



Hebrew Scriptures

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I. Course Description

This course provides an overview of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament, with emphasis on how the canon was developed, the different modes of interpreting these writings, and the exegetical skills needed for teaching and preaching out of the Hebrew Scriptures.

A special aspect of this course is to help participants integrate into their lives spiritual disciplines and practical applications that allow these sacred texts to more deeply inform and nurture their Christian discipleship and ministry.

II. Required Texts

A. Bible

Berlin, Adele and Marc Zvi Brettler, editors. *The Jewish Study Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). ISBN 0-19-529754-7

Or

Coogan, Michael D., editor. *The New Oxford Annotated Bible with Apocrypha: New Revised Standard Version*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford, 2001). ISBN 0195284852

B. Textbook

Fant, Clyde E., Donald W. Musser, and Mitchell G. Reddish. *An Introduction to the Bible*, revised edition. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001 ISBN 0687084563.

III. Course Requirements

A. Pre-course Preparation

1. **Reading:** Before the MEADS session convenes, students are expected to read Parts I and II in Fant (pages 21-291), as well as all Bible readings listed below.
2. **Writing:** Students will bring to class a short (one-page) statement in response to the following questions: what is your view of the role of the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament) in the church and in your spiritual life, and why?

B. In-course Work

1. Attendance at all class sessions and participation in class activities.
2. There will be one final in-class assignment given on the last day of the class.

C. Final Evaluation

Students will be evaluated and given credit for the class based on successful completion of writing assignments, attendance and participation in all classes, and evidence that they completed reading of the required texts.

IV. Course Outline

- Session 1 Getting Started: the Babylonian Exile as matrix of the Hebrew Bible; Development and Ordering of the Old Testament Canon; the Hebrew text of the Old Testament; introduction to the *Torah*: Judaism's foundational narrative, with comparative reading of Genesis 1-3
Readings: *An Introduction to the Bible*, chapters 1, 3, 4, 11
- Session 2 Torah and Methods of Biblical Study.
Readings: *An Introduction to the Bible*, chapters 2, 5
- Session 3 *Nevi'im*: the Prophetic Literature.
Readings: *An Introduction to the Bible*, chapters 6–10
- Session 4 *Kethuvim*: the Writings.
Readings: *An Introduction to the Bible*, chapters 12–13
- Session 5 Apocalyptic Literature; the Apocrypha; reflecting on the relationship of the Old Testament to the New; Summary of the Course.
Readings: *An Introduction to the Bible*, chapters 14-15

V. Bible Readings

The following list contains the minimum Bible readings for this course. Students may read more than the minimum, as time and interest allow. Along with the following texts, read, as well, the introductions and footnotes in your study Bible:

Torah

Genesis 1: 1 – 3:24
Genesis 22: 1 – 19
Genesis 32: 22 – 32
Exodus 3: 1 – 15
Exodus 19: 10 – 20: 21
Leviticus 18-19
Deuteronomy 1 :1-6 :25
Deuteronomy 14: 1 – 21
Deuteronomy 34

Prophets

2 Samuel 11: 1 - 12: 24
2 Kings 22
Isaiah 6:1-13
Isaiah 11: 1 – 9
Isaiah 43: 1 - 44: 9
Jeremiah 31: 31 – 40
Ezekiel 1: 1 - 2: 7
Hosea 14
Amos 1: 1 - 3: 2
Obadiah
Micah 6: 6 – 8
Book of Jonah

Writings

Book of Ruth
Book of Esther
Daniel 1, 2, and 7
2 Chronicles 36: 11 – 23
Song of Solomon 1 and 8
Job 38: 1 – 42: 6
Proverbs 3
Ecclesiastes 1: 1 – 18; 12: 11 – 14
Psalms 1, 78, 117, 137, 150
2 Maccabees 7 (in the Apocrypha)

Helps for Reading

What are the major differences between the two creation stories of Genesis?

Sometimes stories are told to answer questions and resolve issues. What questions are answered by the passages in Genesis 22 and 32?

The Exodus/Sinai Covenant events are the defining experiences of the Hebrew identity. What points does the author emphasize in the telling of these stories in the Exodus accounts?

The laws of *kashrut* (kosher) detailed in Deuteronomy 14 are still observed today by many observant Orthodox Jews. What might you expect to find and not find on their dinner table?

Some people believe Moses wrote the whole Torah. How might these people explain the contents of Deuteronomy 34?

David is considered the greatest king of Israel and the one greatly favored of God. What strengths and/or weaknesses of character of the king show up in the story that unfolds in 2 Samuel 11?

The story of 2 Kings 22 is considered to be an account of the first instance of scriptural canonization among the Hebrews. The scroll that was found is thought to be the major portion of the book of Deuteronomy.

Isaiah's depiction of the Peaceable Kingdom in chapter 11 was used by the creators of the church seal for the Community of Christ. Any other options besides the lion, lamb and child?

Isaiah 43 provides many words of comfort for a people in exile. Lift up five recurring theological affirmations from these promises.

What are the terms of the New Covenant that Jeremiah claims God will make with the people of Israel?

The first chapter of Ezekiel depicts God's coming to the people in exile and Ezekiel's call to be their prophet. From Ezekiel's words, can you create in your mind a picture of the coming of the glory of God from Jerusalem to Babylon?

Hosea, Amos, Obadiah, and Micah are prophets with differing personalities and different styles of expression. Do any of these differences jump out at you?

The books of Ruth, Esther, and Jonah are novelettes written with certain purposes in mind. Can you speculate on what the agendas of the authors might have been?

The second chapter of Daniel is apocalyptic genre written in coded language. Every generation has adherents who believe that apocalyptic literature refers to their generation alone. Can you find anything in this chapter that some persons might speculatively believe refers to our day?

The events of 2 Chronicles 36 are told in understated, almost dispassionate, language. Can you read between the lines the profound trauma caused by these happenings?

The Song of Solomon is an erotic, exotic poem that uses imagery that has little appeal to the modern mindset. Note a few examples of images that people today might find almost comical.

The major portions of the book of Job portray Job demanding that God justify God's behavior in the world. Your reading in Job provides God's response to Job's demands. Then note Job's response to God's response in chapter 42.

In Proverbs note what the author considers to be good behavior and the rewards that come from good behavior.

The whole book of Ecclesiastes is about the search for meaning and purpose in life. In the short passages you have read, where does the author look for meaning and with what results?

The psalms you are asked to read are representative hymns from the period of the Second Temple.

List some of the genres of literature that you have found in the compilation of sacred writings we call the Old Testament, or the Hebrew Scriptures, or the First Testament, or the TANAK.