*Ketuvim*).
- (3) Be familiar with the important figures, events, and places of the Hebrew Bible.
- (4) Trace the redemptive-historical storyline of the Hebrew Bible as it relates to Jesus Christ and the literature of the New Testament.
- (5) Understand and embrace personal and communal spirituality practices from the Hebrew Bible.
- (6) Apply the Hebrew Bible to difficult ethical questions in the church and society.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS

Primary Texts

- Bible. You may use any major English translation (JPS, TNIV, NIV, NASB, NRSV, ESV, etc). Please do not use a paraphrase (The Living Bible, The Message) as it will be difficult to follow along in class. You are required to use a hard copy of the Bible in class. You may use a digital copy outside of class.
- Bartholomew, Craig G., Michael W. Goheen. *The Drama of Scripture: Finding Our Place in the Biblical Story. Second Edition.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014. (Only required to read pages up to the New Testament, pages 1-134) **Electronic version available through the library or the link in Moodle.*

Engagement Essay Textbook Choices (<u>Only choose one of the following</u>. <u>Note: you are only required to read the assigned portion of the book</u>)

- Kugel, James L. *The God of the Old: Inside the Lost World of the Bible*. New York, NY: Free Press, 2003. (Chapter 1 & one additional chapter that contains the topic the student desires to use for the focus of the engagement essay)
 - *Kugel offers students an opportunity to engage with the world of the Ancient Near East (ANE). The Hebrew Bible was not only informed and shaped by the ANE, the ANE was the world the writers/editors of the Hebrew Bible wrote in response. Kugel also offers students an opportunity to see how Jewish interpretation differs from Christian interpretation in select topics.
- Yong, Amos. *The Bible, Disability, and the Church: A New Vision of the People of God.* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011. (Chapter 1 & Chapter 2)
 - *Yong will offer students an opportunity to engage with a topic that touches each of our lives in different ways but often goes unexplored within the church. The topic of disability. Individuals with disabilities populate the pages of the Hebrew Bible, their lives call out for thoughtful engagement by readers.
- Berding, Kenneth, Jonathan Lunde (eds.). *Three Views on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament (Counterpoints: Bible and Theology)*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008. (Introduction and one of the contributor's chapters; either Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., Darrell L. Bock, or Peter Enns)
 - *The Counterpoints volume offers students an opportunity to explore how the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament was interpreted by the New Testament authors.

RECOMMENDED READING

The professor may include a recommended resource that is pertinent to the lesson focus of a particular class, such as a paper handout or a digital resource.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

NOTE: "A classroom hour is a 55-minute hour. In order to successfully complete the learning outcomes for this course, you should expect to spend two hours outside of class completing work for the course for every one hour in class." (*WJU Academic Council*, Spring 2013)

- (1) Class Participation and attendance. Students are expected to arrive on time and prepared to discuss the assigned readings and discussion topics. The expected amount of class participation will vary depending on the class size and the teaching format of the day. Students are required to engage respectfully with their peers. See policies for absences and makeup work below.
- (2) Reading Responses. Students are required to write a book *précis* of Bartholomew & Goheen's *The Drama of Scripture* that does not exceed 300 words. If the book *précis* is less than 150 words or you exceed 450 words, a percentage of the final grade will be marked down. A book *précis* is neither an evaluation nor a critique of an author's work. A *précis* is a short summary of a book's main argument and content divisions. The purpose of the book *précis* is to show that the student has grasped the argument of the textbook reading. <u>Please submit a PDF</u>, as other file types often result in errors. Prompts for the book *précis* will be offered on Moodle.

Due September 11

(3) Midterm Exam. The midterm exam will be comprised of multiple-choice and matching questions. The material will come from both class lectures and the assigned readings. A study guide will be provided.

In class on October 2

(4) Engagement Essay. Students must choose to read one of the three resources listed above. Students will then write a 4-5-page essay (double-spaced, Times New Roman, 12pt font). This essay must be written by you, you may not plagiarize. You may not use AI tools for any part of the writing process, including brainstorming or pre-research. You may not have someone else write the essay for you or work on this essay in a group setting as the projects too easily overlap one another in focus. This must be your individual work. Submit the essay via Moodle.

An essential practice for those who engage in other scholars' work is to be aware of themselves as readers. Attuned to how they bring with them their personal autobiography, theological tradition(s), ecclesial experiences, ethical values or concerns, and cultural location, which in turn shape their reading. This is known as practicing scholarly "reflexivity." Students are encouraged to practice "reflexivity" in relation to the reading assignment they choose above. Below is a suggested, not required, way to structure the engagement essay

- a. Begin with a short summary of the author's argument,
- b. Then, evaluate the author's arguments. For example,
 - i. Were the author's arguments convincing? Why, why not?
 - ii. Were the questions relevant? Were there better questions the author

should have explored? Were there things the author left out that may have changed their conclusions?

- c. State your "reflexivity" in relation to the reading.
 - i. How did your personal autobiography, theological tradition(s), ecclesial experiences, ethical values or concerns, and cultural location shape how you engaged the book's argument?
- d. Where do you believe the topic can grow and develop in future research? Academic scholarship is a living communal tradition. Scholarly work in the present rests upon the history of interpretations of those who preceded them. As students, you are part of that living communal tradition. Your work is important, appreciated, and eagerly anticipated in this class.

Please do not wait until the month when this assignment is due to begin the project as it will be difficult to give the essay the reflection it requires.

Due November 29

(5) Final Exam. The final exam will be comprised of multiple-choice, matching, and essay questions. The material will come from both class lectures and the assigned readings. A study guide will be provided.

In class on week of December 8, TBD.

(6) Extra Credit. Students can earn up to 8% on their total grade if they choose to complete an inter-faith engagement essay that is 4-5 pages. This extra credit work requires students to read the entire book.

Neusner, Jacob. *A Rabbi Talks with Jesus. (Revised Edition)*. London: McGill-Queens University, 2000.

Neusner writes from the perspective of modern Jewish scholarship. Your interfaith engagement essay should spend the first 2-3 pages offering something similar to a book *précis*, then close with 1-2 pages of thoughtful engagement on the merits of Neusner's arguments and the difference from his approach that your Christian tradition invites. If you desire, you can use as division titles "Book *Précis*" and "Inter-Faith Engagement" for your essay. Please be mindful of your "reflexivity" and be sure to acknowledge how Neusner's book has expanded your understanding of modern Jewish approaches to Jesus and the Hebrew Bible. Submit the essay via Moodle.

GRADING

Class Participation and Attendance	10%
Required Reading <i>Précis</i>	20%
Midterm Exam	25%
Engagement Essay	20%
Final Exam	25%
Extra Credit	(up to 8%)

The Moodle course companion provides an up-to-date gradebook throughout the semester.

Letter grades are awarded as follows:

- A 90-100%
- B 80-89%
- C 70-79%
- D 60-69%
- F 60% >

CLASS STRUCTURE

Generally speaking, each class session will involve a mixture of lecture, class discussion, and small group discussion and activities. Please be willing and prepared to participate.

You will need to bring a hard copy of your Bible to class and material for taking notes. You do not need to bring the Bartholomew & Goheen textbook to class. You will also need to keep track of all handouts you receive in class.

CLASSROOM POLICIES

Absence and tardiness

Attendance Policy: Students are allowed three absences for any reason (sports, theater, sickness, snowboarding, etc.). Fourth and subsequent absences will receive a final grade reduction of 1% per absence. More than ten absences will result in an automatic "F" for the course. Two "tardies" (arriving more than five minutes late) will result in one absence.

<u>Makeup Work for Absences</u>: Makeup work can be done for fourth and subsequent absences to compensate for the 1% final grade deduction. No more than three makeup exercises can be submitted. All makeup work is due (via email) by the Friday (at midnight) before finals week and entails the following:

- 1. Watch the recorded Zoom video of the missed class.
- 2. Submit notes (via email) that show that you listened to the entire class session (and did not just summarize points from the presentation slides).

Late submission of assignments and exams

<u>Late Assignment Policy</u>: All assignments are due at the beginning of the class period on the posted date. Late work will be accepted up to one week past the due date but will receive a 5% grade reduction for each calendar day (with the exception of Sunday) it is late.

<u>Late Exam Policy</u>: Students are expected to take exams on the scheduled dates and times unless there is an emergency, such as a death in the immediate family or a student is hospitalized. It is up to the discretion of the professor whether or not students who miss an exam will be allowed to make up the exam. If such permission is granted, students are responsible for scheduling a makeup exam no more than five days after the exam date.

The exam will receive a 20% late penalty per day that it is late.

Plagiarism

According to University policy, plagiarism by students should be dealt with in the following manner:

- Plagiarized assignments receive zero credit.
- The first incident (per student) should be handled by the instructor. The instructor will fill out an "Academic Integrity Alert" regarding the incident, and forward it to the Registrar.
- The second incident (per student) will involve an interview between the student and the Academic Committee. The Academic Committee will recommend what further action is to be taken (including dismissal from the course or the school, if appropriate).

Phones/Laptops/Tablets

Computers and phones must be put away for the entire class period. Any use of such devices will result in an automatic tardy for that day. This means that students will need to bring a hard copy of their Bibles to class.

WRITING GUIDELINES

Unless otherwise indicated, papers should be typed, double-spaced, 12-point font, Times New Roman, one-inch margins on all sides.

Please use the citation style associated with your major. For example, Psychology (APA); English (MLA); Biblical Studies/Theology (SBL/Turabian). Be consistent with that style, providing all the necessary bibliographical details for quick retrieval and review of your sources. Abstracts (if applicable to your citation style) do not count towards the page count.

As a general rule, papers should remain within 10% of the assigned length.

DISABILITY SUPPORT AND THE LEARNING COMMONS

William Jessup University is committed to providing a barrier-free environment and equal access and reasonable accommodations to persons with documented disabilities. This syllabus is available in alternative format upon request. Students who have a disability that may impact participation in this class may schedule an appointment with Disability Support Services staff. Students will subsequently notify the instructor, in a timely manner, about approved accommodations by providing a copy of their Faculty Accommodation Notification letter (written by D.S.S.). Disability Support Services is located in the Learning Commons and can be contacted at 916-577-2253.

Course Schedule

Date	In-Class Topic	Assignment Due for That Day
Mon, Aug 21	BEGINNING OF CLASS An Introduction to the Hebrew Bible and its Interpretation	
Wed, Aug 23	The Nature of the Hebrew Bible Current Interpretative Approaches; A Proposal for Approaching the Hebrew Bible as History, Literature, and Theology	Bartholomew & Goheen (pp. 11-24) Required reading: Ellen F. Davis, "Beyond Criticism: Learning to read the Bible again," The Christian Century (April, 2004), https://www.christiancentury.org/article/2004-04/beyond-criticism.
Mon, Aug 28	Exploring the Historical Context of the Hebrew Bible From the Ancient Near East (ANE) to the Second Temple Period	Recommended, not required reading: Sparks, Keaton L. "The ancient Near Eastern context." The Cambridge Companion to the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament, Chapman, Stephen B., and Marvin A. Sweeney, (eds.), Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2016, pp. 57-85.
Wed, Aug 30	Exploring the Literary Character of the Hebrew Bible Hebrew Bible Languages, Literary Genres, Poetic Dynamics, Parallel ANE Literature	Bartholomew & Goheen (pp. 39-44)
Mon, Sep 4	Exploring the Theological Tradition(s) of the Hebrew Bible Inner-Biblical Exegesis, A Survey of Theologies of the Hebrew Bible, A Proposal for a Narrative Approach to the Theology of the Hebrew Bible	Start reading Bartholomew & Goheen (pp. 45-118) Recommended, not required reading: Sailhamer, John L. "Biblical Theology and the Composition of the Hebrew Bible." Biblical Theology: Retrospect and Prospect, Hafemann, Scott J., (ed.), Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2016, pp. 57-85.
Wed, Sep 6	The Hebrew Bible and Practical Theology	Finish reading Bartholomew & Goheen (pp. 45-118)

	The Problem of Anachronistic Readings of Historical Narrative, Responsible Appropriation of the Prophetic and Wisdom Literature of the Hebrew Bible, The Moral Vision(s) of the Hebrew Bible	Recommended, <u>not required</u> reading: Brueggemann, Walter. <i>The Prophetic</i> <i>Imagination: 40th Anniversary</i> . Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2018.
Mon, Sep 11	Three-Fold Division of the Hebrew Bible: The Torah (Law) Introduction to the Pentateuch Book Précis Due	Book Précis Due
Wed, Sep 13	The Torah (continued) Genesis	Genesis 1-11, 12-19; 23-36 Recommended, not required reading: Longman III, Tremper. "Myth or History? Genesis and the <i>Enuman Elish</i> ," <i>How to Read Genesis</i> . Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2005, pp. 71-80.
Mon, Sep 18	The <i>Torah</i> (continued) Exodus	Exodus 1-15; 19-21; 32-34 Recommended, not required reading: Enns, Peter. "Introduction," Exodus: The NIV Application Commentary. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000, pp. 19-38
Wed, Sep 20	The <i>Torah</i> (continued) Leviticus, Numbers	Leviticus 1-7; 16; 19; 23; 26 Numbers 10-14 Bartholomew & Goheen (pp. 118-134)
Mon, Sep 25	The Torah (continued) Deuteronomy	Deuteronomy 5-7; 17-18; 20; 24; 31; 34 Recommended, not required reading: McConville, J. Gordon. "The Deuteronomic Idea in Biblical Scholarship," <i>Grace in the</i> End: A Study of Deuteronomic Theology. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005, pp. 123- 144.
Wed, Sep 27	Three-Fold Division of the Hebrew Bible: The <i>Nevi'im</i> (Prophets)	(NOTE: For those completing the extra credit it is encouraged that you begin reading

	Introduction to the Prophets Midterm Review	Neusner's book in order to allow for a careful reading and response.)
Mon, Oct 2	MIDTERM EXAM	
Wed, Oct 4	The <i>Nevi'im</i> (continued) Joshua and Judges	Joshua 1-8; 23-24 Judges 1-5; 13-21
	Engagement Essay Explained	
Mon, Oct 9	The Nevi'im (continued) 1-2 Samuel, 1-2 Kings Part I	1 Sam 1-3; 8-10; 13; 15-18 2 Sam 1-2; 5-7; 11-12
Wed, Oct 11	The Nevi'im (continued) 1-2 Samuel, 1-2 Kings Part II	1 Kings 1-3; 8; 11-12; 18-19 2 Kings 17-19; 25
	The Nevi'im (continued) Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel	Isaiah 1-12; 24-25; 31; 40; 42; 45; 49-53; 55; 60; 65-66 Jeremiah 1, 7, 18, 29-31, 38-39 Ezekiel 1-4, 10, 36-37 Recommended, not required reading: Marcus,
Mon, Oct 16		Joel. "Mark 1:2-3: The Gospel according to Isaiah," <i>The Way of the Lord: Christological Exegesis of the Old Testament in the Gospel of Mark.</i> Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, pp. 12-47.
		For a critical approach read, Marc Brettler and Amy-Jill Levine, "Isaiah's Suffering Servant: Before and After Christianity," <i>Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology</i> Vol. 73 No. 2 (March, 2019), pp.158-173.
Wed, Oct 18	The <i>Nevi'im</i> (continued) The Twelve (Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi)	Jonah 1-4, Read one other book from The Twelve Required reading: Erica Brown, "Jonah's Prayer," First Things,

		https://www.firstthings.com/web-exclusives/2021/09/jonahs-prayer. Recommended, not required reading: Jeffrey H. Tigay, "The Book of Jonah and the Days of Awe," <i>Conservative Judaism</i> Vol. 38, No. 2, (1985), pp. 67-76.
Mon, Oct 23	Three-Fold Division of the Hebrew Bible: The Ketuvim (Writings) Introduction to the Writings	Proverbs 1-9, 16, 31 Job 1-4, 28, 38-42
Wed, Oct 25	The <i>Ketuvim</i> (continued) Wisdom Literature Part I (Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes, wisdom Psalms)	Recommended, not required reading: Choon-Leong Seow, "Theology when everything is out of control," <i>Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology</i> Vol. 55, Issue 3 (2001), pp. 237-249.
Mon, Oct 30	The Ketuvim (continued) Wisdom Literature Part II (Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes, wisdom Psalms)	Psalms 1, 14, 37, 73, 91, 112, 119, and 128 Recommended, not required reading: Michael V. Fox, "The Meanings of the Book of Job," <i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i> Vol. 137 No. 1 (Spring, 2018), pp. 7-18.
Wed, Nov 1	The Ketuvim (continued) Dynamics of Biblical Poetry, Psalms Part I	Psalms 2, 19, 23, 46, 51 Required reading: Berlin, Adele. "Introduction to Hebrew Poetry," New Interpreter's Bible Volume IV. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2015, pp. 301-315, https://www.academia.edu/23770438/ Introduction_to_Biblical_Poetry_NIB
Mon, Nov 6	The Ketuvim (continued) Psalms Part II	Psalms 73, 89, 90-91, 104, 150 Recommended, not required reading: Grant, Jamie A. "Methodological Considerations," The King as Exemplar: The function of Deuteronomy's kingship law in the shaping of the Book of Psalms. Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004, pp. 7-40.

Wed, Nov 8	The Ketuvim (continued) Ruth, Song of Songs	Ruth (all) Song of Songs (skim) Recommended, not required reading: Ellen F. Davis, "Reading the Song Iconographically," The Journal of Scriptural Reasoning Vol. 20 (February, 2023), https://jsr.shanti.virginia.edu/back-issues/vol- 3-no-2-august-2003-healing-words-the-song- of-songs-and-the-path-of-love/reading-the- song-iconographically/.
Mon, Nov 13	The <i>Ketuvim</i> (continued) 1-2 Chronicles, Lamentations, Esther, Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah – Part I	1 Chronicles 13-16 2 Chronicles 36 Recommended, not required reading: Adele Berlin, "The Book of Esther and Ancient Storytelling," <i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i> Vol. 120, No. 1, (Spring, 2001), pp. 3-14.
Wed, Nov 15	The <i>Ketuvim</i> (continued) 1-2 Chronicles, Lamentations, Esther, Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah – Part II	Daniel 1-3, 7, 12 Ezra 1, 3-10 Nehemiah 1-6, 8-9 Recommended, not required reading: Brueggemann, Walter. "Preaching to Exiles," Cadences of Home: Preaching Among Exiles. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997, pp. 1-14.
Nov 20-24	THANKSGIVING – NO CLASS!	
Mon, Nov 27	Early Judaism and the Reception of the Hebrew Bible Early Translations (ex. Greek Septuagint), Deuterocanonical Books, and Pseudepigrapha	A collection of short readings from these sources will be provided, TBA. Recommended, not required reading: Vanderkam, James C. "Jewish Literature of the Second Temple Period," <i>An Introduction to Early Judaism</i> . Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2001, pp. 53-174.
Wed, Nov 29	The Hebrew Bible and the New Testament	Engagement Essay Due Extra Credit Inter-Faith Essay Due

	Jesus, New Testament Hermeneutics, Apocalyptic Literature and the Prophetic Tradition Engagement Essay Due Extra Credit Inter-Faith Essay Due	Recommended, <u>not required</u> reading: Enns, Peter. "Apostolic Hermeneutics and an Evangelical Doctrine of Scripture: Moving Beyond a Modernist Impasse," <i>Westminster Theological Journal</i> Vol. 65, (2003), pp. 263-287.
Mon, Dec 4	Free Breakfast and Review Day	
Wed, Dec 6		
Dec 8 (TBD)	Final Exam	

"These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts." (Deuteronomy 6:6)