

RELIGIOUS STUDIES 201
HEBREW BIBLE: HISTORY AND INTERPRETATION
COLLEGE OF CHARLESTON
Fall 2018

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this course, the student is introduced to the academic study of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament, examining issues of its composition, historical development, and interpretation (ancient and modern). Particular genres or types of biblical literature are interpreted within their wider ancient Near Eastern context (creation and cosmos, biblical laws, wisdom traditions, etc.). In reading and analyzing selected portions of the Hebrew scriptures, students will be exposed to various historical-critical, literary, and archaeologically informed interpretations of the text. Topics covered include the covenant theme in Genesis and beyond, kingship in ancient Israel, the exodus event (history and archaeology), the biblical legal tradition (covenant code, Ten Commandments), the role of prophets and the nature of ancient Israelite prophecy, the emergence of a Davidic king-messiah and later messianic expectation, biblical wisdom literature (Proverbs, Job, Qohelet), and love poetry (Song of Songs). A primary goal of the course is to instill in the student an awareness of and appreciation for the underlying strategies and ideologies that informed the composition of the biblical and other Near Eastern ancient texts, as well as the cultures that produced them.

GENERAL EDUCATION STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES (SLO)

In dealing with the history and interpretation of the biblical text in its ancient surrounding world, the course addresses the following two GenEd learning outcomes:

- (1) Students analyze how ideas are represented, interpreted, or valued in various expressions of human culture.
- (2) Students examine relevant primary source materials as understood by the humanities area under study and interpret that material in writing assignments.

These outcomes will be assessed by means of a short analytical paper on the interpretation of a biblical passage(s). (See Course Requirements below.)

REQUIRED TEXTS

- 1) A translation of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament. The following translations are preferred for this course (you need only one!):

The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV; 1991). This comes in a variety of study editions, including *The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha* (now in its 5th ed., fully revised and expanded, 2018), and *The HarperCollins Study Bible* (Student edition; revised and updated, 2006).

TANAKH (Jewish Publication Society translation, 1986; 2d ed. in 1999). Study edition: *The Jewish Study Bible*, eds. Adele Berlin and Marc Z. Brettler (2d edition; Oxford University Press, 2014).

The Revised English Bible (REB, 1989). Study edition: *The Oxford Study Bible: Revised English Bible with the Apocrypha*, eds. M. Jack Suggs, Katherine D. Sakenfeld, and James R. Mueller (Oxford University Press, 1992).

The New American Bible: Revised Edition (NAB/NABRE, 1991 and 2012; translation of Old Testament newly revised). Study edition: *The Catholic Study Bible: New American Bible, Revised Edition*, eds. Donald Senior and John J. Collins; 3rd edition (Oxford University Press, 2016).

2) Michael D. Coogan, and Cynthia R. Chapman. *The Old Testament: A Historical and Literary Introduction to the Hebrew Scriptures*. 4th edition. New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018 (cited in this syllabus as CC).

3) A collection of readings, available on Oaks (accessed via MyCharleston).

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND POLICIES

Three exams (70% of final grade). These consist of multiple-choice, passage identification, and essay. It is imperative that you notify me in advance if you are unable to take an exam. You should call me at my office (953-4996) and (if I'm not in) leave a message regarding your situation. Make-up exams may be of increased difficulty and must be taken as soon as possible after the original exam date, preferably within a day or two at the most. Only those who provide a valid excuse will be allowed to make up an exam.

Weekly quizzes/homework assignments (10%). It is expected that each student will come to class prepared (having done the readings and assignments) and ready to participate. As part of your weekly work, I will give either an in-class quiz over the readings or a written homework assignment. The quizzes (announced beforehand) are designed simply to motivate you to keep up with the readings. You will be allowed to miss two of these (late assignments will not be accepted via e-mail). Any number beyond this will count as a zero, regardless of why you missed class or did not turn in the assignment. In-class quizzes cannot be made up. Exceptions to these policies are possible only in cases of severe illness or other grave circumstances. In either case, suitable documentation is required.

SLO Assignment (10%). This consists of a short analytical paper (700-800 words) that responds to a scholarly interpretation of a biblical narrative.

Class Participation and Attendance (10%). Students are required to attend class and participate in discussion of the material. Asking questions informed by the readings and/or offering your own ideas in class is a crucial part of this course. Grades for class participation are determined, in large part, on the basis of the consistency of your involvement in class discussions. If you are routinely unresponsive, particularly if you are rarely in class, or it is clear you've not done the readings, this will be noted by me in my little chartreuse book of languid, lethargic, and generally listless students. You are permitted a total of **THREE** absences, for whatever reason, over the course of the term (documentation is not required for these three). Any number greater than this will result in a lowered or failing grade for the course (8 or more absences results in automatic withdrawal and failure). As for reading assignments and participation in class, **I will assume that you have read the materials carefully before coming to class and will not summarize their content**. I may give unannounced quizzes if students are not keeping up with the assigned material; these will also count in my determination of your grade. If you miss class, it is *your responsibility* to obtain notes on material covered that day (so make friends in class!). Please do not ask me via email to update you on details of what happened in class.

Electronics in the Classroom.

Use of laptops or other electronic equipment is not permitted in the classroom. You are required to print out and have in hand the relevant assigned reading(s) from Oaks for each class. I will announce beforehand (in class or via email) what readings will be discussed in class (and also provide discussion questions). *Smart phone use is strictly prohibited.* All phones should be set on silent (not vibrate) or turned off and *not visible on your desk* (where cyber Satan can tempt you). If I see you continually staring down at your lap and smiling, I will assume you have a phone (if not, I don't want to know).

Honor Code Agreement. Read the handout carefully, sign/date it, and return it to me in class no later than Thursday, August 30.

DISABILITY ACCOMMODATION

If you have a documented disability and have been approved to receive accommodations through the Center for Disability Services/SNAP (Students Needing Access Parity), please come and discuss this with me as soon as possible during my office hours or by appointment (bring documentation). Students approved for accommodations are responsible for notifying me *at least one week* before accommodation is needed.

ACADEMIC SUPPORT SERVICES: The Center for Student Learning (CSL)

The CSL, located on the first floor of the library, offers a wide variety of tutoring and other academic resources that support many courses offered at the College. Services include walk-in tutoring, by appointment tutoring, study strategies appointments, Peer Academic Coaching (PAC), and Supplemental Instruction (SI). All services are described on the CSL website (<http://csl.cofc.edu>) or call 843-953-5635 for information.

GRADING

Final grades are determined in accordance with the following scale:

A = 100-94	C = 75-73
A- = 93-90	C- = 72-70
B+ = 89-86	D+ = 69-66
B = 85-83	D = 65-62
B- = 82-80	D- = 61-59
C+ = 79-76	F = 58-

COURSE SCHEDULE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

(This schedule is subject to revision. Please bring all materials - Bible, Oaks readings, and/or textbook - relevant to the lecture topic for that day.)

I. INTRODUCTION

August 21-23: The Literature of the Hebrew Bible, its Ancient Near Eastern Context, and a Quick Overview of Biblical History (Coogan/Chapman, chapters 1-2 and "Chronology" on pp. 530-537; also summary narrative on pp. 20-23). Oaks readings #1 and #2 contain relevant maps and charts to orient you to the region and its chronology. Readings #3-5 discuss issues relating to the Hebrew text, translations, and approaches to its interpretation.

For the Dead Sea scrolls online, see <http://dss.collections.imj.org.il/>

For the Aleppo Codex, see <http://aleppocodex.org/>

II. TORAH (PENTATEUCH)

Aug. 28-30: By Way of Preface: Genesis 1-11

(read Genesis 1-11 and Coogan/Chapman, chaps. 3-5). Oaks reading #6 contains various maps, charts etc., and passages from some ancient texts relevant for Genesis; please make sure you have these pages in class (note especially the Robbins translation of Genesis 2-3 in Oaks #6a). Readings #7-10 (Baden, Orlinsky, Batto, Fewell) deal with additional matters of interpretation; I will announce beforehand which you are to read for lecture.

Sept. 4-11: The Fathers and Mothers of Israel: Abraham and the Covenant Theme

(read Genesis 12-50 and CC, chap. 6). Note especially Genesis 12:10-20, 20:1-18, and 26:1-11 on the wife-sister motif, Genesis 22 on the near sacrifice of Isaac, and Genesis 37-39 on the stories of Joseph, Tamar, and Judah. Alter (Oaks #11) offers a literary approach to duplicated stories, using the betrothal scene as example, while Huddleston (#11a) provides one example of a literary reading of Genesis 37-39.

Film Clips: Over the course of the term we will view segments from two films relating to the Hebrew Bible and ancient Israel. Both as it happens bear the same title: "The Bible's Buried Secrets" - one from the PBS series NOVA and the other produced by the BBC. Segments of both are available on-line via Youtube and the PBS website.

Sept. 13: The Exodus in Israelite Tradition: History and Archaeology

(read Exodus 1-18; CC, chap. 7; and Huddleston on the first biblical plague in Oaks #13). Note relevant maps in Oaks #2 and full text of the Merenptah stela in Oaks #12.

Sept. 18: The Covenant and the Biblical Legal Tradition

(read Exodus, chaps. 19-24, 34; CC, chap. 8 and pp. 122-128, Box 9.2, and pp. 133-136, 154-155 on Law; and Westbrook, "Crimes and Delicts" in Oaks #14). On male homosexuality in Leviticus 18:22, see Joosten's "A New Interpretation of Lev. 18:22..." in Oaks #14a. Oaks #15 contains a brief selection of laws from Mesopotamia on similar topics.

Sept. 20: Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic History

(read Deuteronomy, chaps. 1-12, 18, 28-30, 34; CC, chap. 12; plus pp. 188-190 on editions and themes). Note also pp. 278-279 on the prophecy-fulfillment motif.

*****Sept. 25 - EXAM 1*****

III. NEVI'IM: THE FORMER/LATTER PROPHETS

Sept. 27: Emergence in the Land of Canaan

(read Joshua 1-12, 22-24 and Judges 1-5; CC, chaps. 13-14. For two views on early Israel and the settlement in the land, see Finkelstein, "How and When Did the Israelites Emerge" (Oaks # 16a) and Mazar, "The Israelite Settlement" (Oaks #16b).

Oct. 2: “We want a king like those of other nations”: The Formation of the Monarchy (read 1 Samuel 3-17 and 28; CC, chap. 15).

Oct. 4: Israel's “Golden Age”: The United Monarchy under David and Solomon (read 2 Samuel 1-8, 11-12; 1 Kings 1-11; and CC, chaps. 16-17). Oaks #17 (Berlin) provides a literary analysis of David’s women, while Baden (#17a) engages in a close, critical and historical reading of the Bathsheba affair and its aftermath. For Solomon’s temple, see Fritz in Oaks #18 and Monson in Oaks #19. For photos of the temple at Ain Dara, Syria, see http://www.pbse.com/dosseman_syria/aindara&page=all

Oct. 9: How Things Worked: Gods, Temples, and Sacrifices/Offerings (read Leviticus 1-16 [Yom Kippur]; CC, pp. 86-87, 104-106, 128-131, and chap. 10). Smith, “Myth and Mythmaking in Canaan and Ancient Israel” (Oaks #20)
Hurowitz, “From Storm-God to Abstract Being” (#21)
Dijkstra, “I Have Blessed you by YHWH of Samaria and his Asherah...” (#22)
Smith, “Biblical Monotheism and the Structures of Divinity” (Oaks #23)

Oct. 11: The Divided Monarchy down to the Destruction of the Northern Kingdom (read 1 Kings 12-22; 2 Kings 1-11, 17; and CC, pp. 278-288). Oaks #24 contains some non-biblical inscriptions (Assyrian, Babylonian, Moabite) relevant to this period.

Oct. 16: The Rise of Prophecy: Elijah, Elisha and the Book of Amos (review relevant passages in 1-2 Kings above; read book of Amos [all]; CC, pp. 288-297, 301-309, and Box 19.3).

Oct. 18-23: Judah's Last Days: King Hezekiah and Isaiah of Jerusalem (“First Isaiah”) (read 2 Kings 16,18-20; 2 Chronicles 28; Isaiah 1-12; CC, chap. 20, and text no. 28 on Sennacherib in Oaks #24, pp. 11-13).

Oct. 25 - EXAM 2

Oct. 30: Kings Manasseh, Josiah, and the Fall of Jerusalem in 586 BCE (read 2 Kings 21-25; 2 Chronicles 33-35; and CC, chaps. 21-22). See Oaks #24, p. 17, for the account of Nebuchadnezzar’s taking of Jerusalem.

Nov. 1: Jeremiah, the Exile, and the Problem of Prophetic Authority (read Jeremiah 1, 7, 23-33; CC, pp. 355-364).

November 6: Fall Break

Nov. 8: “God the Master Puppeteer”: Second Isaiah on Cyrus, the Messiah (read Isaiah 40-51; CC, chap. 24). See Oaks #25 for the Cyrus Cylinder (Finkel) and Smith, “Monotheism in Isaiah 40-55” (Oaks #26).

IV. KETHUVIM (THE WRITINGS)

Nov. 13-15: Wisdom Traditions (survey of genre and corpus in CC, pp. 455-459).

Proverbs: The Two Ladies, the Two Paths

(read Proverbs 1-9; CC, pp. 459-462; and Pechansky, “Is Hokmah an Israelite Goddess, and What Should We Do about It?” - Oaks #27).

Job: The System is Broken, God’s a Gambler

(read Job 1-14, 19, 22-23, 27-42 [skim the rest]; and CC, pp. 462-472). In contrast to CC, see Clines in Oaks #28 (“Why is There a Book of Job, and What Does It Do to You If You Read It?”) and #29 (“Seven Interesting Things about the Epilogue to Job”). For the problem of suffering, injustice, and the gods (theodicy) outside biblical tradition, see the Mesopotamian texts in Oaks #30.

Ecclesiastes (Qohelet): Who Knows Anything?

(read the entire book; CC, pp. 472-477; “Dialogue of Pessimism” in Oaks #30a, pp. 923-926).

*****November 20 (no class, but you will have a film assignment)*****

*****November 22 - Thanksgiving Break*****

Nov. 27: Songs of Songs: Love Poetry in the Bible!

(read Song of Songs [“Song of Solomon”] and CC, pp. 477-479). See Oaks #31 for some Egyptian love poetry similar to that in this biblical book.

Nov. 29: Lion, Tigers, and Bears! Daniel and the Apocalyptic Genre

(read Daniel 7-12 [skim 1-6]; I Maccabees 1-4 (apocrypha section of Bible); CC, pp. 482-492 for historical background, and pp. 518-524 on the book of Daniel itself).

*****EXAM 3 -- December 6 @ 8:00-11:00am*****