

**OT 131-3 Torah and Former Prophets**  
Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary  
Fall 2021 | Tuesdays & Thursday | 10:00-11:20am  
#LPTSBible

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Office Hours: gladly by appointment  
email me with possible times

**Course Description:**

The course is one of four introductory courses on the Old and New Testaments at Louisville Seminary; it combines elements of a survey course and an exegetical seminar in order to meet the course objectives.

The Old Testament/Hebrew Bible is a library of books that emerged out of historical situations and purports to describe historical events; so, we engage the *historical perspective*. The Old Testament, however, is also a work of literature that can be studied for its literary form; so, we engage the *literary perspective*. Finally, the Old Testament/Tanakh has the status of Scripture for a variety of religious communities; so, we engage the *theological perspective*.

**Course Objectives/Dreams:**

Students completing this course will be able to:

1. Describe the general content and organization of the Torah and Former Prophets including important historical events behind these texts and literary features within texts.
2. Analyze and differentiate the varied ancient theological perspectives within and among these biblical books.
3. Exegete biblical passages by asking and answering historical, literary, and theological questions of the text.
4. Reflect critically on hermeneutical issues in contemporary, theological readings of the Torah and Former Prophets.

These objectives relate to the following degree program Student Learning Outcomes:

MDIV 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.

MAR SLO #1: Be able to interpret Scripture critically and imaginatively.

MAR SLO #3: Demonstrate an understanding of multiple theological perspectives, historical and contemporary.

## **Assignments & Evaluation:**

Students are expected to attend class sessions *regularly* and *punctually*, to have completed the readings and assignments for each class period, to participate in discussions in class, and to have a Bible and textbook/readings accessible.

Assignments are listed here as *summaries* of the work required along with their due dates. Students will be given more information and a grading rubric for the assignments on Canvas. All assignments are due via Canvas. Please do NOT email them to me.

### **1. Bible Content Project. Due by midnight Sunday, September 26**

(15% of final grade) [Course Objective #1]

Students will read the books in the Torah and Former Prophets sections and create a content outline for each book. One line of textual summary per biblical book chapter. Read and summarize!

### **2. HLT Reference Sheet. Due by midnight Sunday, October 10**

(15% of final grade) [Course Objectives: primarily #3, also #1 and #4]

Students will create a 2-page reference sheet that addresses 1 historical, 1 literary, and 1 theological issue within a given biblical passage.

### **3. Take-Home, Open Book Unit Two Exam. Due by midnight Sunday, October 31**

(25% of final grade) [Course Objectives: #1, #2, #3]

A multiple choice, short answer, true/false, and long answer exam.

### **4. Biblical Theological Essay on Joshua. Due by midnight, Sunday, November 28**

(20% of final grade) [Course Objectives: #2, #3]

This 4-page essay answers the ambitious question "Who is God?" at the level of a single book.

### **5. Take-Home, Open Book Unit Three Exam. Due by midnight Sunday, December 12**

(25% of final grade) [Course Objectives: #1, #2, #3]

A multiple choice, short answer, true/false, and long answer exam.

## Grading Scale

95-100	A	73-76	C
90-94	A-	70-72	C-
87-89	B+	67-69	D+
83-86	B	63-66	D
80-82	B-	60-62	D-
77-79	C+	0-59	F

## Course Books & Materials:

1) A New Revised Standard Version Study Bible. Choose among 3 options:

A) *The New Interpreter's Study Bible: New Revised Standard Version with the Apocrypha*. Edited by Walter Harrelson. Nashville: Abingdon, 2003.

B) *The HarperCollins Study Bible*. Edited by Harold W. Attridge, Society of Biblical Literature. HarperOne, 2006.

C) *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*. Edited by Michael Coogan, Marc Brettler, Carol Newsom, PHEME PERKINS. Oxford University Press, 2015.

These study bibles include a standard, scholarly translation (NRSV) and excellent study notes. Please do not use another translation or Bible for this class. If you are more familiar with another translation, then the NRSV will provide a fresh reading for you. You can use this Bible in other biblical studies courses here at seminary.

2) *Opening Israel's Scriptures*. By Ellen F. Davis. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019.

3) *Womanist Midrash: A Reintroduction to the Women of the Torah and the Throne*. By Wilda C. Gafney. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2017.

Other required and recommended readings will be posted on Canvas.

### **Use of Inclusive 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. More discussion about inclusive language can be accessed from the Academic Support Center and from the section of the LPTS web site with information for current students.

### **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 more information, see the Policy for Academic Honesty in the Student Handbook.

### **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.

### **Citation Policy**

Citations in your papers should follow Seminary standards, which are based on these guides:

Turabian, Kate L., Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations: Chicago Style for Students and Researchers*. 9th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020.

*The Chicago Manual of Style*. 17th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017.

Copies of these guides are available at the library and in the Academic Support Center. See also the library's citation help page: <https://lpts.libguides.com/digitalresources/citingsources>

### **Attendance Policy**

According to the Seminary catalog, students are expected to attend class meetings regularly. In case of illness or emergency, students are asked to notify the instructor of their planned absence from class, either prior to the session or within 24 hours of the class session. Six or more absences (1/4 of the course) may result in a low or failing grade in the course.

# UNIT ONE: INTRODUCTIONS

## Sept 9: WHAT ARE WE STUDYING?

### Topics:

Old Testament vs. TaNaK vs. Hebrew Bible: Why does it matter?

Differing Canons—Jewish vs. Catholic vs. Protestant vs. Orthodox

Why different canons? The Protestant Old Testament canon has the same books as the Jewish TaNaK but in different order.

Jewish divisions: Torah, Prophets, Writings

Christian Divisions: Law/Pentateuch, History, Poetry, Prophecy

## Sept 14: READING/INTERPRETING THE HEBREW BIBLE

### Topics:

Text of Hebrew Bible; MT vs. LXX vs. Vulgate vs. Dead Sea Scrolls

What is Exegesis? Hermeneutics?

3 Chairs and a Couch Or Where Three Worlds Meet

Using Genesis 28, Isaiah 7-8, and Song of Songs as examples.

HLT Exercise

### Required Readings:

*An Introduction to the Hebrew Bible: A Thematic Approach*, Chapter 2. [Canvas]

### Recommended Readings:

*The New Interpreter's Bible*, pages 2261-65, "Guidelines for Reading and Interpretation" by John R. Donahue, S.J. & pages 2268-72, "Varieties of Readings and Interpretations of the Biblical Text," by Edgar McKnight.

Green, Joel B. "Modern and Postmodern Methods of Biblical Interpretation." *Scripture and Its Interpretation: A Global, Ecumenical Introduction to the Bible*. Edited by Michael J. Gorman. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017. [Canvas]

**Sept 16: READING HISTORICALLY:  
THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST AND ISRAELITE/JUDEAN HISTORY**

Topics:

ANE Peoples and Places; Major Events and Time Periods

Israelite and Judean History until the Babylonian Exile

Required Readings:

*An Introduction to the Hebrew Bible: A Thematic Approach*, chapter 1. [Canvas]

Douglas Knight and Amy-Jill Levine, *The Meaning of the Bible: What the Jewish Scriptures and Christian Old Testament Can Teach Us* (New York: HarperOne, 2011), 3-41. [Canvas]

Recommended Readings:

For those students with a strong interest in history, the next resource to read is Victor Matthews's *A Brief History of Ancient Israel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002)

King, Philip J., and Lawrence E. Stager. *Life in Biblical Israel*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001, 36 – 61. [Canvas]

**Sept 21: READING HISTORICALLY**

Topics:

History of the Text

History in the Text

Required Readings:

John H. Hayes and Carl R. Holladay, *Biblical Exegesis: A Beginner's Handbook* (Louisville: WJK Press, 2007): 53-71. [Canvas]

Carol Meyers, *Rediscovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women in Context* (Oxford University Press, 2021), 38-58. [Canvas]

## Sept 23: READING LITERARILY

### Topics:

Stylistic Analysis of Narrative

Structural Analysis and Genre

Literary Context

### Required Readings:

William P. Brown, *A Handbook to Old Testament Exegesis* (Louisville: WJK Press, 2017): 63-72, 79-84, 95-99, 103-104, 145-151. [Canvas]

### Recommended Readings:

Phyllis Tribble, *Rhetorical Criticism: Context, Method, and the Book of Jonah* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994): 101-106. [Canvas]

William P. Brown, *A Handbook to Old Testament Exegesis* (Louisville: WJK Press, 2017): 63-112, 145-155. [Canvas]

# UNIT TWO: TORAH / PENTATEUCH

## Sept 28: Historical, Literary, and Theological Introduction to Torah

### Topics:

Sources: J, E, D, P

Literary Structure

Torah in Judaism and Christianity

### Required Readings:

Jean-Louis Ska, *Introduction to Reading the Pentateuch*. Translated by Sr. Pascale Dominique. (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbraus, 2006), "The Five Books of the Pentateuch: Content and Structure," 16 – 39. [Canvas]

Johanna W. H. van Wijk-Bos, *Making Wise The Simple: The Torah in Christian Faith and Practice* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005): 3-14, 58-70. [Canvas]

## Sept 30: CREATION & "THE FALL"

### Topics:

Genesis 1: The First Creation Story

Genesis 2-4: The Second Creation Story, Garden of Eden story, Cain and Abel story

### Required Readings:

Genesis 1-4

Davis, 8-22

Gafney, 1-27

## October 5: CREATION CARE: FIELD TRIP

**This class session is a field trip to Henryville, Indiana to visit Dr. Patricia Tull's net-zero energy home and farm. Dr. Tull is also an Old Testament scholar and will lead a discussion of the creation stories.**

### Topics:

Creation Care

### Required Readings:

Patricia Tull, *Inhabiting Eden: Christians, the Bible, and the Ecological Crisis* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2013), Chapters 2 and 3 [Canvas]

## **October 7: ABRAHAM**

### Topics:

Abraham and Hagar and Ishmael

Abraham and Sarah and Isaac

### Required Readings:

Genesis 12-20

Davis, 27-35

Gafney, 30-45

## **October 12: EXODUS**

### Topics:

Moses's Birth

Moses's Burning Bush

The Exodus Event

### Required Readings:

Davis, 40-49

Gafney, 87-91, 95-99

## **October 14: MOUNT SINAI**

### Topics:

Legal Codes:

Covenant Code: Exod 19 – 24

Deuteronomic Code: Deut 12 – 26

Holiness Code: Lev 17 – 26

Priestly Code: Exod 25–31; 35–40; Lev 1–7; 11–15; 27; Num 5–6; 15; 18–19; 28–30

Slavery in Legal Codes

### Required Readings:

Douglas Knight. *Law, Power, and Justice in Ancient Israel*. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), "Israelite Law and Biblical Law" and "The Law of Power," 9 – 29 and 58 – 86. [Canvas]

Noll, Mark A. *The Civil War as a Theological Crisis*. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006), "The Crisis over the Bible," 31-51. [Canvas]

Callahan, Allen Dwight. *The Talking Book: African Americans and the Bible*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), "The Poison Book," 21-30. [Canvas]

## **October 26: GENDER AND SEXUALITY IN LEGAL CODES**

### Topics:

Lev 1 – 4; 11 – 16; 18; Num 5

### Required Readings:

Jonathan Klawans, “Concepts of Purity in the Bible” in *The Jewish Study Bible* (Oxford University Press, 2004), 2041-2047. [Canvas]

Martti Nissinen, *Homoeroticism and the Biblical World: A Historical Perspective* (Fortress Press, 1998), 1 – 18, 37 – 56. [Canvas]

## **October 28: THE GOD OF THE TORAH**

### Topics:

Who is God in the Torah?

### Required Readings:

Johanna W. H. van Wijk-Bos, *Making Wise The Simple: The Torah in Christian Faith and Practice* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005): 233-262. [Canvas]

# UNIT THREE: DEUTERONOMISTIC HISTORY

## Nov 2: DEUTERONOMY & DTR HISTORY

### Topics:

Deuteronomy

Introduction to the Deuteronomistic History

### Required Readings:

Lovelace, Vanessa. "Intersections of Ethnicity, Gender, Sexuality, and Nation." in *The Hebrew Bible: Feminist and Intersectional Perspectives*. (Edited by Gale A. Yee. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2018), 75-106. [Canvas]

Steven McKenzie, *Introduction to the Historical Books: Strategies for Reading* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 13-18 [Canvas]

Gafney, 171-178.

## Nov 4: CONQUEST & JOSHUA

### Topics:

The Problems of Joshua: Verbs of Violence – Other as Object – Land as Possession

Deconstructive Readings of Joshua's Violence

Constructive Readings of Joshua's Violence

### Required Readings:

Davis, 129-147

Robert Allen Warrior, "Canaanites, Cowboys, and Indians: Deliverance, Conquest, and Liberation Theology Today." in *Voices from the Margin: Interpreting the Bible in the Third World*. (Edited by R. S. Sugirtharajah. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995), 277-85. [Canvas]

## Nov 9: JUDGES

### Topics:

Introduction to Judges

Samson

### Required Readings:

Davis, 148-163

Nyasha Junior and Jeremy Schipper, *Black Samson: The Untold Story of An American Icon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 1-10. [Canvas]

### **Nov 11: SAUL, THE FIRST KING**

Topics:

The Kingship of Saul

Required Readings:

Davis, 173-184

Gafney, 189-201

### **Nov 16: DAVID**

Topics:

Historical David – “The Rise of David” and “Succession Narrative”

David and his Wives

Required Readings:

Davis, 185-197

Gafney, 203-236

### **Nov 18: DAVIDIC THEOLOGY**

Topics:

King-Zion theology: 2 Samuel 7; 1 Kings 5&8

Required Readings:

Jon Levenson, *Sinai and Zion: An Entry into the Jewish Bible* (Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1985): 97-101. [Canvas]

### **Nov 30: SOLOMON**

Topics:

Solomon’s kingship

Required Readings:

Davis, 198-208

## **Dec 2: DIVIDED KINGDOM: THE KINGDOM OF ISRAEL**

### Topics:

Kingdom of Israel  
Elijah stories  
Israel's Queens

### Required Readings:

Davis, 209-219  
Gafney, 237-248

## **Dec 7: DIVIDED KINGDOM: THE KINGDOM OF JUDAH**

### Topics:

Kingdom of Judah  
Royal Women of Judah  
The Ending of the Deuteronomistic History: 2 Kings 25: 27-30

### Required Readings:

Gafney, 249-275  
Levenson, Jon. "The Last Four Verses in Kings." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 103 (1984): 353–61. [Canvas]

## **Dec 9: CONCLUSION**

### Topics:

Wrapping up the semester

### Required Readings:

Kugel, James L. *How to Read the Bible: A Guide to Scripture Then and Now*. New York: Free Press, 2007. Kugel, "After Such Knowledge..." 662 – 689. [Canvas]

## Old Testament / Hebrew Bible Exegetical Tools

### 1) Dictionaries / Encyclopedias

- Anchor Bible Dictionary*. 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992.
- Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*. Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2000.
- HarperCollins Bible Dictionary*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996.
- Hayes, John H., ed. *Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation*. 2 vols. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999.
- Meyers, Carol, ed. *Women in Scripture: a Dictionary of Named and Unnamed Women in the Hebrew Bible, the Apocrypha, Deuterocanonical Books, and the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001.
- The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*. Currently 3 vols. Nashville: Abingdon, 2006 –
- Hepper, F. N. *Baker Encyclopedia of Bible Plants: Flowers, Trees, Fruits, and Vegetables*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992.
- Losch, Richard R. *All the People in the Bible: an A-Z Guide to the Saints, Scoundrels, and Other Characters in Scripture*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008.
- Metzger, Bruce M. and Michael D. Coogan. *The Oxford Guide to People & Places of the Bible*. New York: Oxford, 2001.
- Ray-Schwartz, Donald. *Noah's Ark: an Annotated Encyclopedia of Every Animal Species in the Hebrew Bible*. Aronson, 2000.
- Van der Toorn, Karel, Bob Becking, et al. *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible (DDD)*. Boston: Brill, 1999.

### 2) Atlases

- Aharoni, Yohanan. *The Carta Bible Atlas*. 4th ed. Jerusalem: Carta, 2002.
- Curtis, Adrian, ed. *Oxford Bible Atlas*. 4th ed. NY: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Dowley, Tim, ed. *The Baker Atlas of Christian History*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1997.
- Pritchard, James B. *The Harper Atlas of the Bible*. New York: Harper and Row, 1987.

### 3) Concordances

- A specific concordance matches a Bible version.
- Metzger, Bruce M. *NRSV Exhaustive Concordance*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1991. Moulton and Geden. *A Concordance to the Greek Testament*. 6th edition, ed. by I. Howard Marshall. London: T.&T. Clark, 2002. Reference: BS 2302 .M8 2002
- Strong, James. *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*. Updated ed. Hendrickson, 2007.
- Whitaker, Richard E., and John R. Kohlenberger. *Analytical Concordance to the NRSV of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; New York: Oxford, 2000.

#### 4) Commentary Series

*Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries*  
*Anchor Bible*  
*Berit Olam*  
*Hermeneia*  
*Illuminations*  
*International Critical Commentary*  
*Interpretation*  
*JPS Torah Commentary*  
*New Century Bible Commentary*  
*New International Commentary, Old Testament Series*  
*New Interpreter's Bible*  
*Old Testament Library*  
*Smyth & Helwys Commentary Series*  
*Westminster Bible Companion*  
*Wisdom Commentary Series*  
*Word Biblical Commentary*  
*Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture/Old Testament*

#### 5) One Volume Commentaries

Adeyemo, Tokunboh, ed. *Africa Bible Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006.  
*The HarperCollins Bible Commentary*. Rev. ed. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2000.  
*The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1990.  
Newsom, Carol A. and Sharon H. Ringe, eds. *Women's Bible Commentary, Expanded Edition*.  
Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998.  
*The Oxford Bible Commentary*. NY: Oxford, 2001.  
*Queer Bible Commentary* (ed. Guest, Goss, West, Bohache);  
*Global Bible Commentary* (ed. Patte);  
*The International Bible Commentary* (ed. William R. Farmer);  
*The Africana Bible* (ed. Hugh R. Page Jr.)