THE 1501 –The Hebrew Bible
Saint Joseph’s University / Fall 2009
M, W, F: 9:00-9:50 / 10:00-10:50
Course website on Blackboard

Professor
Dr. Bruce Wells / Bellarmine 208 / bwells@sju.edu / 610-660-1399
- Office hours: Monday and Wednesday 11:00 – 12:30
- Please feel free to come and see me. If the office hours do not work for you, let me know and we can schedule an appointment. I will be happy to make time for you, if you should have questions or concerns that you would like to talk about in person.

Textbook

Course Description
This course will examine the biblical traditions and texts of the Hebrew Scriptures as products of particular historical and cultural communities, and as literary and theological documents.

Course Objectives
- To obtain a critical understanding of the content of the Hebrew Bible (primary assessments: quizzes, exams)
- To engage the major viewpoints of current scholarship on the writings that comprise the Hebrew Bible (primary assessments: essays, exams)
- To understand the broad contours of the writing, editing, and copying process that produced and preserved the texts of the Hebrew Bible (primary assessments: in-class performance, exams)
- To gain exposure to the cultures, history, and literature of the ancient Near East (primary assessments: essays, exams)
- To develop the ability to analyze critically primary and secondary sources (primary assessments: essays, exams)

Requirements, Assignments, and Grading

Preparation Assignments. Preparation assignments will be graded on a pass-fail basis. See the course schedule below for specific details regarding these. Failure to complete these assignments well and on-time will negatively affect a student’s grade.

In-Class Performance (10% of course grade). Students are expected to do the assigned reading, to contribute regularly to whole-class discussions, to participate cooperatively in small-group discussions, and to demonstrate through their participation critical engagement with course material. Grades assigned for in-class performance will be largely subjective, based on the professor’s overall impression of a student’s efforts.

Quizzes (10% of course grade). Students should expect a pop quiz on any day that reading is due. A student’s lowest quiz grade will be dropped. If a student is absent for a quiz, that is the grade that will be dropped. No make-up quizzes will be allowed except in extraordinary circumstances.

Essays (30% of course grade). Students will submit two 3-5 page essays during the semester. Students will choose which essays they would like to write from several options (see below). Essays must be typed, double-spaced, submitted on standard 8½ by 11 paper, and printed in a readable font style and size.
E-mail submissions will not be accepted. Essays will be graded by means of the following criteria. (1) **Critical Comprehension**: Does the essay demonstrate clear understanding of the given topic and critical analysis of key aspects of that topic? (2) **Coherence**: Does the essay have a clear thesis with logical arguments to support it? (3) **Originality**: Does the essay reflect the student’s own analysis of and thinking on the topic, as well as a reasonable attempt to suggest an original and/or interesting idea or perspective? (4) **Mechanics**: Does the essay use correct grammar (including syntax, paragraph structure, etc.) and a writing style appropriate to academic work? Below is the list of possible topics for these essays. Students should check the course website for detailed instructions regarding each topic.

- a) Comparison of biblical texts with non-biblical texts from the ancient world
- b) Source-critical analysis of one or more biblical texts
- c) Annotated bibliography of 3 scholarly articles related to a single theme in biblical studies
- d) Overview and analysis of relevant discussions with persons outside of class
- e) Analysis of a biblical text using a critical methodology other than source criticism

All late writing assignments will be discounted by 2 points per calendar day.

**Midterm and Final Exams (50% of course grade)**. Both exams will consist primarily of short answer and essay questions, and both will be worth 25% of a student’s final course grade. The final exam will cover only material introduced after the midterm and through the end of the semester.

**Grading Scale**
A student’s final course grade will be assigned based on the scale below, showing percentage points and the corresponding letter grade. The professor will use the upper and lower portions of each range to assign letter grades with a plus (+) or minus (–). The professor also reserves the right slightly to raise or to lower a student’s grade, based on the professor’s perception of the student’s effort and attitude throughout the course.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage Points</th>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>90-99</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>80-89</td>
<td>B</td>
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<td>70-79</td>
<td>C</td>
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<td>60-69</td>
<td>D</td>
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<td>0-60</td>
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If a student does all of the assigned work in an adequate and average manner, that student will typically receive a grade in the C range. Grades in the B range are given for very good work. Grades in the A range are for excellent or outstanding work. Grades in the D range are for below average or poor work. More detailed descriptions of each range are below.

- **A**
  excellent comprehension of material, insightful analysis, creative synthesis of material, frequent and highly valuable contributions in class, clarity in spoken communication, no issues with mechanics in written communication

- **B**
  very good comprehension of material, solid analysis, good synthesis of material, frequent and valuable contributions in class, clarity in spoken communication, no major issues with mechanics in written communication

- **C**
  adequate comprehension of material, some acceptable analysis, early stages of synthesis of material, some interesting and valuable contributions in class, clarity in spoken communication, few significant issues with mechanics in written communication
difficulty in comprehension of material, little analysis, very little synthesis, infrequent
c contributions in class, some difficulty with clarity in spoken communication, significant
problems with mechanics in written communication

Students with Disabilities
For those who have a documented learning, physical, or psychological disability and who are requesting
reasonable academic adjustments, you are encouraged to contact Services for Students with Disabilities
(Room 113, Science Center, 610-660-1774 or 610-660-1620) early in the semester. If you suspect that
you have an undiagnosed disability (learning, physical, psychological), please contact Services for
Students with Disabilities to discuss this concern. You should also discuss instructional needs and
accommodations with your professor as early in the semester as possible. All requests for extended-time
testing must be discussed with your professor at a minimum of one week prior to the date of each exam.

Academic Honesty Policy
It is expected that students’ work in this course will be conducted in keeping with the highest degree of
academic honesty. Acts of dishonesty such as (but not limited to) cheating, unauthorized collaboration,
and plagiarism will not be tolerated. The “Academic Honesty Policy” of Saint Joseph’s University will be
enforced. The text of the full policy can be found in the Student Handbook.

Important Notes
- Changes to the syllabus, important announcements, and other information will be sent to students
  via e-mail or posted to the course website. E-mail communications will go to students’ SJU e-
  mail accounts. Students may send e-mail messages from other accounts but should check their
  SJU accounts on a regular basis in order to be sure they are not missing important information
  regarding this course.
- All mobile phones and other electronic devices (check with professor for possible exceptions)
  should be turned off or placed in silent mode during class.
- If a student is absent for a class, the student should check with other students in order to obtain
  lecture notes or any other information that was missed. Students should not e-mail the professor,
  simply asking to be told what happened during that class session. Important items that require
  contact with the professor, such as assignments that were not turned in due to an absence, should
  be discussed in person if at all possible.

Course Schedule

JSB = The Jewish Study Bible

Week 1 / Aug. 31 – Sept. 4
Topic: Introduction to the Course / Historical Overview / Historical-Critical Methodology
Assignments:
- For Wednesday
  - Read: Genesis 1:1 through 2:4a; and Genesis 2:4b through 2:25
  - Preparation Assignment: record a list of events for each of these two sections; identify
    and record 5 similarities and 5 differences between the sections; write one paragraph
    attempting to explain the reason(s) for the differences that you identified
- For Friday
  - Read: “Historical Overview” notes on course website
  - Read: JSB 2084-2096
Week 2 / Sept. 8 – Sept. 11

**Topic:** Issues of Textual Transmission / Primeval Myths

**Assignments:**
- For Wednesday
  - *Read:* Genesis 3:1 through 8:22
  - *Preparation Assignment:* most scholars believe that the flood story consists of two separate flood stories woven together; make a list of clues that indicate there might be two different stories; identify which sections you believe go with one story and which sections you believe go with the other
- For Friday
  - *Read:* JSB 2067-2072

Week 3 / Sept. 14 – Sept. 18

**Topic:** Torah, part I – Ancestral Legends and Traditions

**Assignments:**
- For Wednesday
  - *Read:* JSB 1-11; Genesis 12, 15-17, 21-22, 25, 27, 29, 34-35
- For Friday
  - *Read:* Genesis 37-45

Week 4 / Sept. 21 – Sept. 25

**Topic:** Torah, part II – The Exodus and Wilderness Traditions

**Assignments:**
- For Monday
  - *Read:* Class handout from J. Baden, “Case Study: The Sale of Joseph,” pp. 1-16
  - Be prepared to discuss at least two specific *strengths* and at least one specific *weakness* of Baden’s arguments in the assigned reading.
- For Wednesday
  - *Read:* JSB 102-107; Exodus 1-3, 5-9, 12, 14-16
- For Friday
  - *Read:* JSB 281-284; Numbers 12-14
  - *Preparation Assignment:* What is puzzling about the encounters that Moses has with Yahweh in Exodus 3 and 6? I am specifically referring to the way that the name “Yahweh” is introduced to Moses in both chapters. Use the internet or other research tools to discover some possible explanations for how the name is used in these stories. Summarize in bullet-point format an explanation for each text. Please type your assignments and be prepared to hand them in.

Week 5 / Sept. 28 – Oct. 2

**Topic:** Torah, part III – Sinai, Covenant, and Law

**Assignments:**
- For Monday
  - *Read:* Exodus 19-24; JSB 203-206; Leviticus 17-19
- For Wednesday
  - *Read:* JSB 356-363; Deuteronomy 19-25
  - *Read:* Class handout from Matthews & Benjamin, *Old Testament Parallels,* pp. 101-123
  - *Preparation Assignment:* Identify what you believe are two parallels (correspondences) between laws in the Bible and laws from other ANE texts. Write (please type) a total of two paragraphs (one paragraph for each parallel) explaining how the laws (those from the Bible and those from other ANE texts) are similar and why you think that is the case.
Week 6 / Oct. 5 – Oct. 9

**Topic:** Review / Nevi’im, part I – The Deuteronomistic History / Conquest Traditions

**Assignments:**
- **Due Monday**
  - Essay #1 / choose from essay topics a), b), d), or e)
- For Wednesday
  - *Read:* the “Deuteronomistic History” notes on course website
  - *Read:* JSB 451-455 and 462-464
- For Friday
  - *Read:* Joshua 1-3, 6-12, 22-24

Week 7 / Oct. 12 – Oct. 16

**Topic:** Nevi’im, part II – Traditions in Competition

**Assignments:**
- **Exam on Monday**
  - Midterm exam on Monday, Oct. 12
- For Wednesday
  - *Read:* JSB 508-510; Judges 1-5
- For Friday
  - *Read:* Judges 11-16, 19-21
  - Be prepared to discuss the point of the story in Judges 19-21. At one level, it is about kingship; does it appear to be pro-kingship or anti-kingship? Why?

Week 8 / Oct. 21 – Oct. 23 (Fall Break on Oct. 19-20)

**Topic:** Nevi’im, part III – Propaganda and Stories of the “United Kingdom”

**Assignments:**
- For Wednesday
  - *Read:* JSB 558-561; 1 Samuel 1-3, 8-11, 16-17, 24-26
- For Friday
  - *Read:* 2 Samuel 1, 5, 7, 11-13, 15, 18-19; 1 Kings 1-3

Week 9 / Oct. 26 – Oct. 30

**Topic:** Nevi’im, part IV – The Divided Kingdom / The Minimalist Debate

**Assignments:**
- For Monday
  - **Preparation Assignment:** (1) Access the ATLA Database and the WorldCat Database. (2) Find one article by a SJU Theology professor in ATLA; record title (and other publication information) and the ATLA Accession Number (starts with ATLA). (3) Find one book published by a SJU Theology professor in WorldCat; record title (and other publication information) and the WorldCat Accession Number (starts with OCLC).
- For Wednesday
  - *Read:* JSB 668-671; 1 Kings 9-12, 15-18
  - *Read:* Class handout from H. Shanks, “The Biblical Minimalists” (in the Biblical Archaeology Society archives, available through the library’s e-resources)
  - **Preparation Assignment:** Type up two paragraphs describing at least one strength of the minimalist argument and at least one weakness of the minimalist argument.
- **Due Friday**
  - *Submit:* A bibliography of 5 items (at least 1 book, 1 article, and 1 essay) related to a biblical studies theme. Use the ATLA Database and WorldCat. For ideas on themes and instructions regarding formatting, see the course website. (Worth 10 quiz points.)
Week 10 / Nov. 2 – Nov. 6  
**Topic:** Nevi’im, part V – The Demise of Israel and Judah / The “Latter” Prophets  
**Assignments:**  
- For Wednesday  
  - *Read:* 2 Kings 3, 5-6, 9-10, 14-15, 18-21, 24-25  
- For Friday  
  - *Read:* Class handout from S. Harris, *Understanding the Bible*, pp. 155-161  
  - *Read:* JSB 455-461, 1139-1144; Hosea 1-3, 9-11

Week 11 / Nov. 9 – Nov. 13  
**Topic:** Nevi’im, part V – Pre-Exilic and Exilic Writings in the Latter Prophets  
**Assignments:**  
- For Monday  
  - *Read:* JSB 1176-1177; Amos 1-6; JSB 780-784; Isaiah 1, 6-11  
  - Try to set aside what you may have heard previously about Isaiah 7:14. What do you think the statement in this verse meant in its original historical context? Two other children with unusual names are mentioned in nearby verses (7:3 and 8:1-4). What purpose do they serve in the situation described in chapters 7 and 8?  
- For Wednesday  
  - *Read* JSB 1042-1045; Ezekiel 1-4, 8-10, 16, 37; Isaiah 40, 45, 53

Week 12 / Nov. 16 – Nov. 20  
**Topic:** Kethuvim, part I – Introduction to the Writings / Psalms and Proverbs  
**Assignments:**  
- For Monday  
  - *Read:* JSB 1198-1199; Jonah 1-4; JSB 1243-1244; Haggai 1-2  
  - How is the character Jonah portrayed in the book of Jonah? Is he the hero or the villain? What is the point of chapter 4 in the overall portrayal of the character? Be prepared to discuss possible answers to these questions.  
- For Wednesday  
  - *Read* JSB 1275-1284; Psalms 1, 8, 19, 23, 105, 143; JSB 1447-1449; Proverbs 15-16, 19, 22

Week 13 / Nov. 23 – Nov. 27  
**Due Monday**  
- Essay #2 / choose from essay topics a), b), c), d), or e). The topic must be different from the topic that the student chose for his/her first essay. *Please bring a printed copy of your essay to the Theology Department office (Bellarmine 218) and place it in the box marked for THE 1501 (Wells) essays.*

NO CLASS: Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting and Thanksgiving Break

Week 14 / Apr. 14 – Apr. 18  
**Topic:** Kethuvim, part II – The Questioning of Orthodoxy  
**Assignments:**  
- For Wednesday  
  - *Read:* JSB 1499-1505; Job 1-2, 8-9, 15-16, 31, 38-42  
  - *Read:* Class handout from R. Murphy (*Responses to 101 Questions on the Psalms and Other Writings*), pp. 41-58
• For Friday
  – Read: JSB 1603-1606; Ecclesiastes 1-12
  – Read: Class handout from R. Murphy (Responses to 101 Questions on the Psalms and Other Writings), pp. 69-86

Week 15 / Dec. 7 – Dec. 11
**Topic:** Kethuvim, part III – Post-Exilic History and Lore
**Assignments:**
• For Monday
  – Read JSB 1623-1625; Esther 1-10
  – Some scholars have suggested that the book of Esther fits the genre of comedy. How do you think the story in Esther could be interpreted in this way? Be prepared to discuss possible answers to this question.
• For Wednesday
  – Read: JSB 1640-1642; Daniel 3, 10-12