COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is an introduction to the Hebrew Bible, the diverse literature of Ancient Israel that came to be recognized as sacred Scripture (known alternatively as Tanakh or Old Testament). While the Hebrew Bible is one of the cornerstones of Western Civilization, many people today have little awareness of its contents or of the great role it has played in the development of our culture. Fewer have an understanding of the Hebrew Bible’s own development or of the vast critical literature that surrounds this most unusual collection of writings. The task of this course will be a modest attempt to improve this situation.

Whether or not you have any religious interest in biblical literature, an understanding of literature, film, music, religious conflicts, and current electoral politics (among other things) virtually requires some basic knowledge of the Hebrew Bible. This course is therefore fundamental to your overall liberal arts training. The primary goal is to give you tools and experiences to understand the history and literature of the Hebrew Bible within the ancient Near Eastern context in which it flourished. While pursuing this goal, some efforts will be made to familiarize you with modern critical methods of biblical scholarship. I hope that by the end of the course you will not only have learned certain details of ancient history but will have begun to appreciate this enigmatic set of documents on a deeper level, and will have the ability to discern some of the ways in which our lives today are shaped by its powerful influence.

* Ketef Hinnom Silver Scroll. ca. 600 BCE. Israel Museum.
**Course Objectives**

Through lecture/discussion, written assignments, group work, engagement of various primary and secondary texts, and interactions with various media forms (including print media, online resources, films, and material culture), you have the opportunity to:

1. **Acquire and apply** transferable critical thinking skills for *close reading* of primary (biblical and ANE comparative texts) and secondary (scholarly) sources;
2. **Gain** familiarity with the basic lexicon (organizing principles) of the discipline of biblical studies and some of the classical approaches/methodologies employed in the discipline;
3. **Unpack** dimensions of worldviews upon which Hebrew biblical traditions are based (scribal, mythical, experiential, doctrinal, ritual, ethical, and social), the primary social features of Hebrew biblical traditions and how such features function;
4. **Develop** a critical appreciation of some of the defining (meta)narratives, beliefs, rites and rituals, symbolics (art, iconography, and architecture), values and mores, modes of discourse, and cultural appropriations that distinguish Hebrew biblical traditions within varying historical, social, and literary contexts;
5. **Cultivate** an ability to think, write, and speak critically about biblical ‘religion’ as a social (and thus political) phenomenon and analyze how identity formation is a central part of the social process;
6. **Demonstrate** an appreciation for the difficulties that arise from the nature of the primary sources, different approaches to interpretation, and the ways they are employed in contemporary arguments;
7. **Improve** communication skills through thinking, writing, and speaking critically about your own historical, social, and cultural position(s) as it/they relate to Hebrew biblical traditions;
8. **Cultivate** an attitude of curiosity, openness, and appreciation of multiple interpretive perspectives or ‘readings’ of primary and secondary sources, becoming better prepared to listen to, converse with, and befriend people whose perspectives and convictions (may) differ from your own.
**COURSE MATERIALS**

**IHB**  

All remaining REQUIRED readings for this course will be provided in .pdf on Moodle as designated on the Course Schedule (see separate file), in lieu of a printed coursepack: this includes both Argument/Background/Method sources as well as all Exhibit sources. Some of these readings are taken from the following resources:

**SC**  

**HR**  

**EVALUATION**

The primary course **Requirements** will be a combination of written and oral assignments in which you will demonstrate critical thinking and engagement with the course’s main texts and ideas. In order to pass the course, you must complete all of the assignments. The breakdown of final grade points is as follows:

I. Engagement  
   Preparation  
   Attendance  
   Participation-Discussion  
   Participation-Activities  
   300 points total  
   200 points  
   -  
   50 points  
   50 points

II. Passage Analysis  
   100 points

III. Quizzes (5)  
   100 points

IV. Reacting to the Past  
   150 points

V. Exams (2)  
   Exam 1  
   Exam 2  
   350 points  
   100 points  
   250 points

The maximum number of points for the class is 1000, which can be translated into the following letter grades:

1000-930 A  
899-870 B+  
799-770 C+  
699-600 D  
929-900 A-  
869-830 B  
769-730 C  
599-000 F  
829-800 B-  
729-700 C-
COURSE REQUIREMENTS

I. Engagement (300 points total)

Preparation (200 points). The Course Schedule (see separate file) provides a list of the readings that you will be responsible for on any given day. The course will cover a fair bit of material in a short time period, so it will be important for you to stay current on the reading. Doing all of your assigned readings well in advance of class is important because our interactive lectures and in-class discussions all presume that you have the necessary background knowledge provided by these readings. While we will not always directly cover all parts of all of the assigned readings, we will discuss your responses to the readings as we clarify the main points.

So, you are expected to come to class prepared to speak to the substance of the assigned reading material—as indicated by your having completed all of the assigned weekly readings prior to the beginning of each week (i.e., by the beginning of class on Mondays) and by keeping up-to-date Double-Entry Notebooks (or BlueBooks, I’ll provide these for you), as follows:

For each of the Exhibit or Argument/Background source readings highlighted in gray on the Course Schedule (see separate file), you will write exactly two pages in your double-entry notebooks. The first page will be a restatement of the text’s argument in your own words/visual representation. You can write a summary, make an outline, draw a graphic organizer, flowchart or a diagram of the reading, or simply take careful notes. The purpose of this page is to help you understand as fully as possible the structure and details of the text’s argument (we’ll workshop ‘argument summaries’ in class together). This page should help you recall the import of the reading in some detail several weeks later. Your second page is to be your own personal reflections on or reactions to the reading. Analyze it, illustrate it through your own experience, refute it, get mad at it, question it, believe it, doubt it, go beyond it.

Every class period, I will roll a d20, with the following outcomes: if I roll 1-8, I won’t collect your notebooks; if I roll 9-20, I will collect your notebooks. If/when I collect your notebooks, I will only read THAT DAY’S ENTRY with interest, awarding points according to the following scale:

0 - did not complete on time (no entry for current date)
3 - entry missing either summary or response
6 - summary shows evidence of some understanding of the reading and response demonstrates some preparation to engage in discussion
8 - either summary demonstrates a strong understanding of the reading or response demonstrates significant preparation to engage in discussion (but not both)
10 - both summary demonstrates a strong understanding of the reading and response demonstrates significant preparation to engage in discussion

However, the remainder of the points for the Preparation portion of your grade will be awarded at the end of term and will be based on the percentage of notebook entries you completed overall and the overall quality of your summaries and responses.
**Attendance (~).** Attendance at (the 40+ scheduled) class meetings will be monitored. You will be allowed to miss up to **three** (3) class meetings without penalty. I make no distinction between excused and unexcused absences—I fully expect that you will occasionally (i.e. up to three times) be unable to attend class for one reason or another, so it is not necessary to apologize or provide any excuse for your absences. Those of you who are involved in campus activities (sports, newspaper, theater, etc.) may need to use your absences for commitments in those areas. That’s fine, but you are not afforded more absences in addition to extracurricular-related absences. Unsanctioned late arrivals and early departures (more than 15 min. late/early) will be tallied as half an absence. *Every successive absence beyond your first three (3) will result in the deduction of two percentage points from your final overall grade.*

**Participation-Discussion (50 points).** Active participation in class discussions is one of the keys to happiness and success in this course. Participation is not so much an issue of the number of comments (quantity), but primarily the substance of those comments (quality). Dominating discussion and/or not being sensitive to the direction of the discussion are just as problematic as not saying anything at all. When you have something important to contribute, speak up and without reserve—each one of you has something unique and worthwhile to bring to our discussion (especially if you’ve been keeping up with your notebooks)—and address each other when speaking, rather than directing comments to me (unless, of course, you are referring to something I said or want to direct a comment or question specifically to me). There are different kinds of contributions you can make to discussion, *all of which you are expected to work on over the course of the semester.* None of these are really possible without coming to class each session (**Attendance**) having read, summarized, and responded to the assigned readings (**Preparation**):

- Attentively listening to your colleagues, in order to build on what has already been said;
- Asking colleagues to clarify unclear contributions;
- Summarizing key ideas that have emerged during the discussion;
- Articulating an answer to a posed question;
- Raising questions that help advance discussion and/or draw quiet(er) colleagues into the discussion;
- Offering an original idea related to the topic of discussion;
- Drawing on evidence (background/exhibit/argument sources, personal experience, popular culture) to either support or challenge ideas;
- Constructively critiquing an idea offered in the readings or by a class member (including me!);
- Pointing out how various comments complement each other or are at odds;
- Playing “devil’s advocate”

I will evaluate your discussion participation and award points two times throughout the term (once at mid-term and once at the end of the term), according to the following scale/range:

- 0 - you show various degrees of disinterest during class discussion
- 5 - you listen politely and nothing else
- 10 - you listen carefully and show evidence of interest (take notes, nod, pay close attention), but do not respond
- 15 - in addition, you ask follow-up or clarification questions
- 20 - in addition, you provide input, make suggestions regarding
25 - in addition, you raise important points, ask meaningful questions in terms of content, make important comments relating to the readings, authors, or works studied, and express yourself accurately and gracefully.

You may also be called on to provide verbal constructive feedback to your colleagues oral presentations (see details below) using the rubrics I provide in class, or you may be selected on presentation days as one of the 2-3 students required to provide immediate verbal feedback directly after one of your peers presents. In either case, your involvement, engagement, and contributions in giving your peers feedback on their presentations will be assessed and rolled into my overall evaluation of your participation in the course.

**Participation-Activities (50 points).** Every class period will also include opportunities for you to personalize course material, to reflect on or apply course concepts, or practice key tasks and processes. For some class meetings this may include a **Pop Quiz** on assigned material. For other class meetings this may either involve writing a short in-class response to a prompt based on material we are working with that day or participating in an in-class exercise.

**In-class short, written responses** are designed to give you practice retrieving/rehearsing key course concepts and to assist you in building your own connections between course material and everyday life outside of the classroom. I may, for example, ask you to summarize the position a selected reading is arguing against, to identify an author's thesis and main argument, to paraphrase a passage from a selected reading, to provide an example to illustrate a key idea, or to describe how and why issues in the text apply to your life.

**In-class exercises** are designed to give you practice with key tasks and processes you will need to successfully accomplish the learning goals of the higher-level assignments for this course. I may, for example, ask you to practice writing essay introductions or to proof-read and/or comment on your peers' writing.

In-class responses and exercises are just that, *in class*: you may not make them up if you are absent. Submittables may be submitted through Moodle (so feel free to bring your laptops to class).

In-class written responses and submittable material from participation in in-class exercises are low-stakes assignments. I will not give detailed feedback on either, but I will award points according to the following scale:

- 0 - did not complete the in-class writing or exercise
- 1 - completed the in-class writing or exercise
- 2 - completed the in-class writing or activity and demonstrated deep engagement with the material
“The Art of Listening” To simulate the oral/aural culture of the ancient Near East, we will close and/or open each class with a 1-minute reading of a biblical or related text, performed by each of you. When it is your turn to read (we will move through the class roster alphabetically), select one (1) excerpt from the primary readings assigned for that day that either struck you or that lends itself to an oral “performance.” Practice reading your selection a few times beforehand, and time it to ensure that it is 1 minute or less. Not being prepared for your day of reading will result in a reduction of your Participation-Activities grade. Most of you will likely present a reading at least twice throughout the term.

II. Passage Analysis (100 points) - in class throughout the term
This assignment requires you to present a short segment (roughly 20-30 lines) of an assigned Exhibit (primary source/text) reading (see the Course Schedule, separate file), to the rest of the class. Your passage should be relatively self-contained and your analysis of it must move beyond plot summary and address the literary elements. Your analysis should take about 15 minutes to complete and should have several components:

— A brief summary of the day’s reading in general. What happens in today’s reading assignment? Where does your selected passage fit into this literary context?

— Your analysis. What is striking or unusual about this passage? Why did you select it? How does it fit into your general reading of the text as a whole? How are you analyzing it; what is your approach? This is where you would attend to linguistic, lexicological, and literary features—vocabulary, grammar, voice, rhythm, perspective, diction, imagery, trope, characterization, space, rhetoric, theme, citation, allusion, etc. Don’t feel like you have to explain everything—that’s what the discussion questions are for (see below)! Ideally, some of your analysis should come out as you lead your peers through the passage.

— Four “response” or discussion questions. These questions should be based on what the passage made you think about. They can have any structure you like and can relate to any part of the passage, but here are some samples: “How does this passage fit with the section we read last class…?” “What are some of the similarities and differences between the Proverbs and other ANE wisdom literature?” “How do you address the problem of the commands for the Israelites to slaughter the Canaanites?” “Why does biblical prophecy look so different from Mesopotamian prophecy?”

Don’t be afraid if you don’t completely understand that day’s reading, or even everything in your own passage. That’s part of the purpose of the subsequent discussion—to clarify what was initially unclear. Try to choose questions that facilitate open discussion rather than questions that have a clear answer or that ask for a yes/no or “I liked”/“I didn’t like” response. This is a discussion-based assignment: it should be largely a “verbal/oral” presentation in which you facilitate a discussion—please no PowerPoint, Prezi, etc. Two final REQUIREMENTS: on the day of your passage analysis, bring printed, paper handouts containing (at least) the lines of your passage and copies of your discussion questions for the rest of the class; in the afternoon (say by 4pm) on the day before your passage analysis, submit to me a .pdf copy of this same handout.
Logistics: passage analysis discussions will take place in class sometime during Weeks 3-10, 13-14 (2-3 passage analyses/week) according to the following schedule. I will take volunteers for specific presentation slots on a first-come, first-served basis and assign the remaining slots randomly.

- **Week 3** - Exhibits: Ecclesiastes; Song of Songs; Proverbs
- **Week 4** - Exhibits: Psalms; Job
- **Week 5** - Exhibits: Judges
- **Week 6** - Exhibits: 1/2 Samuel
- **Week 7** - Exhibits: 1/2 Kings
- **Week 8** - Exhibits: Amos; Hosea; Ezekiel; Isaiah; Jeremiah
- **Week 9** - Exhibits: Exodus 20-23; Leviticus 12-20
- **Week 10** - Exhibits: Deuteronomy
- **Week 13** - Exhibits: Exodus 1-15; Genesis 24-32
- **Week 14** - Exhibits: Genesis 1-22

III. Quizzes (100 points total; 20 points each) - quizzes due Feb 9, Feb 23, Mar 9, Mar 16, Apr 6, Apr 13, May 4, May 11

These short quizzes are designed to encourage you to keep up with the assigned textbook (IHB) and other Background source readings and to give you practice retrieving/rehearsing key course concepts. This is the way that it works. For 8 weeks out of the course, there will be a short quiz available via Moodle posted right after the Wednesday class meeting. All quizzes are in a multiple choice format and are based on material contained in your IHB textbook and other Background source readings (see the Course Schedule, separate file). Each quiz will only be available for a 24 hour period. There are no rewrite opportunities for missed quizzes. The quizzes are open book. Correct answers to the quiz questions will not be provided online; however you are more than welcome to ask me about the correct answers to any quiz question you are uncertain about, and we can spend some class time going over the quiz if necessary. There will be a total of 8 quizzes. You can take as many of the quizzes as you like, but only your top 5 scores will count towards the total grade. Each quiz is worth 20 points.

IV. Reacting to the Past (Cooperative Storytelling Game) - The Josianic Reform: Deuteronomy, Prophecy, and Israelite Religion (150 points total) - Round 1 Paper due Apr 18; Round 2 Paper due Apr 25

During weeks 11-12 we will be embarking on a cooperative storytelling game set just before the implementation of a monotheistic reform of Israelite religion (622 BCE). Your participation in the game will involve writing two (2) short persuasive papers and active, verbal contributions to the movement/development of the game scenarios. Papers will be shared with the entire class using Google Drive. Points will also be awarded at the completion of the game for achievement of primary and/or secondary victory conditions. Your overall grade for playing the game will be based on the following breakdown:

- **Round 1 Paper** 40 points
- **Round 2 Paper** 50 points
- **Verbal Contributions** 60 points

Further guides on how to complete the papers and make verbal contributions to the game will be provided and we will discuss it together early in the term. For now, here is a preview of some of the game content: The Josianic Reform takes up several tensions within the Bible: “the one versus the many
The central conceit is that the action takes place at the moment of 2 Kings 23:1-3a when all the elders and people of Judah assemble to hear a newly discovered “Scroll of the Teaching” read out to them. The de Wette hypothesis proposes that Deuteronomy is the very text found. The game makes this moment the center of gravity around which discussion of the Hebrew Bible and the practice of Israelite religion revolve. The disintegrating power of the Assyrian Empire supplies an international context for the nation to imagine recovering lost territory if it pleases God by reforming. You are a woman, the prophet Huldah, who vets the scroll: How will you defend it? You are of the royal house: Should you ally with Egypt? You are a Traditionalist: Won’t these changes “remove the ancient landmarks?” The Documentary hypothesis—the literary-historical notion that the Torah grew out of a set of traditions, documentary “sources,” and editorial activity—takes seriously the competing idea sets within the Bible. Why does the found-scroll differ in tone and ideas from the Priestly and Yahwistic traditions? The game’s factions “embody” these idea sets and play out their tensions.

V. Exams (400 points total)

- Exam 1 (150 points)             Friday, Mar 24, 3 PM – Sunday, Mar 31, 11:59 PM (60 min)
- Exam 2 (250 points)             Thursday, May 18, 8 AM – Friday, May 19, 8 PM (180 min)

This course includes two exams that will cover materials discussed in lecture, readings, and other course materials. Exams must be taken on Moodle during the designated date/time. Your failure to take the exam during this time will not result in a makeup opportunity except in the most extraordinary of circumstances. If such a circumstance does arise, please see me/contact me ASAP. You will be given 60 minutes to complete Exam 1 and 180 minutes to complete Exam 2. Exam 2 will be cumulative.

Please note: NO EXAM MAY BE TAKEN IN COOPERATION WITH OTHER PERSONS AT ANY TIME. Those who choose to do this will be subject to university and class policies regarding cheating. See below (“Academic Integrity”) for more information.

COURSE POLICIES

Reading
In order to do well at any of the above requirements it is imperative that you do all of the readings required for each class. Note that much of the reading consists of biblical texts, which must be read s-l-o-w-l-y! Since the Bible is difficult reading, plan your time accordingly. It will be harder to read, so find a quiet place with few distractions. Read with a pen (or pencil) in hand to underline material you find interesting or puzzling. Jot notes/questions in the margins. Enjoy the exploration. If you are pressed for time before a particular session make sure to do at least the Exhibit source readings (I mean those that are selected from the Bible and/or other ancient documents).

Academic Integrity
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 attribution constitutes plagiarism and will be dealt with severely. Plagiarism ranges from copying someone else’s work word for word, to rewriting someone else’s work with only minor word changes (mosaic plagiarism), to summarizing work or borrowing...
ideas without acknowledging the source. To learn more about DePauw’s academic integrity policies please see: [http://www.depauw.edu/handbooks/academic/policies/integrity/](http://www.depauw.edu/handbooks/academic/policies/integrity/).

In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, you are all expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, and respect. REL 141 is a combined lecture and discussion course. This means that, in part, you all are responsible for contributing to both your own learning experiences and the learning experiences of others. Because the contribution of ideas from each of you is critical to the learning process, any behavior that makes other students feel uncomfortable in their learning environment will not be tolerated. This includes interrupting others while they are talking, carrying on conversations separate from the class discussion, or making comments that could be perceived as offensive in terms of race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, ethnicity, nationality, disability, etc. Please make every effort to maintain an atmosphere where everyone feels comfortable sharing and responding to ideas.

Laptops and tablets are welcome in class, under the condition that they are used for taking notes, accessing course-related resources, and submitting in-class responses. There is no reason for you to text, chat, post, skype, tweet, surf, shop, blog, etc. during class. Please turn ringers off during class. Arriving late or leaving early without prior arrangement, and talking or otherwise being disruptive during class, are behaviors that are both discourteous to others and, you know, distracting to me. Seriously. Not good.

**Schedule Conflicts**

If you have any time conflicts with any classes or assignments, you must notify me by the end of Week 2 (February 10). Arrangements can be made to accommodate for religious observances, DePauw sponsored extracurricular events (such as if you are an athlete), etc. But again, please notify me by February 10 to make arrangements. See also **Attendance**, above.

**Late Work**

All assignments are due on the dates indicated on the syllabus. Unexcused late assignments will lose 1/2 grade point per day late. For example, a “B” paper turned in two days late will be marked down to a “C+”.

**Special Accommodations**

It is the policy and practice of DePauw University to provide reasonable accommodations for students with properly documented disabilities. Written notification from Student Disability Services is required. If you are eligible to receive an accommodation and would like to request it for this course, please contact Student Disability Services. Allow one week advance notice to ensure enough time for reasonable accommodations to be made. Otherwise, it is not guaranteed that the accommodation can be provided on a timely basis. Accommodations are not retroactive. Students who have questions about Student Disability Services or who have, or think they may have, a disability (psychiatric, attentional, learning, vision, hearing, physical, medical, etc.) are invited to contact Student Disability Services for a confidential discussion in Union Building Suite 200 or by phone at 658-6267. After receiving your official letter of accommodations, please share it with me (privately and in a confidential manner) so that we can make appropriate arrangements for this course to be a successful learning experience for you.
Course Schedule Changes

This syllabus represents the master plan of how instruction and learning for this course will proceed. All information ABOVE this notice (including objectives, assignment details and point values, policies, etc.) WILL NOT CHANGE: this is my pledge to you.

However, all information contained in the separate Course Schedule (topics, readings, etc.) is SUBJECT TO CHANGE at my discretion and only after consultation with you all. You are welcome to suggest changes to the course schedule at any time, which may be negotiated for implementation, although there is no guarantee that suggested changes will be implemented. If any major changes will be introduced into the Course Schedule, I will promptly notify all of you.