

Hebrew Scriptures
RLST 2210-01
Millsaps College
Fall 2010
MW 2:45-4:00
Christian Center 05



11QPs^a 27-8

Instructor: Bennie Reynolds

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Office Hours: Mon, Wed.: 11:00am-12:30pm

Murrah Annex 218 (or by appointment)

Overview

Nearly three thousand years ago, a collection of peoples living in the central hill country of the Levant (Eastern Mediterranean Seaboard) began to carve out an ethnic and religious identity. In terms of beliefs and practices they were similar to their neighbors. The kinds of literature they produced were also similar to that of their neighbors, but the collection of writings for which they were ultimately responsible was and is unique both in terms of its contents and generic shape. The people were the Israelites and their literary heritage is the Hebrew Bible. The Bible is arguably the most formative piece of literature in the history of the western world and continues to wield significant influence – especially in the United States. Regardless of one’s opinion about the relative value of the Bible’s contributions to culture, it is eminently worthy of close consideration. In this course we will approach the writings of the Hebrew Bible from an historical and literary perspective. We will investigate the ancient socio-cultural contexts of the Hebrew Bible as well as modern issues that influence interpretation. In other words, we will investigate When, Where, How, Why, and by Whom the writings of the Hebrew Bible were

composed, collected, and canonized. We will also investigate Israelite, Judahite, and Jewish literature produced during the same period as the biblical literature, but which was not collected into the Hebrew Bible.

Course Objectives:

The overarching objective of this course is help students develop critical, analytical reading skills and become active appreciators of great literature. The narrower objective of this course is to help students develop a basic proficiency in the contents of the Hebrew Bible as well as the cultural and religious environments in which the Bible was produced. We will do this by not only reading biblical and related texts but investigating when, where, how, and why the writings came to exist. Students will become acquainted with the methods and results of modern biblical scholarship and will even learn to perform such analyses on a small scale.

Grading:

Attendance and Participation: 10%

Papers: 60%

Final: 30%

The grading scale is as follows:

94 – 100%	A
90 – 93%	A-
87 – 89%	B+
83 – 86%	B
80 – 82%	B-
77 – 79%	C+
73 – 76%	C
70 – 72%	C-
67 – 69%	D+
63 – 66%	D
0 – 62%	F

Course Requirements

Attendance and Participation 10%

In this course we will attempt to cover a vast subject area in a relatively small amount of time. It is imperative that students attend each and every class. As explained below, missing more than three classes could be devastating to a student's grade.

Each student begins the year with an attendance/participation grade of 85. Points are added to this score based on quality of in-class participation. Points are subtracted based on unexcused absences or incomplete assignments. The first unexcused absence will cost 2 points. The second will cost four points. The third will cost 5 points and the fourth

(and beyond) will cost 10 points each. In other words, one unexcused absence will hardly cause a blip on the grade. But four will lower the attendance/participation grade by 21 points.

Homework

There will be daily reading assignments. Students are expected to read each assignment before class (I may call on you with a question!). Students should be prepared to contribute their own thoughts and ideas about the assignments each week. The successful student should expect to spend a minimum of six hours each week in preparation outside of class-time. The nature of the course is such that there will be light reading on some days and heavy reading on others. The student is encouraged to skim the entire syllabus and note the days that require heavier reading. Doing so will allow the student to set aside enough time to complete all assignments on time.

Papers

Students will compose (8) position papers and (1) reflection paper throughout the course of the term. Papers should be 500 words, double-spaced, 12 pt. Times New Roman font. Papers whose format does not meet ALL of these criteria will not be accepted. Every paper should contain a clear and unambiguous thesis statement in the introduction. In other words, one should always inform the reader what one will argue and how one will do it, e.g., “In this paper I argue that 8th century Israelites and Judahites were not monotheists by analyzing three important literary works produced by Israelites and Judahites in the 8th century: Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah.” Do not make the reader wait until the conclusion to find out what your paper is actually about (Hint: this means that YOU must determine what your paper shall be about before you start writing it). These papers are not intended for the students to simply summarize the reading assignment. The student is expected to move beyond comprehension to synthesis. **Late papers will not be accepted.** If you must miss class, please make arrangements ahead of time to turn in the paper. If you are sick, your professor should be informed BEFORE CLASS TIME that you will be absent and why.

The title of each paper project is listed in your syllabus. A more detailed prompt will be posted on blackboard by Monday of the week they are due.

Exams

There will be a mid-term and a final exam. These exams will contain multiple choice, short-answer, I.D., and essay questions.

Disabilities

Any student with a documented disability or medical condition who may need accommodations in order to ensure access to this course is invited to discuss this with the instructor as early in the semester as possible. Students who seek reasonable accommodation for disabilities are required to identify themselves to the ADA officer, Patrick Cooper (Patrick.Cooper@Millsaps.edu, 601-974-1228).

Required Literature

-Bowley, James. *Introduction to Hebrew Bible: A Guided Tour of Israel's Sacred Library* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2007).

-Coogan, Michael (ed.). *The New Oxford Annotated Bible: New Revised Standard Version*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

-Short selections placed on Course Connect.

Other Important Titles

(At some point you may need to find some information about a part of the Bible, but not know where to look. You've tried Barnes & Noble and the Christian Book Store and they've not been helpful. The following titles are a good place to start.)

-Commentaries

Each book of the bible, and in many cases the Apocrypha, are treated exhaustively in one or more volumes.

1) *The Anchor Bible* (Doubleday, now Yale University Press)

The highest standard in English commentaries. Sometimes technical (presuming knowledge of Hebrew or Greek).

2) *The New Interpreters Bible* (Abingdon Press)

Less extensive or technical than Anchor Bible or Hermeneia, but normally full of careful and insightful commentary.

3) *Hermeneia* (Fortress Press)

Incomplete series, but of the same (or sometimes even better) quality as the Anchor Bible. A technical commentary that presumes knowledge of Hebrew and Greek.

4) *The Old Testament Library* (Westminster John Knox Press)

A German-style commentary that includes several volumes translated from older German-language commentaries. Some volumes are technical while others are not. Less attention to issues of textual criticism and translation.

5) *Interpretation* (Westminster John Knox Press)

This series is designed primarily for pastors and teachers in a church setting, but it is produced by qualified experts and often includes insights that are useful to those outside a confessional context.

-Journals

Journal of Biblical Literature

Journal for the Study of the Old Testament

Vetus Testamentum

Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha

Revue de Qumran

Dead Sea Discoveries

Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Periods

Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft

Revue Biblique

Interpretation

Near Eastern Archaeology

Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research

Israel Exploration Journal

-General Reference

The Anchor Bible Dictionary (ABD)

The New Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible

The Oxford Encyclopedia of Archaeology in the Near East
Civilizations of the Ancient Near East
Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls
Brill's New Pauly: Encyclopedia of the Ancient World
Religion Past and Present: Encyclopedia of Theology and Religion (RGG)
Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception (EBR)

Course Schedule

	Date	Topic	Assignment
1	W 8/25	Introduction to the Introduction QUIZ	
	Discussion		Ideas About the Bible(s) Bowley chapter 1
2	M 8/30	Welcome to the Neighborhood I: Mesopotamia	Course Connect: Enuma Elish (Babylonian Creation Epic); Excerpts from <i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> on history and culture of Assyria & Babylonia.
3	W 9/1	Welcome to the Neighborhood II: Egypt, Levant, Greece	Course Connect: <i>Ba'lu</i> .
	Discussion	Learning to ask the right questions of the Bible	Course Connect: "The Rise of Modern Biblical Scholarship" by James Kugel Position Paper 1: What Are Our Assumptions?
4	M 9/6	History of Israel I: From Origins to Exile	Course Connect: Dever: 37-74 HB: Joshua 1-6, 12, Judges 1- 3:6
5	W 9/8	History of Israel II: The Persian Period to the end of the Hasmonean State *Erev Rosh HaShanah*	Course Connect: Davies 86- 108 HB: Ezra 1, 2-6 1 Maccabees 1-3:9, 2 Maccabees 4:7-34, 5- 6:11
	Discussion	The Politics of Reading the Bible.	Reflection Paper: Whose Bible, Whose Story? (CC) Eddie Glaude, "The Nation

			and Freedom Celebrations” Robert Allen Warrior, “A Native American Perspective: Canaanites, Cowboys and Indians.”
6	M 9/13	Introduction to the Pentateuch	Bowley 107-115 HB: (read in this order!) Genesis 1-2, Exodus 21:2-11, Deuteronomy 15:12-18, Leviticus 25:39-55, Genesis 12:10-20, 20:1-18, 26:1-11
7	W 9/15	In the Beginning	Bowley 116-126 HB Genesis 1-11:9
	Discussion 4	Whose Deluge?	Position Paper 2: Flood Narratives - <i>Utnapishtim/Atrahasis</i> (<i>Gilgamesh Epic</i> 11) -Genesis 6-9
8	M 9/20	Legends of the Patriarchs	Bowley 126-131 Genesis 12-50***
9	W 9/22	From Egypt to Sinai: Exodus	Bowley 132-147 Exodus 1-15, 19-20, 21-23
	Discussion	Is the God of the Bible Omnipotent and Omniscient?	Position Paper 3: What kind of God? Genesis 1-11
10	M 9/27	From Sinai to Canaan: Leviticus, Numbers	Bowley 148-171 HB: Leviticus 1-16 (P), 17-26 (H) 17-21.
11	W 9/29	Deuteronomy	Bowley 173-184 HB Deuteronomy (read in this order):A) 12-26 + 28:1-46, B) 4:44-11:32 + 27, C) 1:1-4:43 +28: 47-68, D) 29-30, E) 31-34
	Discussion	Finding and Understanding Literary Motifs in the Bible	Position Paper 4: Miraculous/Harrowing Birth Motif <i>Legend of Sargon</i> Birth Legend of Moses (Exodus 1:22-2:10) Legend of Romulus and

			Remus Birth Legend of Heracles Birth Legend of Jesus Matthew 2 (New Testament) (Cf. Superman, Harry Potter, etc.)
12	M 10/4	The Deuteronomistic History	Bowley 185-225 HB: Deuteronomy 6, 1 Samuel 3-4, 8-9, 15:10-16:13, 31, II Samuel 5-7, I Kings 2:1-12, 11-12, 2 Kings 21-23
		Legal Innovation: How to change God's law without changing God's law.	Reading: Ska 40-52 (Blackboard) Position Paper 5: Legal Innovation: The Case of Trans-generational Punishment (Exodus 20:5-6, Deuteronomy 24:16, Deuteronomy 7:9-10)
13	W 10/6	Prophecy and Divination in Ancient Israel and the Ancient Near East	HB: 1 Kings 16:21-II Kings 13:21 (The Elijah-Elishah Cycles)***
	Discussion	Divination and Science: Not as Different as You Might Think.	
14	M 10/1	A closer Look at the prophets of the 8 th century I Amos, Hosea	Bowley 262-268, 273-280 HB Amos (all); Hosea 1-5
	Discussion	Social Critique and Social Justice	
15	W 10/13	A closer Look at the prophets of the 8 th century II Isaiah, Micah	Bowley 230-243, 292-299 HB: Isaiah 1-11, Micah
	Discussion	That Whole "Virgin Shall Conceive" Thing.	
16	M 10/18	**Fall Break**	
17	W 10/20	A closer look at the prophets of the 7 th century Jeremiah, Habakkuk, Zephaniah,	244-255, 304-310 HB Jeremiah 1-3, 7, 12-13, 18-21, 26-29, 36, 43, Habakkuk
	Discussion	Theodicy	
18	M 10/25	Exile and Aftermath I:	Bowley 256-261, 281-284,

		Lamentation, Ezekiel, Obadiah, Psalm 137	390-396 HB Lamentations 1, Ezekiel 1-10, 23, 33, 37, 40-45, Obadiah
19	W 10/27	Exile and Aftermath II: Theological Revolutions in 2 nd Isaiah, Dtr. Jeremiah redaction	HB: Isaiah 40-48, Jeremiah 7, 19
	Discussion	One God or Many? Pre-exilic religion in ancient Israel.	Position Paper 6: One God or Many? 2 Sam 5:20, Judges 6:25, Judges 5:13, Kuntilet Ajrud inscriptions, 2 Kings 21:7, Jeremiah 7:18, Deuteronomy 32:8-9
20	M 11/1	Restoration: Haggai-Zechariah 3 rd Isaiah The Isaiah Apocalypse (Isaiah 24-27) Ezra-Nehemiah	Bowley 311-319, 422-430 HB: Haggai-Zechariah 1, 8, Ezra 9-10, Nehemiah 2, 4-6, 8:1-3, 13
	Discussion	Marriage, Divorce, and the In-Group	
21	W 11/3	-Introduction to Hebrew Poetry -Psalms	Bowley 329-343 HB Psalms 3, 5, 6-7, 17; 74, 79, 80; 2, 18, 72; 30, 40, 66:13-20; 23
	Discussion	Prayer, Meditation, Psychology, and Science	
22	M 11/8	-Introduction to Wisdom -Proverbs	Bowley 344-354 HB: Proverbs
	Discussion	The Role of Religion in Education	
23	W 11/10	Wisdom shaking the foundations of knowledge: Job	Bowley 355-372 HB: Job***
	Discussion	Is there such a thing as righteous suffering? How about disinterested righteousness?	
24	M 11/15	Wisdom denying the foundations of knowledge: Qohelet	Bowley 397-405 HB Qohelet (Ecclesiastes)

	Discussion	Is it possible to gain wisdom? Is it worth it?	Position Paper 7: What is wisdom and how can you get it? Proverbs 4, 6, 8 Job 28 Qohelet 1
25	W 11/17	Scripture as foundation of knowledge: Torah Wisdom in Ben Sira Erotica: The Song of Songs	Bowley 459-461, 373-382 HB Ben Sira 24, Song (all)
	Discussion	Sex, Sexuality & the Bible	
	M 11/22	NO CLASS – Instructor at the Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature.	
	W 11/24	NO CLASS – Thanksgiving Break	
	M 11/29	Satire: Jonah and Ruth	Bowley 285-291, 383-389 HB Jonah, Ruth (all)
	Discussion	Social Critique and the Role of Religion	
	W 12/1	Apocalypses: Daniel and 1 Enoch	Bowley 414-421 HB: Daniel (all) Blackboard: Excerpts from Book of the Watchers (1 Enoch 1-36) and the Animal Apocalypse (1 Enoch 85-90)
	Discussion	The Bible tells me so – but which text gets to be the Bible? Textual Criticism and the Case of Daniel 4.	Position Paper 8: Textual Criticism. Daniel 4 in MT & OG: Which one is the Bible?
		Final Exam 4pm	Study