OT 131-3 Torah and Former Prophets

Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary Fall 2024

Prerequisites

None

Instructor Contact

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Office Hours: Tues 10 – 11 AM

On Zoom

or by appointment

Course Description

This course provides a critical introduction to some of the literature of the Hebrew Bible in light of ways in which modern scholars engage with this literature. In terms of biblical content, we are not examining the entirety of the Hebrew Bible, but rather we will focus on the Torah and Former Prophets. In terms of our methods, students will learn to approach biblical texts with an eye toward the distinctive features and dynamic interplay of the world behind the text (i.e., the ancient background and historical development that has led to texts' development), the world within the text (i.e., the literary artistry and theology unveiled by close reading), and the world in front of the text (i.e., the various contexts of readers).

Learning Goals

Master's students have several student learning outcomes we strive to teach across the curriculum. Assignments in this course match with the various parts of MDiv/MAR SLO 1 and the Antiracism SLO. The components of each of those SLOs have been reproduced below with modifications specific to this course *in italics*.

MDiv/MAR SLO 1: Students will gain knowledge and understanding of the Bible, and the ability to use critical skills and educated imagination to interpret it in contemporary social and cultural contexts.

- **A. Biblical content**: demonstrates familiarity with the general content, organization, *and key features of the books that make up the Torah and Former Prophets in* the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament.
- **B.** Facility with interpretive paradigms: able to analyze and exposit scriptural texts *from the Torah and Former Prophets*, taking into consideration at least three perspectives: *the world behind the text, the world within the text, and the world in front of the text.*
- C. Use of exegetical tools and techniques: competently uses major tools for exegetical study including print or digital concordances f...J.
- **D.** Critical reflection on hermeneutics: able to reflect critically on competing models for the authority of the Bible and its relationship to other sources of authority (such as tradition, secular knowledge, and experience), and on the past and present social impact of this diversity of views.

Antiracism SLO: Students can describe strategies, grounded in their practice, for working toward racial justice appropriate to their particular vocational settings.

- A. Defining and using key terms in ways informed by an understanding of systemic racism
- **B.** Identifying racism in its many manifestations (historical, structural, personal, communal, etc.)
- C. Critical reflection on the history and current contexts regarding race, racism, and antiracism
- D. Critical reflection on racist and antiracist practices and theologies
- E. Developing and implementing antiracist policies, practices, and theologies

Required Books

Students are required to have ONE OF THE FOLLOWING English study Bibles. (The edition does not matter):

Attridge, Harold W., ed. *The Harper Collins Study Bible*. New York: HarperOne, 2006.

Berlin, Adele, Marc Zvi Brettler, and Michael Fishbane, eds. *Jewish Study Bible*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Coogan, Michael D., ed. *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*. 4th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Harrelson, Walter, ed. New Interpreter's Study Bible. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2003.

McKenzie, Steven L., Kristin De Troyer, and F. Scott Spencer, eds. *The SBL Study Bible*. New York, NY: HarperOne, 2023.

Recommended

One helpful resource for this class is a book by one of your professors Tyler Mayfield (*A Guide to Bible Basics*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2018). This book has plenty of the foundational information that you are required to learn.

As an introduction to the academic study of the Bible, this course includes a lot of new ideas and critical reading that can be challenging to the faith traditions that a student starts with. *Engaging Biblical Authority* (edited by William P. Brown. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2007) is a book with sixteen short reflections by diverse scholars (in biblical studies and theology) who share very different expressions of how they now understand biblical authority. Each reflection expresses insights relevant to their particular contexts and informed by the challenging things that they have learned about the Bible.

Contract Grading

The contract grading system below has been implemented because of my beliefs about justice and to ease tensions about "making-the-grade." Based upon your individual learning goals, each student can choose how much work to do for this course and expect a grade within the range displayed below.

Every assignment is due on Sunday at midnight for the module in which it is assigned. Some assignments will require self-assessment based on instructor comments. For those assignment follow the process below:

- 1. Read the instructions and the specific SLO component being assessed with the assignment.
- 2. Complete the assignment and submit it.
- 3. Review all comments left by the instructor.
- 4. Respond to the comment with a few sentences explaining the grade you think you should earn:
 - a. E (excellent): assignment shows creative, insightful, or complex understanding/application of the SLO and exceeds multiple requirements in the instructions.
 - b. S (satisfactory): assignment shows competence with regard to the SLO and addresses every requirement in the instructions.
 - c. R (re-write): assignment does not show competence in the SLO or does not address every requirement in the instructions.
- 5. The instructor will review your suggestion and input the grade you recommend or veto it if your suggestion seems very inappropriate.

If a student earns an R, they must re-do the assignment based on feedback and re-submit the assignment at the standard of an S. Re-do assignments are due within two weeks of the student receiving an R. Every student who receives an R must meet with the professor before re-submitting their assignment.

Students can expect a grade within the range below based upon the proportion of assignments earning an S or E.

C Level Work (C- or C or C+)

- 1. All Discussion Board Posts
- 2. Self-Exegesis Assignment
- 3. All Learning Activities
- 4. All Weekly Quizzes except short answer/essay questions
- 5. Five of eleven possible book outlines
- 6. Three of six possible reflection papers

B Level Work (B- or B or B+)

- 1. All the requirements of the previous level
- 2. Seven of eleven possible book outlines
- 3. All Weekly Quizzes INCLUDING short answer/essay questions
- 4. Four of six possible reflection papers

A Level Work (A- or A)

- 1. All of the requirements of the previous level
- 2. Secondary Reading Quizzes

Please note: All submitted work must meet substantive (quality of your ideas) and formal (adherence to standards of proofreading and citation) requirements for a graduate level course. If your work does not meet these requirements you may negate your contract grade. If the professor corrects an earlier draft of your work and you re-submit the same errors, you will negate your contract grade.

Guidelines for all Assignments

Discussion Board Posts

For almost all students who take this class, a good deal of the content can be new and challenging (sometimes because it is difficult to grasp, but more often because it is so different from common knowledge). Discussion questions are a chance for students to reflect on course content. Most weeks, there will be a few possible discussion questions related to the content covered in video lectures. Every student must choose ONE question and post a response on the Discussion Board. (You can post a video or write a paragraph). You are *highly encouraged* to engage with the responses of others as well.

When posting or responding to others, please remember to treat your peers with respect and courtesy *even* when you adamantly disagree with them. Do not intentionally post anything to offend or harm others. Inevitably, some people will express beliefs that you find offensive or harmful; or you will express beliefs others find offensive or harmful. When this happens, please inform the instructor so the professor can facilitate a learning experience from the incident and (if necessary) remove the content.

Self-Exegesis Assignment

Early in the semester, each student must submit the Self-Exegesis Assignment. The assignment calls for students to answer questions that require deep personal reflection. Only the professor will read this assignment. There will be a chance with the Discussion Board to share insights from this assignment with the rest of the class.

Books of the Bible Outlines

A major component of this course is students gaining a greater familiarity with the content of the Hebrew Bible (SLO 1. A.). Toward that end, every student is required to submit outlines of biblical books that we cover in the Torah (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy) and Former Prophets (Joshua, Judges, 1–2 Samuel, 1–2 Kings). 1–2 Samuel counts as two outlines. The same is true of 1–2 Kings. For these outlines, students **must** adequately complete the following:

- 1. Read through the book of the Bible.
- 2. Write a *one sentence or more* summary of the content in every chapter of the book of the Bible. Remember to write complete sentences, use action verbs, and focus on accurately conveying what is there.
- 3. Arrange those chapter summaries in the form of an outline that groups chapters into two or more major blocks that each make up a section of the book of the Bible that you are outlining.

Here is a sample from the book of Esther.

By composing these outlines, students will be able to map out their own understanding of the literary design that contributes to the world within the text for each book of the Bible. With this overall understanding of each book of the Bible, students will be able to see the specific passage that we are studying on a given day of class in terms of how it fits with a larger whole. By comparison and contrast with peers, each student will be able to gain new perspectives on the meanings within the biblical text. Most importantly, these outlines will help students have confidence in their understanding of the content of the Bible for ministry, ordination exams, or dialogue with friends who will depend on you because of your degree.

Learning Activities

Experience helps one to learn more than only exposure. As we progress through this semester there will be activities during many weeks that require students to read the Bible closely and engage with it informed by different perspectives and methods that we are learning. The mode for completing these

activities will sometimes be a form that students are asked to annotate. For others it may be a quiz simply because that allows for offering easy and quick feedback.

Weekly Quizzes

Every week, there are quizzes on the content covered in lectures. Students must score 85% or better on every quiz before proceeding to the next module. A student can retake any quiz as many times as necessary.

Students aiming for a grade of **B-**, **B**, **B+**, **A-**, or **A** must complete the short answer/essay questions on these quizzes. There will be no points assigned for these answers on the quiz. Instructor feedback will let you know how you did. These additional questions require a deeper level of understanding and engagement with the video lectures. Any student who answers these questions will learn more than they would have without them.

Secondary Readings Quizzes

There will be an additional quiz each week requiring essay/short answer responses to the secondary readings. Students aiming for a grade of **A-** or **A** must complete these quizzes.

Reflection Papers

There will be six reflection papers assigned during the course of the semester, but students aiming for a grade in the range of C must complete only three; four must be completed for a grade in the B or A range. The following guidelines apply to all papers:

- 1. Papers must be typed, double-spaced, and carefully edited for style, grammar, and spelling.
- 2. You must have a thesis statement near the beginning of your paper that gives some indication of the claim being made in your paper and the structure of your argument.
- 3. Each paper must be a **minimum of 750 words** (without including any footnotes or bibliography). There is NO expectation of additional/outside reading (beyond assigned texts for this class) in order to adequately complete the reflection papers.
- 4. You must properly cite sources. See the guidelines here on how to cite sources.

The guidelines for each reflection paper are below:

1. Translation as Interpretation (potentially SLO 1. B., C., and D.; Antiracism SLO. A., B., C., and D.)

Download the "<u>Translation as Interpretation Handout</u>." As you read the assigned writings by van Wijk-Bos and Gafney and as you watch Lectures 11.1 and 11.2 on translation as interpretation, fill out the handout. Using this handout as notes, you will write your reflection paper on a few issues that complicate the simple dichotomy of formal equivalence vs dynamic equivalence. Choose three issues. For each issue write about the following: what are at least two options that people choose for translation? what is at stake in the choice of each option? how is the issue greater than the difference between formal and dynamic equivalence? which option do you prefer and why?

2. **Biblical Law and Power** (SLO 1, B. and D.; potentially Antiracism SLO. A., B., C., and D.)

There are many seemingly altruistic laws in the Hebrew Bible, but Douglas Knight cautions that readers should not ignore that the interests of the powerful can be maintained even with these laws. Choose one of the following seemingly altruistic laws:

Exod 22:26 – 27; Lev 25:39 – 46; or Deut 15:10 – 11. In what ways might this law serve the political, economic, social or psychological interests of ancient Israelite elites? How can turning a critical eye toward the ways humanitarian laws serve interests of the powerful in the world behind the text help people today who are engaged in striving for liberation from oppression? How, if at all, can it be helpful for those who use the Bible as a resource in such struggles?

3. Slavery Abolitionists and Biblical Hermeneutics (SLO 1. B. and D.; Antiracism SLO D., potentially A., B., C., and E.)

Read Leviticus 25:44 – 46 closely. For pro-slavery apologists of the 19th century, this text would be one of many that seem to unambiguously demonstrate God's approval of their system of slavery. However, Mark Noll describes two overarching approaches taken by interpreters of the Bible who opposed slavery in the antebellum period. In your paper (1) describe how each of these two approaches use the Bible to oppose slavery, (2) note the advantages and pitfalls to each approach, and (3) apply each of these two approaches to how one might exegete Leviticus 25:44 – 46. In your conclusion, state which of the two approaches you find most appealing and explain what it is about your background, experiences, theology, etc. that you believe influences you most to adhere to one of these approaches over another.

4. Rahab and Narrative Ambiguity (SLO 1. B. and D.; Antiracism SLO C. and D.)

Your paper will focus on three ways one can interpret Rahab as a character in Joshua 2. In your paper, briefly explore (write one paragraph for each) how one could advocate the following three perspectives of Rahab's characterization: (1) as an admirable person of faith, (2) as a traitor to her people, (3) as a pragmatist. As you explore each potential interpretation, you *must* appeal to evidence from the biblical text to show how it supports said characterization. After exploring these three interpretations, you will consider the implications of Warrior's article on reading "with Canaanite eyes." What difference does the context of the reader in front of the text make in influencing the interpretations that one develops?

5. Delilah and Popular Culture (SLO 1. B.)

This paper invites you to interpret the Bible and a popular work of art in an intertextual relationship. First, read Judges 16 closely while taking notes to summarize the passage. Then look at Solomon Joseph Solomon's painting *Samson and Delilah* and take careful notes on what you see. Having taken notes on each independently, your paper will bring the two together in an intertextual relationship. *Choose ONE* of the following two options; do not try both: (1) what do you see in the biblical text that you did not note before having viewed Solomon's painting? (2) how are gaps and ambiguities in Judges 16 portrayed in Solomon's painting in a way that creates, reinscribes, or subverts *ideas about gender and sex*?

6. Solomon and Ambivalent Storytelling (SLO 1. A. and B.)

First consider how the Deuteronomistic History presents a positive view of King Solomon's reign in 1 Kings 9:15-10:29. Then consider how the "Law of the King" in Deut 17:14-20 and the texts of 1 Kgs 5:13-18; 12:1-9 implicitly challenge this positive viewpoint. Note specific biblical texts for each point. What are the primary theological issues or concerns for the writer of Deut 17:14-20 in terms of the relationship between God and king?

Course Schedule

Week#	Watch	Read	Submit
1 9/9 – 9/15	Introduction to the class Introduction to the syllabus What do we call these scriptures? Hermeneutics and Interpretation The Diversity of a Hermeneutic of Faith The Enlightenment and the Rise of Modern Biblical Criticism Exegesis as Map Making Instructions to the Self-Exegesis Assignment	Brown, "A Hermeneutical Adventure," 3–10 Shectman, "How Do Biblical Scholars Read the Hebrew Bible?"	Discussion Board on Introduction to Hermeneutics, Interpretation, and Exegesis Week 1 Quiz Week 1 Secondary Readings Quiz
2 9/16 – 9/22	Biblical Canons The Hermeneutical Circle and the Construction of Meaning Text Criticism Redaction Criticism Source Criticism Tradition Criticism Historical Analysis Ancient Southwest Asian and Northeast African Contexts	Collins, "The Different Canons of Scripture," 14–19 King and Stager, <i>Life in Biblical Israel</i> , 36–61 Sommer, "Appendix: Monotheism and Polytheism in Ancient Israel," 145–174	Self-Exegesis Assignment Week 2 Quiz Week 2 Secondary Readings Quiz
3 9/23 – 9/29	A Chronology of ancient Israel The Art of Biblical Narrative Narrative, Story, and Narrative Discourse Structural Analysis and Form Criticism Poetics vs. Rhetoric Contexts and the Horizon of Expectations Book of the Bible Outlines Instructions	Alter, "A Literary Approach to the Bible," 1–24 Exodus 2:1–10 "The Birth Legend of Sargon"	Week 3 Quiz Week 3 Secondary Readings Quiz Discussion Board for Self-Exegesis

4	Mapping Out the Biblical World	Gafney, Wil.	Genesis Outline
9/30 –	The Role of Readers	"Reflections on Teaching Biblical	Discussion Board on
10/6	History of Consequences	Interpretation through a Black Lives Matter	Courageous Conversations
	Ideological Criticism	Hermeneutic." 139–156	Handout on Authority
	Theological Interpretations	Collins, "Modern	and Divine Inspiration
	Courageous Conversations: The	Theology," 196–214	Discussion Board on Authority and Divine
	Authority of Scripture	Gnuse, "Inspiration of Scripture," 2255–2260	Inspiration
		Trible, "Authority of the Bible," 2248–2254	Week 4 Secondary Readings Quiz
5	Authorship in the Ancient World	Genesis 1–2	Exodus Outline
10/7 – 10/13	Four Modes of Ancient Revision of Texts	<u>Atraḥasis</u>	Handout on Genesis
10/13	What Is Myth?	Genesis 6:1–9:17	Creation Stories
	The Use of Creation Myths in the		Discussion Board on Myths
	Hebrew Bible		Discussion Board on
	Terminology: ASANA		Comparative Analysis
	Major Points on Contextual Analysis		Week 5 Quiz
	ASANA as a Window into Ancient Israelite Life		
	Why Do These Cultures Have the Same Stories?		
	How Is the Bible Different from Its Surroundings?		
	When Did Cross-Cultural Exchange Happen?		
	Close Reading Assignment Instructions		
	Reflection Paper 1 Instructions		
6	RESEARCH AND STUD	Y WEEK	Handout on Close
10/14 – 10/20			Reading and Literary Contexts
7	Voices from the Margins	Exodus 1–2	Reflection Paper 1
			Leviticus Outline

10/21 - 10/27	Major Principles of Black Biblical Interpretation Origins of Womanist Biblical Interpretation Diversity of Womanist Interpreters, Approaches, and Definitions of 'Womanist' What Is Translation? Translation Issues (Choose three or more) The Name of God Skin Complexion Narrative Inconsistency Ethnic Frameworks Gendered Pronouns and God Theological Challenge to NT Euphemism or Explicit Jarring, Explicit Language Different Worldviews Ambiguous Hebrew Poetics/Wordplay Erotic Language Reflection Paper 2 Instructions	Excerpt from Hurston, Moses, Man of the Mountain Smith, "Introduction," Insights, 1–21 Gafney, "Appendix B" in Womanist Midrash, 281–292	Handout on Reading Hurston with Exodus 1–2 Discussion Board for Black and Womanist Interpretation Week 7 Secondary Readings Quiz
8 10/28 – 11/3	Purity and Impurity in Leviticus Three Strategies of Biblical Interpretation in Response to "Clobber Passages" Some Data on Sex and Gender in the Bible Carr, "Bible and Sex Lecture" Hermeneutic of Suspicion and Hermeneutic of Recuperation Biblical Law and Israelite Law Scholarly Hypotheses on the Composition of Biblical Legal Texts Reflection Paper 3 Instructions	Klawans, "Concepts of Purity in the Bible" <i>The Jewish Study Bible</i> , 2041–2047 Nissinen, Homoeroticism and the Biblical World, 1–18, 37–56 Knight, "Israelite Law and Biblical Law" and "The Law of Power," 9–29 and 58–86	Reflection Paper 2 Numbers Outline Deuteronomy Outline Handout on Exodus 14 and Source Criticism Discussion Board on Law and Power Discussion Board on Bible, Sex, Sexuality, and Gender Week 8 Quiz Week 8 Secondary Readings Quiz

9	Slavery in the Hebrew Bible	Noll, "The Crisis over	Reflection Paper 3
11/4 —	Intertextuality and Communication (A	the Bible," 31–51	Joshua Outline
11/10	New Testament Example) Inner-biblical Interpretation and the	Callahan, "The Poison Book," 21–30	Discussion Board for Slavery and the Bible
	Composition of the Bible	Exodus 21:2–11	Week 9 Quiz
	The Bible as a Dialogue	Leviticus 25:39–46	Week 9 Secondary
	Reflection Paper 4 Instructions	Deuteronomy 15:1–18	Readings Quiz
10	Reading from the Margins	Warrior, "A Native	Reflection Paper 4
11/11 –	Biblical Depictions of Divinely	American Perspective," 277–285	Judges Outline
11/17	Sanctioned Genocide and Apologetic Interpretations	Deuteronomy 7, 20	Discussion Board on
	Other Responses to Biblical Depictions	Joshua 2–6	Rahab and Biblical Violence
	of Divinely Sanctioned Genocide		Week 10 Quiz
	Reflection Paper 5 Instructions		Week 10 Secondary Readings Quiz
11	The Deuteronomistic History	Judges 13–16	Reflection Paper 5
11/18 –	Where Did the Israelites Come From?		1–2 Samuel Outline
11/24	Biblical Criticism to Undermine Zionist Interpretation		Week 11 Quiz
	Centering the Women in Judges 13–16		
	Reflection Paper 6 Instructions		
12	Evidence of Sources	Fentress-Williams, "1	Reflection Paper 6
11/25 —	The Documentary Hypothesis	and 2 Samuel," 90–106	1-2 Kings Outline
12/1	Supplementary and Fragmentary Hypothesis	Carr, "The Beginnings of the Monarchy and Royal Zion Texts," 59–	Handout on Exodus 14 or 1 Samuel 17–18
	Agreement On Sources Among Scholars	76 Exodus 14	Discussion Board on Source Criticism
	Covenants and Theology in the Hebrew Bible	1 Samuel 17–18	Week 12 Quiz
13	The Biggest Miracle in Your Bible	Matthews, "The Period	Week 13 Quiz
12/2 – 12/8	Three Accounts of Jerusalem's Survival in 701 BCE	of the Divided Kingdom," 53–75	Discussion Board on Final Reflections
	Divine Retribution in the Hebrew Bible	Aubin, The Rescue of Jerusalem, 3–14	

The Sin of Jeroboam and Biblical	Bellis, "Did an
Propaganda	Academic Outsider
The Big Picture of the Torah and Former Prophets	Determine What Saved Jerusalem from Conquest by the Assyrian Emperor Sennacherib in 701 BCE?" 1 Kings 11–12 2 Kings 18–19

Course Policies

Inclusive and Expansive Language

In accordance with seminary policy, students are to use inclusive language in class discussions and in written and oral communication by using language representative of the whole human community in respect to gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, and physical and intellectual capacities. Direct quotations from theological texts and translations of the Bible do not have to be altered to conform to this policy. In your own writing, however, when referring to God, you are encouraged to use a variety of images and metaphors, reflecting the richness of the Bible's images for God. See for further assistance, http://www.lpts.edu/academics/academicresources/academic-forms/guides-policies-andhandbooks/inclusive-and-expansivelanguage.

Academic Honesty

All work turned in to the instructors is expected to be the work of the student whose name appears on the assignment. Any borrowing of the ideas or the words of others must be acknowledged by quotation marks (where appropriate) and by citation of author and source. Use of another's language or ideas from online resources is included in this policy and must be attributed to author and source of the work being cited. Failure to do so constitutes plagiarism and may result in failure of the course. Two occurrences of plagiarism may result in dismissal from the Seminary. Students unfamiliar with issues related to academic honesty can find help from the staff in the Academic Support Center. For the Seminary policy, see The Code of Student Conduct, 6.11; the Student Handbook, p. 19.

Special Accommodations

Students requiring accommodations for a documented physical or learning disability should be in contact with the Director of the Academic Support Center during the first two weeks of a semester (or before the semester begins) and should speak with the instructor as soon as possible to arrange appropriate adjustments. Students with environmental or other sensitivities that may affect their learning are also encouraged to speak with the instructor.

Policy on Late Work

All assignments must be turned in on time. All assignments are due on the Sunday that ends a module. Modules are published a week ahead of time, which gives students who work ahead an extra week to complete assignments. If you cannot complete an assignment on time, email the professor.

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