**HEBREW BIBLE INTRODUCTION\***

IST2003- SU14

SYLLABUS DRAFT – SUBJECT TO SLIGHT ALTERATIONS DURING MAY AS I FINALIZE THE COURSE.

Professor Jan Everhart

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**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course introduces students to important themes in the Hebrew Bible, including creation, identity and ethnicity, history and memory, power, violence and war, hope, justice, and the nature of God and the gods. The course also covers the historical development of the literature, religion, and culture of ancient Israel, and methods and interpretive strategies for understanding ancient texts.

**COURSE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

The goal of this course is to orient students to major aspects of the critical study of the Hebrew Bible. To accomplish this goal, we will:

1. Introduce and familiarize students with the content of the Hebrew Bible, the types of literature contained therein, and the historical and cultural contexts in which this literature was produced. Readings, lectures, and exams will provide support these objectives.
2. Examine a number of critical methods pertaining to the interpretation of the Hebrew Bible. Readings, lectures, and online discussions will support this objective.

Iliff engages in a collaborative effort with students with learning and/or physical challenges to reasonably accommodate student needs. Students should contact their assigned advisor to initiate the process of requesting accommodations. The advising center is available through [advising@iliff.edu](mailto:advising@iliff.edu) or 303-765-1146.

Academic honesty is central to our work together. Any time you use someone else’s words or ideas, be sure to cite your source. If you use a verbatim quote, you must use quotation marks in addition to the citation. You should cite material that comes from books, articles (whether print or on-line), study Bible notes, websites, the syllabus, newspapers, etc. IF YOU ARE UNCERTAIN, ERR ON THE SIDE OF CITATION. If you plagiarize material on any assignment for this course, you will fail the assignment and risk failure of the course. During our first class day we will review how to cite biblical texts in your assignments.

**TEXTS**

The Bible – NRSV or Jewish Publication Society Tanakh. Any study Bible is fine as long as you use one of the two translations listed. The *HarperCollins Study Bible: Student Edition: Fully Revised and Updated*. Edited by Harold W. Attridge, et al. Society of Biblical Literature, HarperOne, 2006 is a good choice. For the JPS Tanakh, I recommend *The Jewish Study Bible*, Edited Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler, Oxford University Press, 2004.

\*Much of the material in this syllabus comes verbatim from Dr. Amy Erickson’s winter 2014 syllabus for the same course. Any copied material is used with her permission and is not separately cited.

Brown, Michael Joseph. *What They Don’t Tell You: A Survivor’s Guide to Biblical Studies.* Louisville: Westminster JohnKnox, 2000. 978-066422208. **Note: Quickly read Michael Brown’s book before our initial meeting on June 16.**

Coogan, Michael. *A Brief Introduction to the Old Testament,* 2nd edition*.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2011. 978-0-19-9830114.

Matthews, Victor Harold, and Don Carlos Benjamin. *Old Testament Parallels: Laws and Stories from the Ancient Near East.* Revised and expanded 3rd edition. Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 2007. 978-0809144358.

Other articles will be available on-line. Each student will review an additional text, choosing from a list of possibilities. Book review guidelines are posted as a separate document.

**LATE WORK POLICY**

Posts to discussions that have ended will not be accepted. Assignments submitted late will receive a 10% deduction per day. If you turn in an assignment on the day it is due, but past the time it is due, it is one day late. **ILIFF POLICY DOES NOT ALLOW ADJUNCT INSTRUCTORS TO GIVE GRADES OF INCOMPLETE. ALL COURSEWORK MUST BE TURNED IN BY THE FINAL DUE DATE IN ORDER TO PASS THE CLASS.**

**ASSIGMENTS AND GRADES**

**Participation. 25%.**

Participation includes engagement on our face-to-face class day (June 16), as well as engagement throughout the course through the on-line discussions. Participation does not simply mean talking or contributing; it also means listening and responding thoughtfully throughout the course. You should contribute twice a week to our on-line discussions. If you follow the assignments on the Canvas home page, you should see when and what to post. You will assess your own participation at the end of the course; completion of the self-assessment also factors into this part of your grade. I will upload short lectures at least once a week, and your discussion postings may respond to the mini-lecture as well as the readings.

**Exegesis Exercises. 10%**

The exercises will focus on two selections: Genesis 1-2 and Joshua 2 and 6. Questions will prompt your thinking about what it means to exegete a text, but you will not be able to answer every question. KEEP YOUR POSTINGS TO A MAXIMUM OF 4-5 SENTENCES, consisting of a thesis, your supports and evidence, and your line of argumentation. The goal of these exercises is to help you learn how to formulate a thesis (or argument) for a biblical passage and to present appropriate evidence to support that argument. Please do not try to make the text “preach.” See Brown’s comments on preaching as a related, but different, exercise. While I am a preacher, the goal here is to help you learn how to read the text critically. Please table your ideas about what the Bible should say or what you want it to say; read the text closely and focus on where it surprises you or challenges you. Instead of ironing out problems or inconsistencies, look for problems and then “play” with a variety of solutions (one of which might be your thesis statement.)

**Exams** (2) **50%** (Midterm 20% , final 30%.)

Both the mid-term and final will be open-book/notes (e.g. use your Bible) essay exams. Both will be comprehensive to that point in the course. You may use as many or as few secondary sources as you like. Do not turn these exams into major research papers!

Midterm: essays are due on Thursday, July 10, at midnight.

Final: essays are due Friday, August 8 at 8:00 a.m.

**Book Review. 15%**

Due Thursday, July 17, at midnight. See the guidelines and the list of books for your review.

500 points are possible in the course. The chart below indicates the grading scale:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 500 - 476 = A | 475 - 451 = A- | 450- 435 = B+ | 434-419 = B | 418-401 = B- |
| 400-384 = C+ | 383-366 = C | 365-350 = C- | 349-333 = D+ | 332-319 = D |
| 318 -300 = D- | Below 300 = F |  |  |  |

**Week 1 (June 16-21) INTRODUCTION & CREATION**

**Monday, June 16, 8:30 – 4:30 at Iliff**. This is our one face-to-face meeting. Prepare by reading the Michael Brown book AND choose two of the following short articles below. We will work hard and have fun. We will use the entire eight hours, with a 60-minute lunch break. This class will set the stage for our work for the rest of the course.

Choose two of the following (available on canvas or through the Iliff library)

Walter Brueggemann, “Biblical authority: a personal reflection,” *Christian Century,* 118 no 1 Ja 3-10 2001, 14-20. Available at <http://covnetpres.org/2000/11/biblical-authority-a-personal-reflection/>.

Marc Zvi Brettler, “Biblical Authority: A Jewish Pluralistic View,” in *Engaging Biblical Authority: Perspectives on the Bible as Scripture.* Ed. W.P. Brown. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007, 1-9.

Serene Jones, “Inhabiting Scripture, Dreaming Bible,” in *Engaging Biblical Authority,* 73-80.

Peter Ochs, “The Bible’s Wounded Authority,” in *Engaging Biblical Authority****,*** 113-121.

Ellen Davis, “The Soil that is Scripture,” in *Engaging Biblical Authority,* 36-44.

Come to class prepared to discuss how the articles you read challenged the way you understand or conceive of the authority of the Bible.

For **Thursday, June 19:**

Genesis 1-11; Ps 74:12-17; 77:11-29 (communal laments); 136 (praise); Isa 40:12-31; 44:24-45:7. This part of Isaiah is called “Second” or Deutero-Isaiah and probably represents a different time period from Isaiah 1-39 or the final part of Isaiah (chapters 56-66).

Coogan (2011), “Creations” and “Formation of the Pentateuch,” (all of Part II).

*OT Parallels,* 3-42.

**First exegesis exercise (5%).** Compare and contrast the accounts of creation in *OT Parallels* with Genesis 1-2:4a and 2:4b-2:25 (we read the biblical creation accounts in class). Consider the questions below (after reading each account, you might want to jot down notes to yourself or create some kind of chart), focusing on similarities and differences.

Who creates?

How? Out of what?

Why?

What terms describe humanity?

What do the stories have in common? What is different?

How do the biblical texts compare to each other? To the other ANE accounts?

Provide a possible thesis statement or central argument you could make about one of the biblical texts in light of one of the Mesopotamian or Egyptian texts (you will need to narrow your focus: don’t try to deal with every text). You need to provide 2-3 sentences in support of your thesis or argument. DO NOT TRY TO ANSWER ALL THE QUESTIONS DIRECTLY OR COMPLETELY; THE QUESTIONS SHOULD HELP SPARK YOUR THINKING. **This exercise is due on Thursday, June 19 at midnight**. Upload in the assignment slot. Don’t forget to “log in” and add to our discussion by Thursday at 8:00 a.m.

**Week 2** (June 22-28) – **Creation and Origin Stories**

**For Sunday, June 22** – Proverbs 8:22-31; Job 38:1-40:5 and “The Great Hymn to Khnum” (see link: <http://amentneferet.wordpress.com/gods/khnum/>)

And choose among the following (read either two short articles or the longer more academic piece from *JBL.*)

1. Kathryn Schifferdecker, “And also many animals” in *Word & World* 2007 and William P. Brown, “Proverbs 8:22-31,” *Interpretation,* July 2009, 286-289.
2. Allen Lenzi, “Proverbs 8:21-33: Three Perspectives on Its Composition,” *Journal of* *Biblical Literature* 125 (2006): 687-714.
3. Sarah Stokes Musser, “Comfort in the Whirlwind? Job, Creation, and Environmental Degradation,” *Word & World* 2012 and William P. Brown, “Proverbs 8:22-31,” *Interpretation,* July 2009, 286-289.

On-line conversation (due by midnight on Sunday, June 22): Reflect on creation in the HB and the ancient Near Eastern texts, especially in light of what you’ve learned or appreciated after reading the creation texts in the wisdom literature.

**For Thursday, June** **26** – **Origin Stories and Ethnicity in the Hebrew Bible**

Genesis 12-50; Deut 34:1-8; Exodus 1-15; Ruth; Esther

Coogan, “Ancestors of Israel” and “Escape from Egypt” (chapters 5 & 6).

Lecture: Moses and Hybrid Identity

On-line conversation (due by 8:00 a.m. on Thursday, June 26): Share 3-4 sentences of your thoughts/ideas/questions related to the readings on the creation of community and formation of identity.

**Week 3** (June 29-July 5) – Identity Continued

**By midnight on Sunday, June 29**, read **one** of the following articles:

1. Thomas Römer, “Moses Outside the Torah and the Construction of a Diaspora Identity,” *Journal of Hebrew Scriptures* 8.15 (2008). <http://www.jhsonline.org>.
2. F.V. Griefenhagen, “Ethnicity In, With, or Under the Pentateuch,” *Journal of Religion & Society* 3 (2001). <http://moses.creighton.edu/jrs/2001/2001-1.pdf>.
3. Gale A. Yee, “’She Stood in Tears Amid the Alien Corn’: Ruth, the Perpetual Foreigner and Model Minority,” in *They Were All Together in One Place? Toward Minority Biblical Criticism*, eds. Bailey, Randall; Liew, Tat-siong Benny; Segovia, Fernando F. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009, 119-140.

In 3-4 sentences (by midnight on Sunday), add to Thursday’s conversation by indicating how the article you read has helped you continue to think about identity in relation to biblical texts.

**For Thursday, July 3 – Shaping and Maintaining Identity: Boundaries and Relationships**

Exodus 20:22-23:33 and 25-40; “read around” in Leviticus, but focus on 11, 13, 15, and 18-21.

Coogan, “From Egypt to Sinai” through “The End of the Journey.”

*OT Parallels* 101-130

Martin Cohen, “The Biblical Prohibition of Homosexual Intercourse (Lev. 18:22; 20:13)” in Susanne Scholz, *Biblical Studies Alternatively*, 153-164.

Mary Douglas, “Justice as the Cornerstone: An Interpretation of Leviticus 18-20,” *Interpretation* 53 (2001): 341-350. <http://int.sagepub.com/content/53/4/341.full.pdf>.

Lecture: Available by Monday at noon; listen in time to post your comments by Thursday at 8:00 a.m. In our discussion forum, write 3-4 sentences of response to the lecture and/or readings (questions in assignment slot).

**Second exegesis exercise due Thursday at 8:00 p.m.** For this exercise, read Robert Alter, “A Literary Approach to the Bible,” chapter one of *The Art of Biblical Narrative.* Then, read the story of Rahab (Joshua 2 and 6) using a literary approach. Provide a possible thesis statement/argument about this text via the literary method. You may focus on only a few verses or a single character, or you can deal with how the two chapters interrelate. After stating your thesis, provide 2-3 sentences to support your thesis.

The following questions may help you think about the assignment, but do not try to answer each question. What themes or threads hold the story together? How do the two narratives (chapters 2 and 6) function together, or not? What repeated phrases or words might link them or distinguish them? Who speaks, at what point(s), and to whom? How does the narrative shift? Do some elements of the narrative function symbolically? What does the text say about the identity of Israel? Of God? How does the story function in the larger context of the book of Joshua?

**Week 4** (July 6-12) – **History & Memory, War & Violence**

**For Sunday, July 6:**

Deut 1-7; 31-34; Joshua 1-12; 23; Judges 1-9; 19-21; 1-2 Samuel; 1 Kgs 1-2

Coogan – 162-208 (chapters 11 & 12).

*OT Parallels* 165-197

(I realize this is a holiday week-end, so feel free to post ahead of time.) By Sunday at midnight, post one-two paragraphs reflecting on what you’ve read. What surprises you or disturbs you? What characters seem most important?

**Midterm essays are due by 8:00 a.m. on Thursday, July 10**. Essay questions will be available one week ahead. You should plan to use your Bible, and you may use any other resources as you see fit, as long as you cite them. DO NOT TURN THE ESSAY INTO A RESEARCH PAPER. THE MATERIAL WE HAVE COVERED IN CLASS (INCLUDING OUR CONVERSATIONS, LECTURES, ETC.) WILL BE ADEQUATE .

**Week 5** (July 13-19) **JUSTICE**

**For Sunday, July 13:**

Exod 1-15; Deut 14-16, 23, 26, 28; Amos; Jeremiah 1-7; Psalm 22, 40, 72, 82.

Coogan, 237-272 (chapter s 16 & 17); 291-312 (chapter 19).

Walter Brueggemann, *Old Testament Theology*, “Old Testament Theology and the Problem of Justice,” pages 735-742.

By Sunday at midnight, post a sentence or two proposing a biblical definition of justice. By Tuesday, respond to at least two of your classmates’ definitions.

Lecture: Humanitarian Concerns

Choose **one** of the following articles:

George Pixley, “A Latin American Perspective: The Option for the Poor in the Old Testament,” in *Biblical Studies Alternatively,* ed. S. Scholz, Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2003, 385-394; OR

Naim S. Ateek, “A Palestinian Perspective: The Bible and Liberation,” in *Biblical Studies Alternatively,* 394-399 OR

Robert Allen Warrior, “A Native American Perspective: Canaanites, Cowboys, and Indians,” in *Biblical Studies Alternatively,* 400-405 OR

Jon D. Levenson, “Liberation Theology and the Exodus,” in *Jews, Christians, and the Theology of the Hebrew Scriptures*, ed. Alice Bellis and Joel Kaminsky, Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000, 215-30 OR

Mona West, “Outsiders, Aliens, and Boundary Crossers: A Queer Reading of the Hebrew Exodus,” in *Take Back the Word: A Queer Reading of the Bible*, ed. Robert Goss and Mona West, Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2000, 71-80.

**By Thursday at 8:00 a.m.,** post about your article (first posters, tell us in a sentence or two about the author’s thesis). What surprised you? Challenged or interested you? What did you find convincing or unconvincing?

**Book Review due Friday, July 18. Consult the list of books and the instructions for the review, posted as a separate document. Reviews are due by 8:00 a.m. Friday.**

**Week 6** (July 20-26) **JERUSALEM: Politics and Hope, King and Messiah**

**By Sunday, July 20 at midnight:**

Deut 18; Psalm 2, 9-10; Isa 1, 6, 6, 9, 11, “the servant songs” (42:1-9, 18-25; 44:24-45; 48:12-22; 49:1-6, 7-13; 50:4-11; 52:13-53:12); Jer 1, 28.

Coogan, 272-289.

On-line discussion TBA – posting due by Sunday at midnight.

**By Thursday, July 24 at 8:00 a.m.**

Jon Levenson, “The Temple and the World,” *The Journal of Religion* 64.3 (1984): 275-298.

R. Kendall Soulen, *The God of Israel and Christian Theology,* Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996, 1-21.

Johanna Bos, “Responsible Christian Exegesis of Hebrew Scripture,” in *The People’s Bible,* 117-123.

On-line discussion: What is “Responsible” Christian Interpretation of Hebrew Scriptures?

**Week 7** (July 27- August 2) **The God of the Hebrew Bible**

For Sunday, July 27, at midnight:

Deut 4; Judges 5, 16; Psalm 29, 96, 104; Isa 40, 41, 56, 57, 66

*Old Testament Parallels* 263-274

Read **one** of the following:

Jan Assman, *Of God and gods: Egypt, Israel, and the Rise of Monotheism.* Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2008, chapter 1.

Mark Smith, “God in Israel’s Bible: Divinity between the World and Israel, between the Old and the New,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 74 (2012):1-27.

Matthew Schlimm, “Different Perspectives on Divine Pathos: An Examination of Hermeneutics in Biblical Theology,” in *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 69 (2007):673-694.

Lecture: The Development of Monotheism

For Thursday, July 30, at 8:00 a.m. – Talking To and About God

Psalms 1, 33, 40, 42, 43, 56, 73, 88, 145

Coogan, 373-381

Walter Brueggemann, “Psalms and the Life of Faith: A Suggested Typography,” in *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*, 17 (1980):3-32.

**Week 8: Exam Week**

The final exam (essays) is due at 5:00 p.m. on Friday, August 8. Questions will be posted a week ahead of the exam. You may use your Bible and whatever secondary sources you choose.

**PLEASE DO NOT ASK FOR AN EXTENSION AS ILIFF DOES NOT ALLOW ADJUNCT INSTRUCTORS TO GIVE INCOMPLETE GRADES.**