

OT 131-3 Torah and Former Prophets
Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary
Fall 2019
Tues & Thurs 1:30 – 2:50 PM
Schlegel Hall 122

Prerequisites

None

Instructor Contact

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Office Hours: email for 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., 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

By completing this course, students will:

1. Gain a stronger familiarity with content within the books of the Hebrew Bible covered in this course (SLO 1).
2. Be able to analyze and exposit biblical texts through critical focus on the world behind the text, the world within the text, and the world in front of the text (SLO 1).
3. Develop greater competency with using major tools of exegetical study including print and digital resources (SLO 1).
4. Develop critical awareness of the impact (positive or negative, but always inescapable) of contextualized beings (including themselves) on biblical interpretation (SLO 1, 3, and 4).

5. Reflect critically on the past, present, and future consequences of competing paradigms for the authority of the Bible and its relationship to other sources of authority (SLO 1, 2, 3, 4).

How Learning Happens

I have structured this course to follow a democratic, emancipatory model of education. This means that the goals and process of learning for us are geared toward creating a more just and democratic society. It also means that the teaching/learning process is not based on a unilateral sharing of packaged information, but rather on exercises designed to foster critical thinking, creative thinking, and collaboration. Our thought and study will be problem-oriented rather than positivistic and dogmatic; perspectival rather than relativistic; and geared toward contextual collaboration in the belief that engaging with our differences can enrich our thought and life.

Required Books

- An English study Bible. Options include those listed below (others are acceptable with approval):
 - *The Jewish Study Bible* (Published by JPS)
 - *The Harper Collins Study Bible*
 - *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*
 - *The New Interpreter's Study Bible*

Contract Grading

The contract grading system below has been implemented in order to facilitate an environment that aligns with the emancipatory model of education. This system should foster more collaborative (rather than competitive) interactions and 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.

Individual assignments will be graded on a basis of R (Re-do), S (Satisfactory), and E (Excellent). In the case of participation and the self-exegesis assignment, students will only be graded on a basis of S and E. Every student must complete ALL assignments to the standard of S in order for that assignment to count.

If a student receives an R, that student 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 writing center and the professor before re-submitting their assignment. If the student fails to earn an S on a re-done assignment, the student will receive one mark against their ability to remain within the contract grading system. A student with three marks will negate their contract grade and will need to meet with the professor regarding the potential for them to pass this class.

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. Active participation in class and group discussions
2. Self-Exegesis Assignment
3. Quiz 1
4. Eight of eleven possible book outlines
5. Three reflection papers

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

1. All the requirements of the previous level
2. All eleven book outlines
3. Four of five possible reflection papers

4. Class Notes Assignment

A Level Work (A- or A)

1. All of the requirements of the previous level
2. Secondary Reading Notes Assignment

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

Guidelines for all Assignments

Participation

Active participation is required in all class sessions. Students should come to class prepared to discuss the assigned biblical text(s) and/or secondary reading(s) and prepared to engage with classmates in planned activities. Aside from simply answering questions, active participation can be shown through activities like listening attentively to others, responding to others, asking relevant questions, and taking notes. Students must earn a grade of S or E on participation. Students at risk of earning an R in participation will need to meet with the professor to address this issue in order for the student to pass this course.

Self-Exegesis

Each student must submit the self-exegesis assignment by **11:59 pm on September 12**. Guidelines for the assignment have been posted on CAMS. The assignment calls for students to answer questions that require deep personal reflection. Students will receive a grade of S or E based on the seriousness and thoroughness of their answers—not the content of their answers.

Books of the Bible Outlines

A major component of this course is students gaining a greater familiarity with the content of the Hebrew Bible (Course Learning Goal 1). Toward that end, every student is required to submit outlines of the biblical books that we cover in the Torah (Gen, Exod, Lev, Num, Deut) and Former Prophets (Josh, Judg, 1 – 2 Sam, 1 – 2 Kngs). For these outlines, students **must** adequately complete the following:

1. Read through each book of the Bible assigned for this course.
2. Summarize (in approximately one sentence of their own words) the content of **every chapter in every book**.
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.

After submitting these outlines, students will use their own outline to assist with re-reading the primary texts in their literary context for the purpose of subsequent class discussions and assignments. A sample outline of Genesis will be shared as a guide. Outlines are due by **11:59 pm on September 24**.

Quiz

There will be a quiz administered on **October 1** at the start of class. The quiz will cover four basic areas of introductory material:

1. Terms for the Old Testament
2. Biblical canons
3. A chronology of ancient Israel
4. The geography of biblical Palestine

Students will be graded on the basis of R, S, and E. Students who earn an R will have to schedule a time with the professor to re-take the quiz outside of class, in which case the highest possible grade they will be able to receive will be an S.

Reflection Papers

There will be five reflection papers due during the course of the semester. Each is **due by 11:59 pm** on the date for which it is assigned. The **first reflection paper is required** from all students. Students aiming for a grade in the range of C must complete three; four must be completed for a grade in the B or A range. Papers must be typed, double-spaced, and carefully edited for style, grammar, and spelling. With the exception of the first paper, 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 an outline of the structure of your paper. Each paper must be a **minimum of 750 words and maximum 1000 words**. There is NO expectation of additional/outside reading (beyond assigned texts for this class) in order to adequately complete the reflection papers.

Students will earn an R, S, or E on each paper. Students who earn an R will have to resubmit their paper with revisions within two weeks of receiving an R. The maximum possible grade for a resubmitted paper is an S.

The guidelines for each reflection paper are below:

1. Translation as Interpretation

Choose three issues in translation that we discussed in class on October 13 and/or in the readings from van Wijk-Bos and Gafney. 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? which option do you prefer and why?

2. Biblical Law and Power

There are many seemingly altruistic laws in the Hebrew Bible, but Douglas Knight cautions that, even with these laws, readers should not ignore that the interests of the powerful can be maintained. Choose one of the following seemingly altruistic laws: Exod 22:26 – 27; Lev 25:39 – 46; Deut 15:10 – 11. In what ways might this law serve the political, economic, and/or social 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 and the Bible

Mark Noll describes two overarching approaches taken by interpreters of the Bible who opposed slavery in the antebellum period: a general appeal to the overall meaning of the Bible and a more detailed engagement with the problems of equating biblical slavery with the slave system in the United States. Summarize the arguments that support each of the above approaches as well as the major pitfalls that Noll says plagued these abolitionist interpretations. Conclude by stating 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

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. Solomon and Ambivalent Story-Telling

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 Kngs 5:13 – 18; 12:1 – 9 implicitly challenge this positive viewpoint. 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?

The following rubric will be used to assess reflection papers:

Name:	Course: Torah and Former Prophets	Date:	Reflection Paper # ____	Overall Grade: R (2 or more categories with R) S E (3 or more categories with E)	
Criteria	Unsatisfactory /Needs Improvement “R” = Rewrite	Proficient/ Satisfactory “S” = Satisfactory	Excellent “E” = Excellent	Grade Each Category	Comments
a) Writing mechanics, grammar, style, spelling, format of	Many errors in grammar, spelling, or footnote citation	Generally well written with some mechanical errors or	Grammar, style, spelling and language mechanics are excellent.		

<p>citations (SBL), word limit.</p>	<p>format. Closer proofreading required. Contact writing center for assistance. Not between 750 – 1000 words.</p>	<p>grammatical errors that detract somewhat from the quality of the paper. Meets word count requirement.</p>	<p>Good paragraph construction, citation format is excellent. Clearly written within 750 – 1000 words.</p>		
<p>b) Clear thesis statement, organization, persuasive argumentation related to the thesis</p>	<p>No clear thesis statement, lacks organization and/or arguments; evidence does not clearly support the thesis.</p>	<p>A fairly clear thesis and organization; arguments are generally persuasive with a few exceptions.</p>	<p>Crystal clear thesis, arguments are persuasive, conclusions are significant and insightful.</p>		
<p>c) Addresses very directly the issue and biblical texts assigned for the essay only stays focused on assigned topic</p>	<p>The essay does not deal directly or fully with any questions relating to the prompt OR the essay includes a large section of discussion that is not immediately</p>	<p>The content of the paper deals somewhat with the assigned questions but does not do so fully, OR some parts of the essay veer off into unrelated</p>	<p>The content of the paper is consistently focused on addressing very directly the assigned questions, and supports the student's thesis with no extraneous material included.</p>		

	relevant to the prompt.	topics or issues.			
<p>d) Use of evidence and data to support arguments and analysis. Citation of biblical text relies primarily on listing the biblical book, chapter number and verse number in the main body of the paper (not in footnotes) with only brief phrases. Avoids long quotations in the paper.</p>	<p>Specific biblical texts, other primary sources, and secondary sources are not cited throughout the paper in support of arguments and analysis OR too many generalizations made without specific support from the biblical text and/or academic publications OR paper uses long quotations in the main body of the paper rather than simply citing chapter and verse numbers OR biblical</p>	<p>Generally adequate use of evidence and data to support arguments and analysis with a few omissions, unsupported generalizations, long quotations, or chapter and verse numbers in footnotes rather than in the main body of the text in parentheses.</p>	<p>Excellent and consistent use of evidence and data to support arguments and analysis. Cites biblical texts by book, chapter and verse number (e.g. Exod 32:14) rather than using long quotations. Perhaps occasional use of short key phrases in the biblical text as part of the analysis.</p>		

	<p>citations of chapter and verse numbers are made in footnotes rather than in parentheses in the main body of the paper.</p>				
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Class Notes Assignment

Students aiming for a grade in the **B-**, **B**, **B+** range must complete this assignment and submit electronically by **11:59pm on December 13**. By completing this assignment, students will not only earn a higher grade, but they will also learn the material better than those who do not complete the assignment. The purpose of this assignment is for you to be able to bring together the things that you learn in this class in a way that (1) highlights important material, (2) allows you to efficiently review and refresh your memory for any relevant work you do, and (3) includes some nuance of your individual learning style. This is not meant to radically change how you take notes for class. Any ways that this assignment does change your notetaking should be beneficial to learning and retention. Your notes must adhere to the following guidelines. If they do not, then they do not count for this assignment:

1. Your notes must include the following:
 - a. Your name
 - i. If you collaborate with others, include their name(s) as well.
 - b. The date of the class
 - c. The topic
 - d. A summary (approximately 3-5 sentences) synthesizing the main points you took from the class
 - e. Notes in whatever fashion best suits your style of learning
2. You will need to submit notes pertaining to every day in which we have class.
 - a. If extenuating circumstances cause you to miss a class, learn the material from another student's notes and write your own summary. Do not merely copy another student's summary.
 - b. If there is no lecture on a day of class, you will only need points "a" through "d" of guideline 1, above. (You will not *need* additional notes beyond a summary of what is most important).
3. You will need to submit these notes **via email** on **December 13**.
 - a. The final submission of your notes must be in **ONE** consolidated document (PDF or Word).
 - b. If you are also submitting a Secondary Readings Assignment, this should be in a separate document from this assignment.

Secondary Reading Notes Assignment

Students aiming for an A- or A in this course must complete this assignment and submit electronically by **11:59 pm on December 13**. By completing this assignment, students will not only earn a higher grade, but they will also learn the material better than those who do not complete the assignment. The purpose of this assignment is for you to be able synthesize what is most important from each of your readings. This is not meant to replace whatever notes or highlighting that you already do when you read; it is meant to supplement that work. Guidelines:

1. For every reading other than the biblical text (excluding optional readings), you must supply the following:
 - a. Your name
 - i. If you collaborate with others, include their name(s) as well.
 - b. The name of the author(s)
 - c. The title of the work
 - d. A summary/abstract (approximately 3-5 sentences) including
 - i. The thesis/main argument or topic of the work
 - ii. At least three important points that support this thesis/argument or are covered concerning this topic
2. When you read multiple selections from the same author for the same day of class you do not need separate summaries/abstracts.
3. If you collaborate with others, do not merely copy and paste their summary/abstract. Use your own words.
4. You will need to submit these notes via email on **December 13**.
 - a. The final submission of these notes must be in **ONE** consolidated document (PDF or Word).
 - b. This submission must be a separate document from your Class Notes Assignment.

All Assignments with Due Dates

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Due Dates</u>
Self-Exegesis	Sep 12
Book Outlines	Sep 24
Quiz	Oct 1
Reflection Paper 1	Oct 13
Reflection Paper 2	Oct 24
Reflection Paper 3	Nov 5
Reflection Paper 4	Nov 12
Reflection Paper 5	Nov 21
Class Notes Assignment	Dec 13
Secondary Readings Assignment	Dec 13

Course Schedule

	Date	Primary Texts	Secondary Readings	Assignment Due	Topics
1	9/5	Begin to read the Torah (Gen, Exod, Lev, Num, Deut) and Former Prophets (Josh, Judg, 1-2 Sam, 1-2 Kgs) All due by Sep 24			What is the Hebrew Bible? Common Misunderstandings Biblical Canons The Biblical Text Intro to syllabus
2	9/10		Brown, "A Hermeneutical Adventure," 3-10 Optional: Green, "Modern and Postmodern Methods of Biblical Interpretation," 187 – 204 [Library Reserve]		Reading the Bible: Where Three Worlds Meet Hermeneutics and Theory
3	9/12		King and Stager, <i>Life in Biblical Israel</i> , 36 – 61 Sommer, "Appendix:	Self-Exegesis Assignment The People's Companion to the Bible	The World Behind the Text Brief Introduction to Modern Historical Critical

			Monotheism and Polytheism in Ancient Israel," 145-174	Self Inventory Questions [CAMS]	Methodologies and Goals
4	9/17		Alter, "A Literary Approach to the Bible," 1 – 24 Ska, "The Five Books of the Pentateuch: Content and Structure" in <i>Introduction to the Pentateuch</i> , 16 – 39		The World Within the Text Literary Approaches Macrostructure and the Biblical Narrative
5	9/19		Collins, "Modern Theology," 196 – 214 Yee, "Introduction: Definitions, Explorations, Intersections," 1 – 38		The World in Front of the Text Theological Interpretation Ideological Criticism
6	9/24		Gnuse, "Inspiration of Scripture," 2255 – 2260	Book Outlines for Torah and Former Prophets	The Bible as Scripture

			Trible, "Authority of the Bible," 2248 – 2254		
7	9/26	Gen 1 – 2	Kugel, "Two Models of God and the 'God of Old,'" 107 – 118 Schlimm, <i>This Strange and Sacred Scripture</i> , 12 – 44 Optional: Fretheim, <i>God and the World in the Old Testament</i> , 29 – 67		Creation and Biblical Theology
8	10/1	"Atrahasis" (in Dalley, <i>Myths from Mesopotamia</i>) Gen 6:1 – 9:17		QUIZ	The Bible in Its Ancient Southwest Asian and Northeast African Context
9	10/3	Gen 9:18 – 29	Reed, "Noah as a Failed Adam with an Unjust Curse," 1 – 42		Literary Analysis: What Close Reading Looks Like
10	10/8	Gen 16, 21	Gafney, <i>Womanist</i>		Whose Story is the Bible?

			<i>Midrash</i> , 1 – 11, 30 – 45		Womanist Interpretation
11	10/10	Exod 3	Gafney, "Appendix B" in <i>Womanist Midrash</i> , 281 – 292 Wijk-Bos, "'Writing on the Water': The Ineffable Name of God,"	Reflection Paper 1 (due Oct 13)	Translation as Interpretation
12	10/22	Exod 14	Dozeman, "Authors" in <i>Exodus</i> , 31 – 43 [Library Reserve]		Source Criticism
13	10/24	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 –	Knight, "Israelite Law and Biblical Law" and "The Law of Power," 9 – 29 and 58 – 86	Reflection Paper 2	Biblical Law Sociological Interpretation

		6; 15; 18 – 19; 28 – 30			
14	10/29	Lev 1 – 4; 11 – 16; 18; Num 5	Klawans, "Concepts of Purity in the Bible" <i>The Jewish Study Bible</i> , 2041-2047 Nissinen, <i>Homoeroticism and the Biblical World</i> , 1 – 18, 37 – 56 Bird, "The Place of Women in the Israelite Cultus," 3-20 [Library Reserve]		Purity, Sacrifice, and Holiness in the Hebrew Bible Gender, Sexual Activity, and Sexuality
15	10/31	Num 25, 27, 31, 36	Gafney, <i>Womanist Midrash</i> , 129-169		Womanist Interpretation
16	11/5	Exod 21:2-11; Lev 19; 25; Deut 15:1- 18	Noll, "The Crisis over the Bible," 31-51 Callahan, "The Poison Book," 21- 30	Reflection Paper 3	The Bible and Slavery: How to Read the Bible Responsibly when Integrating the Three Worlds

17	11/7	Gen 19, 38; Exod 12:31 – 42; Deut 23:1 – 8; Neh 13:1 – 3; Ruth ; Prov 31	Sommer, "Inner-biblical Interpretation" Myers, "The Hermeneutical Dilemma," 40 – 56 Brueggemann, "Introduction: Imaginative Remembering," 1 – 13		Inner-biblical Interpretation and the Composition of Your Bible
18	11/12	Deut 7, 20; Josh 2 – 6	Warrior, "A Native American Perspective," 277 – 285 [Library Reserve]	Reflection Paper 4	Reading From the Margins Ambiguity
19	11/14	Judg 13-16	Blyth, "Mind the Gap Part 1" in <i>Reimagining Delilah's Afterlives as Femme Fatale</i> , 51 – 84 [Library Reserve]		Close Reading in Dialogue with the History of Consequences Judges in Canonical Context
20	11/19	2 Sam 7	Lovelace, "Intersections of Ethnicity, Gender,		Royal-Zion Covenant Theology

			Sexuality, and Nation," 75 – 106		Deuteronomistic History
21	11/21	1 Kngs 1 – 12		Reflection Paper 5	Solomon
22	11/26	NO CLASS			
23	12/3	2 Kngs 25	Levenson, "The Last Four Verses in Kings," 353 – 361		Fall of Judah
24	12/5		Kugel, "After Such Knowledge..." 662 – 689 [Library Reserve]		Bringing it all together

Course Policies

Inclusive and Expansive Language

Whether you are aware of this fact or not, Louisville Seminary emphasizes the use of inclusive and expansive language with regards to people in our written and oral communications. This intentionality of language should be representative of the span of humanity with respect to gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, age, as well as physical and intellectual capacities. With gender, for example, "humankind" is an inclusive alternative to the androcentric term "mankind." For many of us, this type of writing, speaking, and thinking may be new or different and we encourage you to continue to work with it as one aspect of proclaiming the truth of the gospel for all people.

In this course, we will also discuss God with this intentionality of language in mind. While it is clear that the Bible often uses masculine forms to refer to God, the Christian faith has always taught that God is beyond male and female. In keeping with the Christian conviction that God is neither male nor female and the attempt to remain intentional with our language, you are encouraged to either avoid gendered pronouns when referring to God or use pronouns that intentionally reflect the metaphors, theology, or claims you are making. Part of this expectation is that members of this community will be intentional with what we say rather than complicit in perpetuating biases (especially those we do not agree with) based upon our ignorance or lack of effort. To help us remain intentional with our language, the instructor may encourage students, on occasion, to remain cognizant of the language that we use.

Direct quotations and translations from the biblical text need not be altered to conform with this policy; but, you may alter these as well if you so choose.

Attendance

Prompt attendance is mandatory. Excessive tardiness (in time or frequency) constitutes an absence. Two unexcused absences negate your grading contract. If absences become a problem, students must meet with the instructor regarding the possibility of passing this class.

Excused absences are rarely possible with the consent of the instructor. However, it is your responsibility to inform the instructor ahead of time via email, and you will be required to submit work above and beyond what is required for your peers in order to make up for the absence.

Academic Integrity

Students are expected to submit their own work—or their own group’s work in the cases where we have group assignments. The use of any ideas or words from an outside source must be acknowledged by an appropriate citation of the author and source. Failure to follow these guidelines constitutes plagiarism and may result in failure of this 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 at 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 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. Students may be offered grace with regards to one late assignment during the course of the term. A second late assignment will drop your grade by half a grade. A third late assignment will negate your contract grade. With three late assignments, you will need to meet with the instructor about the potential for you to pass this class. The Class Notes Assignment and Secondary Readings Assignments will not be accepted late.

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