

REL 141 Hebrew Bible

Fall 2009
MW 10:00-11:30 am
Harrison 101
Office Hours: Tues 1:30-4:30 and Fridays by appointment

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Course Objectives:

This course introduces students to the literature of Ancient Israel that came to be known as the Hebrew Bible (Tanakh or Old Testament). Students will be expected to read significant portions of this literature in translation and to learn to recognize its complexity and diversity. In class we will discuss the texts within the historical and cultural contexts in which they developed and were written down. Students will also be introduced to the methods and practices of biblical scholarship, as well as the rich interpretive traditions carried on by Jewish and Christian communities throughout the ages. It is my goal that students will become sophisticated, careful readers of the biblical text so that they will be able to understand and assess the many varied theological, political, and social positions said to be proven based on what "the Bible says."

Statement on Plagiarism

Plagiarism and academic dishonesty constitute serious offenses that undermine your education and violate DePauw policy on academic integrity and may result in penalties ranging from a lowered grade to course failure or expulsion. All work submitted in this class must be your own, and must be completed specifically for this class. You may not turn in work previously written for another class. Any use of another's work without proper citation constitutes plagiarism and will be dealt with severely. The policy and discussion of each student's obligations and rights are in the Student Handbook.

Proper citation of secondary sources should follow one of the standard formats (MLA, Chicago, etc.) and include all of the following: author, title, publisher, place, date of publication, and page number. ***Biblical texts should be cited as follows within the body of the text: (Book Chapter: Verse, translation*)***. E.g. "In the beginning" (Gen 1:1, NRSV). When referring to biblical passages within the text of your paper, please do not write out the reference like this, Genesis chapter one verse one, but rather use the shorter notation Genesis 1:1. If you have further questions regarding plagiarism or citation styles ask me or consult a writing handbook.

**translation only required when quoting directly from the text*

Required Books:

Harper Collins Study Bible. NRSV w/ Apocrypha.

Collins, John. A Short Introduction to the Hebrew Bible, Fortress Press, 2007.

Suggested Additional Resources:

Accordance Bible Software (available in DML in ROW basement and in the Geo lab in Julian 201).

Anchor Bible Dictionary (ABD) (REF BS440.A54 in ROW and on Accordance).

Anchor Bible Commentary Series (BS 192.2.A1).

Alter, Robert. The Art of Biblical Narrative, Basic Books, 1991.

Barton, John. Reading the Old Testament, Westminster/John Knox, 1996.

Bellis, Alice Ogden, Helpmates, Harlots, and Heroes: Women's Stories in the Hebrew Bible, Westminster John Knox, 2007.

Davies, Philip R. and John Rogerson, The Old Testament World, Westminster/John Knox, 2005.

Frankel, Ellen, The Five Books of Miriam, HarperSan Francisco, 1998.

Friedman, Richard Elliot, Who Wrote the Bible, Harper and Row, 1987.

Kugel, James, The Bible As It Was, Harvard Univ. Press, 1999.

Mazar, Amihai, Archaeology of the Land of the Bible, Doubleday, 2001.

Pritchard, James B. (ed.) The Ancient Near East: An Anthology of Texts and Pictures, Princeton University Press, 1958.

Sparks, Kenton L. Ancient Texts for Study of Hebrew Bible, Hendrickson, 2005.

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Requirements:

Reading Preparation and Participation – Read the biblical selections indicated on the syllabus, along with the introductions to each book in the Study Bible. Focus on getting an overall sense of the passages, their emphases and their basic content. After getting a sense of the whole section, return to read more closely those chapters indicated on the syllabus as essential. Come to class prepared to discuss the reading question(s) listed on the syllabus and with your own questions from the reading.

Weekly Forums – You will be expected to post a forum (roughly $\frac{3}{4}$ page) to the course moodle site each week. Half of the class will post by *Tuesday at 7pm* and the other half by *Thursday at 7pm*. I would recommend that you compose your comments in a word file and then cut and paste them into the forum so that you don't lose your work.

By *Tuesday at 7pm*, the first half of the class (males/females) should choose one chapter of one of the biblical texts assigned during the week (preferably one not covered in detail in class).

First, read through this chapter raising specific questions about the reading.

These can be questions about basic meaning

What does this particular word, phrase, sentence mean? What connotations does it have?

about the way the text is/was put together

Are there discrepancies with what is written elsewhere? Or gaps in the narrative?

Is there evidence of sources or redaction?

or about the larger moral, ethical, or theological issues raised by the text

Why did the characters act as they did? Are these characters models for behavior?

What does this say about the Deity?

Second, look over the chapter again and write out some reflections on one or two of the questions you raised.

These can be proposed answers to the questions or reflections about the nature and significance of the questions.

Third, You should also ask yourself how historical context affects your reading, how contextual reading might be different from a modern reading and how your own personal experience and context influences how you read this chapter. A significant part of the goal here is for you to be reflecting on *your experience* of reading the text of the Bible.

By *Thursday at 7pm*, the other half of the class (females/males) is expected to post a response to one of your classmates' posts. You may choose to respond to one of his or her questions, raise additional questions, and/or comment on the issues raised.

Accordance Assignments – You will turn in two (2) research assignments using Accordance Bible Software. I will provide instruction in class regarding the use of the software, and you will be expected to do the research on the designated computers (DML in ROW and 201 Julian).

The first assignment will focus on the distribution of divine names and key terms within the Torah. Students in the class will be given names used of God or key terms used in the Torah. You are to do word searches to find all the passages that contain these terms and write up a discussion of the distribution of each term and its meaning and significance in those contexts.

The second assignment will be directly related to the topic you have chosen for your research paper. It entails writing up the results of your investigation (aided by the use of Accordance) of all the primary source material relating to your topic. For help with selecting appropriate search terms please see me. You may also find information about relevant primary texts in ABD articles related to your topic.

Midterm Exam – A study guide will be provided one week in advance. For this exam you will be required to list the books of the Hebrew Bible in order (both according to the Jewish canon and the Protestant Christian canon).

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Research Paper – Students may pursue research in any area related to the material covered in this course. Papers should be narrowly conceived in order to allow students to dig deeply into their topic. You are expected conduct research using *at least 2* academic commentaries or book length studies (start with Anchor Bible Commentary Series) and *2 scholarly articles* (use ATLA and JSTOR databases). Some types of topics are listed below, however students can propose topics of another type.

You must either make an appointment to meet with me to discuss your topic for the research paper OR turn in a proposal describing your topic and keywords for your Accordance searches by Wednesday October 14 at 5pm. Final Paper should be roughly 3500-4000 words.

Interpretation of a specific biblical passage (e.g., the mating of the sons of God and daughters of humans in Gen 6; Abraham’s sacrifice of Isaac or “the binding of Isaac” in Genesis 22; the theophany at Sinai in Exodus 19; the dynastic promise of David in 2 Samuel 7; Ezekiel’s vision of the heavenly chariot in Ezekiel 1; description of the woman of valor in Proverbs 31; Daniel’s vision of the four beasts in Daniel 7; etc.)

Comparison of two parallel or interrelated biblical passages (e.g. Genesis 1:1-2:3 // Genesis 2:4-25; Exodus 20 // Deut 5; 2 Samuel 7 // Psalm 89; 2 Samuel 24 // 1 Chronicles 21; etc.)

A biblical figure (e.g., Noah; Miriam; Moses; Deborah; Samson; David; Esther; Josiah; Amos; "the Suffering Servant" of Second Isaiah; Ezra; etc.)

Ethical or Legal Concerns (e.g. warfare; justice; women; menstruation; dietary concerns; economic justice; homosexuality; etc.)

Historical or archaeological issues (e.g. the flood in biblical and extrabiblical literature; historicity of the exodus; historical record of the conquest; what happened to the ark of the covenant?; comparison of Solomon’s Temple with archaeological record of 10th C. temples; dating the careers of Ezra and Nehemiah; etc.)

In lieu of a standard research paper, students may also propose creative projects that present their research into a particular topic in a creative way. Examples could include:

building a model (either real or virtual) of Noah’s Ark, the Tabernacle, Solomon’s Temple or Jerusalem at a particular time;

writing a dialogue between two biblical characters (e.g. Josiah and Samuel; Hilkiah the High Priest and Isaiah the prophet; Ruth and Ezra; author of Proverbs and Job);

retelling a biblical story from the point of view of another character (especially one of the women such as Sarah, Hagar, Leah, Miriam, Jephthah’s daughter).

interpretive exploration of a text, character, issue, or theme from the Hebrew Bible, in the form of a musical composition or performance, an art piece (sculpture, painting, collage, etc.), a video production, dance composition, etc.

All such projects must be approved by the professor and include research and documentation.

Final Exam – Tuesday May 12, 8:30-11:30am.

Grade Breakdown

Assignment	Percentage of Final Grade	Final Grade Breakdown
Attendance and Participation	10%	A 93-100
Weekly Forums	20%	A- 90-92.99
Accordance Assignments (2)	20% (10%, 10%)	B+ 87-89.99
Midterm Exam	15%	B 83-86.99
Research Paper	20%	B- 80-82.99
Final exam	15%	C+ 77-79.99
		C 73-76.99
		C- 70-72.99

Note: If you are enrolled Pass/D/Fail, you must successfully complete **all** of the above assignments and end with an overall grade of 70 or better to achieve a Pass.

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Course Outline

	Primary Texts Essential Texts in Bold	Secondary / Background Reading	Additional Reading (if you have time)
Week 1: What is the Hebrew Bible? How do we read the Bible?			
W	Survey, Syllabus		
Week 2: Epics of Creation / Stories of Origin males			
M	Historical Context Social Context	Collins Introduction and ch. 1 Old Testament World Ch. 1, 3 (moodle)	
W	Genesis 1-5; 6-11 OT Parallels 3-40 (moodle)	Collins ch. 2-3	ABD "Torah (Penateuch)" v.6 605-622
		What are the different deities like? How do they create?	
Week 3: Patriarchal Narratives females			
M	Genesis 12-32 (12, 15, 17, 20)	Collins ch. 4	
		Look for repeated stories. How do they support source approach?	
W	Genesis 33-37-38-50	Alter "A Literary Approach to the Bible" (moodle)	
		Compare literary to source approach on Gen 38.	
Week 4: Moses and the Plagues males			
M	Exodus 1-11; Psalm 78, 105	Collins ch. 5	ABD "Egypt, Plagues in" v.2 374-378
		What are the plagues? How is the plague narrative put together?	
W	Exodus 12-15-18		ABD "Unleavened Bread and Passover, Feasts of" v.6 755-765
		What different traditions make up the festival described in 12-13?	
Week 5: Exodus and Sinai females			
M	Exodus 19-20-24; Deut 5-7	Collins ch. 6	
		Compare the versions of the Decalogue. Why are they different?	
W	Exodus 32-34	<i>The Commentator's Bible</i> (moodle)	ABD "History of Biblical Hermeneutics" v.3 433-443
		What did the people do wrong? Did they know it was wrong? Who is responsible for what they did? What is Aaron's role?	
Week 6: Worship, Tabernacle, and Priesthood males			
M	Class Cancelled – Yom Kippur		
W	Exodus 25-40; Lev 1, 6-8, 11-16	Collins ch. 7	ABD "Unclean and Clean" v.6 729-741
		What is Priestly Ideology? How do they see the world? Accordance #1 Due Friday 5pm.	
Week 7: Numbers and Deuteronomy and the Structure of Society females			
M	Leviticus 18, 19, 20, 23 Numbers 3, 8-9, 11-14-16, 19 Psalms 111-118, 120-134, 145-150		ABD "Levites and Priests" v.4 297-310
		What is the relationship between Levites and Priests? How do these texts reflect struggles over authority?	
W	Deuteronomy 1-34 (1-4, 12, 17-18, 27-28)	Collins ch. 8	ABD "Covenant" v.1 1179-1202 ABD "Blessings and Curses" v.1 755-761
		What is the purpose of Deuteronomy? How is it like a treaty?	

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Week 8: Entering the Land		males
M	Midterm Exam	
W	Joshua 1-8, 11-12, 23-24 Judges 1-8, 18-21	Collins ch. 9-10 How successful was the conquest? Research Proposal Due 5pm.
Week 9: Fall Break		
Week 10: The Rise of the Monarchy		females
M	1 Samuel 1-19 (8, 16-17) Psalms 47, 93, 97, 99	Collins ch. 11 Is a king a good idea?
W	2 Samuel 1-24 (5-7, 24) Psalms 1-41, 51, 72	Collins ch. 12
	How is David's Kingdom established? Is a Temple a good idea?	
Week 11: Prophets		males
M	1 Kings 1-19 (8, 18-19); 2 Kings 1-4	Collins ch. 13 Collins ch. 14
	What is the role of the prophet in the case of Elijah and Elisha?	
W	Early Literary Prophets Amos; Hosea	Collins ch. 15 ABD "Prophecy (ANE; Pre-exilic)" v.5 477-489
	What does it mean to be a prophet in these cases? Accordance #2 Due Friday 5pm.	
Week 12: Judean Monarchy and the Assyrians		females
M	2 Kings 17-23 Psalms 2, 45, 48, 110, 125, 132	
	Why is Hezekiah so important? What did he do? How is Jerusalem (Zion) portrayed in these Psalms?	
W	Isaiah 1-12, 17-20, 24-29, 35 (1, 6-11)	Collins ch. 16 How does Isaiah speak to the situation in Judah in the 8 th C. BCE?
Week 13: Exile and Return		males
M	Jeremiah 7; 2 Kings 24-25; Lamentations 1 Ezekiel 1-5, 37, 40 Psalms 79, 89, 95, 100, 137	Collins ch. 17-18 Why was the Exile such a shock to the people of Judah? How do different texts explain the Exile? What different kinds of responses to Exile are there?
W	Ezra; Nehemiah (8-10); Haggai; Zechariah 1-8; Malachi 3	Collins ch. 20-21 ABD "Prophecy (Post-exilic)" v.5 489-495
	What major changes are evident in the Post Exilic period? What is the role/status of the Temple and its priests?	
Week 14: Love Poetry?		females
M	Song of Songs	Collins ch. 23
	How do you read Song of Songs? What is it about? What is it for?	
W	Thanksgiving Break	
Week 15: Wisdom		males
M	Proverbs 1, 3, 8, 10, 31; Job 1-3, 13, 40-42 Qohelet (Ecclesiastes) Psalms 1, 14, 37, 73, 119, 128	Collins ch. 24-25 Perdue "Cosmology and the Social Order"
	What is wisdom literature? How is it different from other types? How do Job and Qohelet challenge the type of wisdom in Prov?	

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W	Jonah; Ruth; Esther	Collins ch. 26 Bellis, "Subversive Women in Subversive Books"	ABD "Feminist Hermeneutics" v.2 783-791
		Who are the heroes of these stories? What are they like? Why does the Bible include such short stories?	
Week 16: Apocalypticism and Hopes for the Future			females
M	Isaiah 40-66 (40-45, 55, 66) Zechariah 9-14; Daniel 1-12 (2, 7, 11-12)	Collins ch. 19 Collins ch. 20, 27	
		What are the differences between prophetic and apocalyptic ideology? Compare the views of the future of Isaiah and Daniel.	
W	Conclusions	Collins ch. 29	Research Paper Due Friday 5pm.
Week 17: Final Exam – Tuesday December 15, 8:30-11:30 am.			