251-01 Introduction to Hebrew Scriptures

Sarah Melcher
THEO 251-01 - Introduction to Hebrew Scriptures – 90405
Xavier University, Fall 2014

Time: 11:00-11:50 a.m. MWF; Conaton Learning Commons (CLC) 406
Professors: Rabbi Abie Ingber, Dr. Sarah J. Melcher
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Melcher office hours: 2:00 – 3:30p.m., MW

Overview
This course provides an introduction to the literature of the Hebrew Bible, its interpretation, and its theological import within the paradigm of theological reflection. The student will acquire tools for the critical analysis of scripture, as well as explore the Hebrew Bible's historical, sociological, and cultural contexts.

A first step towards attaining these objectives is to consider the books of the Hebrew Bible individually, that is, as distinct writings, each with its own purpose and literary character. A second step is to develop the skill of asking questions which the text is capable of answering, and to exercise the patience and perception which will allow the text to answer the questions on its own terms. The approach of this course presupposes that the books of the Bible are religious documents, the foundational writings of Judaism and Christianity, that is, their Scripture. The course will undertake close readings of Hebrew Bible passages and explore Jewish and Christian perspectives on these passages.

It is not possible to read and discuss the entire Hebrew Bible during the course of one semester. Therefore, books or portions of books have been selected which exhibit the main types of biblical literature and present major themes and traditions.

Texts
The most important text for this course is the Hebrew Bible itself. The most important tasks in this course are reading, interrogating, and interpreting the Bible. Three supporting textbooks will be used for the course: a general introduction to the Hebrew Bible, an introduction to biblical exegesis (a systematic method of interpretation), and a study Bible containing the full text of the Hebrew Bible, according to the Jewish Publication Society English translation.


Core Curriculum Student Learning Outcomes
This course fulfills one or more requirements of the Core Curriculum. It also attempts to help students achieve the following Core Curriculum Goals and Student Learning Outcomes.

UNDER GOAL 1. Students will be effective communicators in writing and orally, THEO 251 will help especially with SLOs (Student Learning Outcomes):
1. Students will formulate clear and arguable theses, supported by evidence drawn from appropriate sources.
2. Students will utilize an effective writing process guided by audience, purpose, cultural context, and disciplinary standards.

UNDER GOAL 2. Students will be critical thinkers. THEO 251 will help especially with SLOs
1. Students will analyze and interpret texts, images, objects, artifacts, and quantitative and qualitative data.
2. Students will describe the historical, cultural, mythological, and social contexts of texts, works of art, and theories.
3. Students will evaluate the strength of an argument or claim and its evidence
4. Students will discuss fundamental questions that arise from the human condition, such as questions about the grounds of morality, the essence of justice, the nature of reality, the possibility of certainty, the nature of beauty, or the reasonableness of religious faith

UNDER GOAL 3. Students will be creators of new knowledge and expression
1. Students will utilize their imagination and creativity, individually and collectively, to innovate and generate new perspectives to problems

UNDER GOAL 4. Students will be able to understand and appreciate the arts, humanities and science disciplines, and reflect on connections among these studies.
1. Students will engage in critical, theological reflection by the method developed in Jesuit and Catholic practice, using human experience and religious traditions as resources to address issues or questions arising in today’s world
2. Students will think historically in order to understand the past on its own terms and to understand how societies have changed over time
3. Students will recognize and interpret artistic and literary expression

UNDER GOAL 5. Students will be integrated individuals who articulate a coherent, ethical perspective on the world and their place in it
1. Students will recognize the societal, ethical and moral dimensions of discourse, art, information, science and technology
2. Students will relate their knowledge and skills in a reflective and constructive way to their life experiences and the challenges confronting today’s world
3. Students will use information and resources responsibly in their communication and research
4. Students will utilize intellectual, moral, and spiritual tools and sensibilities to engage faithfully and responsively in the world for the promotion of peace, social justice, and ecological sustainability

UNDER GOAL 6. Students will be aware global citizens
1. Students will recognize relationships between diversity, inequality, and social, economic, and political power both in the United States and globally
2. Students will describe contributions made by individuals from diverse and/or underrepresented groups to local, national, and global communities
3. Students will consider perspectives of diverse groups when making decisions
4. Students will interact with sensitivity as members of society and as professionals with people who have ideas, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors that are different from their own
5. Students will engage Catholic, ecumenical, cross-cultural, and inter-religious perspectives in reflecting upon contemporary issues of significance

Course Requirements
(1) Timely contributions to discussions and timely submission of assignments. Participation in class discussions is important. It is best to read the assignments prior to the day an assignment is due. The quality of one’s participation is more important than quantity. “Quality” participation involves careful preparation, insightful discussion, and pertinent questions.
(2) All students are required to receive a passing grade on the quiz associated with the library’s tutorial, “Preventing Plagiarism.” Professor Melcher must receive your passing score by Friday, August 29. You can find the “Preventing Plagiarism” tutorial at http://www.xavier.edu/library/xututor/plagiarism/index.cfm. All students are also required to receive a passing grade on the quiz associated with the library’s tutorial, “Evaluating Websites.” Professor Melcher must receive your passing score by Friday, September 5. You can find the “Evaluating Websites” tutorial at http://www.xavier.edu/library/xututor/evaluating/index.cfm
(3) This course will use the “Discussion” feature of the “Canvas” web-based resource. Students will be required to post responses to a question or questions posed by the professor. Dates for posting responses are indicated in the Modules which are found under the link for “Modules” on the left side of the Canvas page. Students are encouraged to respond directly to the questions, but a student may also respond to the postings of his or her colleagues.
(4) Tests will be given on Wednesday, September 17; Wed., October 1; Monday, October 27; Friday, November 7; and Friday, November 21. Tests can be found under “Quizzes” on Canvas
(5) A Take-Home Final Examination will be due Friday, December 19 10:00 to 11:50 a.m. The copy of the Take Home Final can be found under “Assignments” on Canvas. Please submit the final to Assignments on Canvas.
(7) Three Papers are required. The guidelines or instructions for each paper can be found on Canvas under Assignments the week before the due date. Due dates = First short paper, Friday, September 12; Second short paper, Friday, October 3; Third Longer Exegesis paper, Friday, November 14.
(8) One short project/exercise is required. The Denominational Assignment is due on Monday, December 1.

**** Grace days. Each student is entitled to a grace period for turning in assignments, up to a maximum of 7 days for the Fall semester. This grace period means that you may take a test or hand in a paper late, as long as you do not exceed a total of 7 days for the Fall semester. Grace days may not be used for discussions postings. You need not offer the instructors an explanation for the late assignment, unless you exceed the limit. The 7 day grace period will only be extended in the case of a health or family emergency and that extension must be cleared with one of the instructors. Please use your grace days wisely. ****
Grading
The value of the above requirements is: Five Tests - 20%; Discussion postings and one short project – 15%; Final exam – 15%; Two Short Papers - 30% (15% each); One Longer Paper – 20%. Numerical grades for these five factors will be weighted according to these percentages. The grading scale will be: A = 100-94%; A- = 93-92%; B+ = 91-90%; B = 89-87%; B- = 86-84%; C+ = 83-82%; C = 81-79%; C- = 78-76; D+ = 75-74%; D = 73-71%; D- 70-68%; F = 67-0% (See Xavier catalog, 43). For policy on departmental grading see http://www.xavier.edu/theology/Grading-Policy.cfm

“Canvas Class” The professor has chosen to use the academic web-based resource “Canvas.” Ordinarily, a student can access the Canvas site through https://canvas.xavier.edu and log in using your XU username and password.

ASSIGNMENTS FOR MODULE 1

Monday, August 25
In class: Introduction to the course
Review of Syllabus
On your own: Please review the syllabus under the “Syllabus” link on Canvas.

READINGS SHOULD BE DONE IN ADVANCE OF CLASS, so the readings listed for August 27, for example, should be finished by class time.

Please use the Reading Guides to aid you in your reading. These will help to narrow down what you will need to know on the tests.

Wednesday, August 27
In class: Introduction to the Hebrew Bible
Readings: Berlin (JSB), 1-16.
Coogan (OT), 3-24.
Genesis 1:1-2:25

Friday, August 29
In class: Video: Walking the Bible – (Episode 1): The Journey Begins
On your own: Now, watch the PowerPoint video, The Task of Exegesis under “Module 1” on Canvas.
Readings: Berlin (JSB), 16-20; 21-26.
Hayes (BE), 1-33.

Monday, September 1
LABOR DAY
NO CLASS

Wednesday, September 3
Readings: Berlin (JSB), 29-32.
Coogan (OT), 27-59.
Genesis 11:1-12:20

Friday, September 5
Video: Walking the Bible – (Episode 1): In Search of Noah’s Ark
Readings: Hayes (BE), 34-52.
Coogan (OT), 63-79.
Genesis 15:1-17:27

Review the questions under the “Discussions” tab on Canvas so that you are prepared to post your responses by September 8 at 7:00 a.m. You will be discussing the exegesis of Genesis 15.

ASSIGNMENTS FOR MODULE 2

Monday, September 8
Video: Walking the Bible – (Episode 1): Abraham: God’s New Partner
On your own: Watch video More on Exegesis
Berlin (JSB), 35-39
Hayes (BE), 53-71.
Genesis 15:1-17:27

Wednesday, September 10
Berlin (JSB), 39-45.
Hayes (BE), 72-89.
Genesis 18:1-21:34

Friday, September 12
*****FIRST SHORT EXEGESIS PAPER DUE***** Please see Guidelines under “Assignments” on Canvas
Berlin (JSB), 45-52.

Monday, September 15
Berlin (JSB), 52-66.
Hayes (BE), 90-103.
Genesis 25:19-31:54
Wednesday, September 17
*****TEST 1***** Take test on Canvas under “Quizzes”
Berlin (JSB), 66-72.
Hayes (BE), 104-126.

ASSIGNMENTS FOR MODULE 3

Please consult Reading Guides on Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy
Engage with the questions and with your peers online on “Discussions” by 7:00 a.m. on
September 29 to discuss the exegesis of Leviticus 18 and 20.
Take Test 2 under “Quizzes” on Canvas October 1
Work on Second Exegesis paper due Friday, October 3.

Friday, September 19
Video: Walking the Bible – (Episode 2): The Israelites Labor Under Tyranny
Berlin (JSB), 102-125.
Exodus 1:1-11:10

Monday, September 22
Coogan (OT), 80-97.
Hayes (BE), 127-138.
Please watch the PowerPoint, Developing Your Skills in Exegesis.

Wednesday, September 24
Berlin (JSB), 125-139.
Coogan (OT), 98-108.
Exodus 12:1-15:27

Friday, September 26
Walking the Bible -- (Episode 3): Surviving in the Sinai
Berlin (JSB), 139-152.
Please read Adele Berlin’s “Introduction to Hebrew Poetry” under MODULE 3
Exodus 16:1-20:23

Monday, September 29
Berlin (JSB), 148-161; 243-258
Coogan (OT), 109-134.
Engage with the questions and with your peers online on “Discussions” on Canvas by 7:00 a.m.
to discuss the exegesis of Leviticus 18 and 20.
Exodus 20:22-23:33; Leviticus 16:1-20:27
**Wednesday, October 1**

*****TEST 2***** Please take Test 2 under “Quizzes” on Canvas.

Berlin (JSB), 356-363; 374-382; 391-394; 400-404.

Coogan (OT), 147-159.


**ASSIGNMENTS FOR MODULE 4**

Please turn in Second Short Exegesis Paper, due Friday, October 3

Please engage with the questions and with your peers online on “Discussions” October 13 to discuss the exegesis of Judges 6:11-27.

Begin work on a timeline which includes the major historical events in Israel and Judah’s history and indicate the most likely dates for these events. This will be a project where the final entry will be on the last day of the course. Consult Coogan for most likely dates for the major events.

**Friday, October 3**

*****SECOND SHORT EXEGESIS PAPER DUE*****

Berlin, 435-450.

Hayes (BE), 139-151.

Deuteronomy 30:1-34:12.

**Monday, October 6**

Berlin (JSB), 451-483.

Joshua 1:1-10:43.

**Wednesday, October 8**

Berlin (JSB), 504-507.

Coogan (OT), 162-176.

Joshua 23:1-24:33

**Friday, October 10**

FALL BREAK

NO CLASS

**Monday, October 13**

Berlin (JSB), 508-530.

Hayes (BE), 152-166.

Judges 1:1-8:35

Engage with the questions and with your peers online on “Discussions” by 7:00 a.m. to discuss the exegesis of Judges 6:11-27.
**Wednesday, October 15**
Berlin (*JSB*), 1578-1586.
Coogan (*OT*), 177-192.
Ruth 1:1-4:22

**ASSIGNMENTS FOR MODULE 5**
Please take Test 3 under “Quizzes” on Canvas Wednesday, October 27.
Work on Third Longer Exegesis Paper due Monday, November 11.

**Friday, October 17**
Video: *Biblical archaeology: from the ground down*
Berlin (*JSB*), 558-571.
Coogan, 195-208.
1 Samuel 1:1-5:12

**Monday, October 20**
Berlin (*JSB*), 574-580; 581-590.
1 Samuel 8:1-10:27; 12:1-15:35

**Wednesday, October 22**
Berlin (*JSB*), 590-598; 608-610; 618-620
Hayes (*BE*), 167-177

**Friday, October 24**
Berlin (*JSB*), 634-658; 668-677
Coogan (*OT*), 209-221.

**Monday, October 27**
*****TEST 3***** Please take this test under “Quizzes” on Canvas
Berlin (*JSB*), 700-709; 711-718; 721-722; 727-730; 742-744.
Coogan (*OT*), 222-236.

**Wednesday, October 29**
Berlin (*JSB*), 752-761
Coogan (*OT*), 237-253
2 Kings 14:1-17:41
ASSIGNMENTS FOR MODULE 6

Please take Test 4 under “Quizzes” on Canvas Friday, November 7.
Please engage with the questions and with your peers online on “Discussions” Monday, November 3 by 7:00 a.m. to discuss the exegesis of Amos 5:1-17.
Locate the Reading Guide for Amos and Hosea to use it as an aid to your reading.
Continue your work on a timeline which includes the major historical events in Israel and Judah’s history and indicate the most likely dates for these events. This will be a project where the final entry will be on the last day of the course. Consult Coogan for the most likely dates for the major events.
Continue work on Third Longer Exegesis Paper due Friday, November 14.

Friday, October 31
Berlin (JSB), 1176-1192.
Coogan (OT), 255-264.
Amos 1:1-9:15

Monday, November 3
Hayes (BE), 178-190.
Please engage with the questions and with your peers online by 7:00 a.m. on “Discussions” to discuss the exegesis of Amos 5:1-17.

Wednesday, November 5
Berlin (JSB), 1143-1148; 1160-1165.
Coogan (OT), 264-271.
Hosea 1:1-3:5; 11:1-14:9

Friday, November 7
*****TEST 4***** Please take Test 4 under “Quizzes” on Canvas
Berlin (JSB), 754-768.
Coogan (OT), 272-290.

Monday, November 10
Berlin (JSB), 780-797; 801-804.
Wednesday, November 12
Berlin (JSB), 769-775; 1234-1242; 1219-1225.
Coogan (OT), 291-313.

ASSIGNMENTS FOR MODULE 7

Continue work on Third Longer Exegesis Paper due Friday, November 14
Please take Test 5 under “Quizzes” on Canvas Friday, November 21.
Work on Denominational Assignment, see Guidelines under “Module 7”

Friday, November 14
*****THIRD LONGER EXEGESIS PAPER DUE*****
Berlin (JSB), 772-779; 917-941; 1226-1231.

Monday, November 17
Denominational Exercise
Dei Verbum
Confession of 1967

Wednesday, November 19
Berlin (JSB), 1666-1674; 860-977.
Coogan (OT), 327-338.

Friday, November 21
*****TEST 5***** Please take Test 5 under “Quizzes” on Canvas.
Berlin (JSB), 1674-1687; 1243-1248.
Coogan, 347-358.
Ezra 3:1-10:44; Haggai

Monday, November 24
AMERICAN ACADEMY OF RELIGION MEETING
NO CLASS – PROFESSORS OUT OF TOWN

Wednesday, November 26
THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY
NO CLASS
ASSIGNMENTS FOR MODULE 8

Complete Denominational Assignment due Monday, December 1.
Continue work on Timeline due Monday, December 8.
Turn in Take-Home Final Examination on Friday, December 19 at 10:00 – 11:50 a.m.

Friday, November 28
THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY
NO CLASS

Monday, December 1
***Denominational assignment due***
Berlin (JSB), 1499-1519.
Job 3:1-10:22

Wednesday, December 3
Berlin (JSB), 1525-1527; 1555-1562.

Friday, December 5
Berlin (JSB), 1603-1611.
Coogan, 396-401
Ecclesiastes 1:1-4:17

Monday, December 8
Berlin (JSB), 1612-1622.
Ecclesiastes 5:1-12:14
*****TIMELINE DUE*****

Wednesday, December 10
Wrap-Up and Review

Friday, December 12
Wrap-Up and Review

*****TURN IN TAKE-HOME FINAL EXAMINATION FRIDAY, DECEMBER 19 – 10:00 – 11:50 A.M.*****