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251-01/02 Introduction to Hebrew Scriptures

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Introduction to Hebrew Scriptures

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Office Hours: Mon./Wed./Fri. 9:55-10:55 a.m. and immediately following class
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Course Description:
This course provides you with an introduction to the literature of the Hebrew Bible, its interpretation, and its theological significance. You will become familiar with key themes that run through this anthology—especially the theme of covenant—and learn what different writers had to say about them. You will become intimately familiar with a limited but representative range of texts from the Hebrew Bible. The knowledge and skills you gain from your study of them will help you become an astute reader of this rich corpus of literature.

Course Objectives:
By the end of this course, you should...
1) be familiar with the major content, themes, and interpretive issues of the Hebrew Bible (knowledge)
2) be able to read the Hebrew Bible responsibly and with humility (skills)
3) be sensitive to the non-Western, non-modern origins of the Hebrew Bible and its historical and cultural backgrounds (attitudes)
4) understand the primary contributions (theological and more) of the Hebrew Bible to the Judeo-Christian heritage (significance)

Course Schedule:
The following schedule provides a brief, tentative outline of the course.

Unit 1: Introduction to the Hebrew Bible
Unit 2: Creation through the Wilderness Wanderings
Unit 3: Conquest of the Land through the Exile
Unit 4: Prophecy, Poetry, & Wisdom in Ancient Israel
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**Expectations**

I expect you to...

- attend class. You should not miss class unless you have a legitimate excuse presented to me in advance (except in the case of an emergency).
- arrive on time. Be here when class starts!
- read the assigned material before class and **bring all assigned reading materials to class**.
- submit all quizzes on time—no late quizzes.
- actively participate in class. Everyone in class has both a right and an obligation to participate in discussions, and, if called upon, should try to respond. All questions, perspectives, and opinions are important and valuable—you are encouraged to share and discuss.
- show respect to me and your classmates.
- refrain from sleeping and daydreaming in class. I understood that sleep deprivation and even dry content 😊 can occasionally result in heavy eyelids and bobbing heads—I take no offense. It is different however, to abandon the effort altogether and put one’s head down on the desk and nap—this could easily be construed as discourteous and conveys indifference to me and your classmates.
- manage Blackboard and email communication. I will communicate with you via Blackboard and email. You are responsible for checking Blackboard and your emails regularly, and you are responsible for ensuring that you know how to use these tools.
- turn off all electronic devices in class. You should turn your cell phones off during class; laptops are not allowed in class subject to special appeal to the professor based on personal circumstances.
- take care of any physiological needs before coming into the classroom.
- refrain from reading or working on materials that are extraneous to the course.
- refrain from prematurely packing up your books and bags before class has ended.
- take responsibility for your learning. If you’re absent, it is your responsibility to keep up with coursework and find out what you missed in class; if you have questions, it is your responsibility to ask them; if you’re confused, it is your responsibility to get things cleared up. I want you to succeed, and I’m here to help.

You can expect me to...

- honor and respect you.
- provide course content that is timely, pertinent, and current based on sound research, not hearsay.
- be on time and prepared for all classes.
- give assessments that help you achieve the course goals and help you grow.
- be clear about my expectations.
- be open to your questions and help you find answers to them.
- provide feedback on assessments in a timely fashion.
- be excited about the material. If I’m not challenged, engaged, and having at least some fun, how can I expect that of you?
- hold you to high standards and help you achieve them.
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Course Requirements:

Attendance
Regular attendance is required. I will send around an attendance sheet each day at the beginning of class, and you will be marked absent if you do not sign this sheet. You are responsible for making sure you sign the attendance sheet each day.

You may miss one class without penalty. Beginning with your second absence, you will lose 3% points from your final cumulative grade per absence. Save your absence for a legitimate emergency. If you are absent, I assume you have a good reason for being gone. Therefore, I do not need doctors’ notes or other documentation letting me know why you were absent. The sole exception to this rule is an absence due to a University-sponsored activity (e.g., intercollegiate athletics).

If you are absent from class, you are still responsible for the work assigned for that day as well as any information given out that day. Please attempt to contact fellow classmates to find out what you missed before contacting me.

Course Readings
The vast majority of assigned readings for the course are from the Hebrew Bible. Thus, you are required to own a copy of the Hebrew Bible and bring it to each class. Most modern English translations of the Bible are acceptable (e.g., New Revised Standard Version, Jewish Publication Society Tanakh, New American Bible, Today’s New International Version). Paraphrases such as The Living Bible or The Message are not acceptable. If you have a question about whether a translation is acceptable or not, please ask.

The assigned readings from the Hebrew Bible will occasionally be supplemented by other readings and handouts, both of which are available on Blackboard. You are required to print out these materials and bring them to class.

Quizzes
After completing the assigned reading for a given class period, you should take the accompanying quiz on Blackboard. The quizzes are open-book and open-notes: in other words, you may use the assigned reading and any notes you took on that reading when taking your quiz. You may not use any other resources (e.g., the Internet) when taking your quizzes.

You must take each quiz prior to the class period for which it is due. You have only a limited time to take the quizzes (20 minutes). The quizzes are not designed to be tricky or picky; their purpose is to ensure that you stay on task with the class work. The material covered by the assigned readings will be incorporated into the exams along with the lecture material.

I do not allow late or make-up quizzes. Please make sure that you complete your quizzes prior to the class period for which they are due. It is your responsibility to make sure that you have working technology and a reliable internet connection: I do not allow make-up quizzes even in the case of computer malfunction or interruption of an internet connection.
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Exams
Two exams will be given throughout the course of the semester. The first will follow our first two units (Introduction to the Hebrew Bible, Creation through the Wilderness Wanderings), and the second will follow our second two units (Conquest of the Land through the Exile, Prophecy, Poetry, & Wisdom in Ancient Israel). These exams will cover selected information from the class lectures and assigned readings.

Grading and Assessment:

Evaluation
Quizzes 50%
Exams (2 @ 25% each) 50%

Grading Scale
I follow the Theology Department’s grading policies, including its grading scale:

A 100%-94% Distinctive
A- 93%-92%
B+ 91%-90%
B 89%-86% Superior
B- 85%-84%
C+ 83%-82%
C 81%-78% Acceptable
C- 77%-76%
D+ 75%-74%
D 73%-70% Inadequate
D- 69%-68%
F below 68% No Credit

Grades indicate a professor’s assessment of a student’s academic performance and not a student’s effort. Given the constant threat of the erosion of quality due to grade inflation, I take very seriously what grades stand for. Most students should expect to be in the “acceptable” category unless sufficient reason is given to move one way or another on the scale. An “A” is not the default—an “A” must be earned, not just by avoiding mistakes, but by demonstrating excellence.

Failure to adhere to the class expectations described above may be used as subjective factors in grading, especially in borderline cases.

Late Policy
You are responsible for quizzes that are due and for what takes place in class whether you are there or not. Readings are due at the beginning of class on the date specified in the syllabus; late work will not be accepted. Late work due to computer malfunction or interruption of an internet connection does not constitute a special case and is considered late. Exams not taken at the scheduled exam date and time will receive a zero.
**Academic Integrity**
Academic dishonesty entails the stealing of another’s ideas and falsely representing them as one’s own; it includes actions such as cheating and plagiarism as well as aiding others in these actions. Xavier’s policy on academic integrity can be found in the University Catalog. You are responsible for knowing this policy and will be held accountable to it.

**Student Accessibility Services**
If you have any special needs for testing or any learning disability, I will accommodate them in conjunction with the Learning Assistance Center. Please be sure to communicate with me early in the term, providing the proper documentation, so that proper arrangements can be made.

**Disclaimer:**
This syllabus is not a promise or a contract. I reserve the right to modify class content and requirements as deemed necessary for the effective teaching of our class. You will be informed well in advance if any such changes are made.