

Introduction to the Hebrew Bible

Montreal School of Theology
Fall Term, Thursdays 6:30 p.m. - 9:25 p.m.
Starting September 27th

The Presbyterian College
Instructor: Greg Davidson (Ph.D., *cantab.*)
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Course website: <http://MTSbible.wordpress.com>

Course Description

Over many hundreds of years oral and written stories, hymns, poems, sayings and songs were brought together to form the Hebrew Bible, sometimes referred to as the Old Testament. This book has become a central text of not only Western civilization, but the backbone of the three monotheistic faiths: Islam, Judaism, and Christianity. The course will offer a critical overview of the content, periods in history, geography, socio-political, and theological approaches to the Hebrew Bible. While we will use historical-critical tools, and view this material as a product of human culture, emphasis will also be given to understanding these scriptures from a Christian faith perspective. There are no prerequisites for this course.

Course Learning Goals

By the conclusion of the course students will be able to:
demonstrate basic knowledge of the content and shape of the Hebrew Bible;
show familiarity with geography and socio-political forces in the Ancient Near East;
discuss competing theological views that led to the formation of the Hebrew canon;
research and write academically at an M.Div. level in this field;
articulate what the material means for their own situation today.

Course Texts

An modern translation of the Bible that includes the Apocrypha. The New Oxford Annotated Bible is a good choice.

Coogin, Michael. *The Old Testament: a historical and literary introduction to the Hebrew Scriptures*. 2nd ed. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Recommended Texts

Matthews, Victor H. *Old Testament Parallels: laws and stories from the Ancient Near East*. 3rd ed. Minneapolis, MN: Paulist Press, 2007.

Turabian, Kate L. *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations*. Chicago Guides to Writing, Editing and Publishing, ed. John Grossman and Alice Bennett. 6th ed. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1996.

Course Outline

Week 1, SEPT. 27: What and where of the Old Testament: shape, geography & historical context

Reading: Coogin chapters 1 & 2

Week 2, OCT. 4: Creation & Pentateuchal Criticism

Readings: Genesis 1-3, 4-11; Coogin chapters 3-5; Matthews pp. 21-32.

Week 3, OCT. 11: Primeval History & Patriarchal-Matriarchal Narratives

Readings: Genesis 4-11, 12-50; Coogin chapters 5-6; Matthews pp. 71-79.

Week 4, OCT. 18: Captivity and flight from Egypt

Readings: Exodus; Coogin chapters 7-9.

Week 5, OCT. 25: Conquest and Tribal Federation

Readings: Joshua, Judges, Ruth; Coogin chapters 13-14

Week 6, NOV. 1: Rise of the Monarchy

Readings: 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 Kings 1-11; Coogin chapters 15-17

Week 7, NOV. 8: Division into Two Kingdoms & Northern Prophets

Readings: 1 Kings 12 - 2 Kings 17, Amos, Hosea; Coogin chapters 18-19.

Week 8, NOV. 15: Southern Kingdom, its prophets, and Fall of Jerusalem

Readings: 2 Kings 15-25, Isaiah 1-39, Micah, Jeremiah 1-44; Coogin chapters 20-22

Week 9, NOV. 22: Leviticus & Deuteronomistic History

Reading: Leviticus, Deuteronomy; Coogin chapters 10,12-13(first half)

Week 10, NOV. 29: Exile and Return

Reading: Lamentations, Obadiah, Ezekiel, Isaiah 40-66; Coogin 23-24.

Week 11, DEC. 6: Wisdom Literature

Reading: Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs; Coogin 27-28.

Week 12, DEC 13: Reconstruction & Post-exilic community

Reading: Ezra, Haggai, Isaiah 56-66, Nehemiah, Zechariah, Joel, Malachi; Coogin 25-26

FINAL EXAM, DEC. 18., 7 P.M.-9 P.M., THE PRESBYTERIAN COLLEGE

Course Evaluation

1. Oral presentations: (25%): a 10 minute presentation on one of the assigned Scripture readings, interpreting it using biblical-critical approaches (sign-up).

2. Major Essay (35%): a focused argumentative paper (8-10 pages, double spaced) based on current research and scriptural interaction in one of following areas:
 - the meaning and significance of the exodus from Egypt
 - the place of the exile on Israel's self-understanding
 - the place of lament in the Hebrew Bible
 - understandings of covenants between Israel and YHWH
3. Final Exam (40%): identification, short answer, scripture passage interpretation and essay questions. Bible with no study notes is permitted.

On How to Write

How we write matters. Style is not unconnected to thought, opinion and content. Short sentences are easier to read than long ones but harder to write. Too many adverbs and adjectives tire the reader. Expressing points clearly helps us think about them more. If not already in your possession, a copy of William Strunk and E.B. White's, *Elements of Style*, is recommended to you. Read, mark and inwardly digest.

Grading Format

Grades will be given in number format on each assignment, as follows:

100-90 = A+	original, publish it
89-85 = A	elegant and highly persuasive arguments
80-84 = A-	clear and informed arguments, well-written
79-77 = B+	good
76-73 = B	satisfactory
72-70 = B-	
69-67 = C+	
etc.	
52-50 = D-	

Late Agreement

Missed presentations, essays or exams will only be reset in case of extended incapacitation or a notice of a major life interruption. Doctor's note required. Full credit may not be given.

Submitting Work

Please print your work on paper and hand it to the instructor.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is constituted by the five core fundamental values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility. These values are central to the building, nurturing and sustaining of an academic community in which all members of the community will thrive. Adherence to the values expressed through academic integrity forms a foundation for the "freedom of inquiry and exchange of ideas" essential to intellectual life of the University. Students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the M.S.T. regulations concerning academic integrity and for ensuring that their assignments conform to the principles of academic integrity.

Departures from academic integrity include plagiarism, use of unauthorized materials, facilitation, forgery and falsification, and are antithetical to the development of an academic community. Given the seriousness of these matters, actions which contravene the regulation on academic integrity carry sanctions that can range from a warning or the loss of grades on an assignment to the failure of a course to a requirement to withdraw.