THE 1501 – The Hebrew Bible
Saint Joseph’s University / Spring 2010
M, W, F: 9:00-9:50
Course website on Blackboard

Professor
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- Office hours: Monday and Wednesday 10:00 – 11:30
- 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
- To engage the major viewpoints of current scholarship on the writings that comprise the Hebrew Bible
- To understand the broad contours of the writing, editing, and copying processes that produced and preserved the texts of the Hebrew Bible
- To gain exposure to the cultures, history, and literature of the ancient Near East
- To develop the ability to analyze critically primary and secondary sources

Assessment: Students’ degree of attainment of these objectives will be assessed by means of a variety of assignments (discussed in more detail in the section below). The first objective (a critical understanding of the content of the Hebrew Bible) will be assessed throughout the course by means of quizzes over assigned reading, both exams (the midterm and the final), and the websites that students will construct as part of small groups. The websites should demonstrate broad coverage of content as well as the use of historical-critical methodology in the treatment of that content. The second objective (engaging current scholarship) will be assessed primarily by targeted questions on both exams and by how well students incorporate such scholarship into the content of their websites. The third objective (understanding how the texts came to be as we have them today) will be assessed by a specific essay question on the midterm exam and by evaluating to what degree an awareness of these processes is apparent in the discussions on the websites. The fourth objective (learning about the ancient Near East) will be assessed on an on-going basis through quizzes and specific questions on both exams. Any ancient Near Eastern background information that students incorporate into their websites in a meaningful way will also be helpful in this regard. Finally, the fifth objective (critical analysis of primary and secondary sources) will be assessed primarily by the analyses of both types of sources that students post to their websites.
**Requirements, Assignments, and Grading**

*Preparation Assignments.* Preparation assignments will be graded on a pass-fail basis. See the course schedule 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 projects, 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.

*Websites (30% of course grade).* Students will be divided into groups of three or four for this assignment. Each group will be responsible for constructing a website that will cover important material learned during the semester. The precise content and format of the site will be determined by each group. In addition to written discussions of significant topics, students may include other items such as reviews of other relevant websites, video or audio interviews, survey results, book reviews, charts, presentations, maps, and works of art. Each website will be graded at the midpoint and the end of the semester. More details on how to complete this assignment will be forthcoming.

*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.

**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.

- 90-99 .............. A
- 80-89 .............. B
- 70-79 .............. C
- 60-69 .............. D
- 0-60 .............. F

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

D  difficulty in comprehension of material, little analysis, very little synthesis, infrequent 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. Students must complete the Extended-Time Request Form, obtain the professor’s approval, and submit the form to Services for Students with Disabilities a minimum of 3 days prior to the date of the scheduled exam. Failure to follow these procedures could result in a denial of the request.

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.

- 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.

- The five best ways to ruin your class participation grade
  - Write, read, send, and/or receive text messages during class.
  - Allow your mobile electronic device to ring, vibrate, or make other noises during class.
  - Speak while another student is contributing a comment to class discussion.
  - Leave the classroom on a regular basis while class is in session.
  - Participate unenthusiastically in small-group discussions and activities.
Course Schedule

JSB = The Jewish Study Bible  
RANE = Readings from the Ancient Near East

Week 1 / Jan. 19 – Jan. 22  
**Topic**: Introduction to the Course / Historical Overview of Israel in the Iron Age  
**Assignments**:  
- For Friday  
  - *Read*: JSB 2048-2062, “Historical and Geographical Background to the Bible”  
  - *Read*: “Did David and Solomon Exist” by Eric H. Cline (on course website)

Week 2 / Jan. 25 – Jan. 29  
**Topic**: Languages, Manuscripts, and the Modern Study of the Bible  
**Assignments**:  
- For Monday  
  - *Read*: JSB 2062-2067 “Languages of the Bible”; JSB 2067-2072 “Textual Criticism of the Bible”  
- For Wednesday  
  - *Read*: JSB 2021-2041 “The Religion of the Bible”  
- For Friday  

Week 3 / Feb. 1 – Feb. 5  
**Topic**: Torah, part I – Primeval Myths / Ancestral Legends and Traditions  
**Assignments**:  
- For Monday  
  - *Read*: JSB 1-11  
  - *Read*: Genesis 1:1 through 2:4a; and Genesis 2:4b through 2:25  
  - *Read*: RANE 31-50 “Enuma Elish”  
  - *Preparation Assignment*: type a list of events for each of these two sections; identify and record 5 similarities and 5 differences between the sections; write one paragraph (typed) attempting to explain the reason(s) for the differences that you identified.  
- For Wednesday  
  - *Read*: Genesis 3:1 through 8:22  
  - *Read*: RANE 26-31 (2nd part of the “Epic of Atra-khasis”); 66-70 “Epic of Gilgamesh”  
  - *Preparation Assignment*: type a list of similarities between the biblical flood story and those from Mesopotamia; be prepared to comment on your list in class.  
- For Friday  
  - *Read*: Genesis 12, 15-17, 21-22, 25, 27, 29, 34-35

Week 4 / Feb. 8 – Feb. 12  
**Topic**: Torah, part II – Ancestral Legends and Traditions / The Exodus and Wilderness Traditions  
**Assignments**:  
- For Monday  
  - *Read*: Genesis 37-45  
  - 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
  – **Read:** RANE 75-76 “Autobiography of Sargon”; 88-95 “Legend of King Kirta”

• 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 / Feb. 15 – Feb. 19**

**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:** RANE 104-117 “Law Codes”
  – **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.

• For Friday
  – Group work on websites

**Week 6 / Feb. 22 – Feb. 26**

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

**Assignments:**

• For Monday
  – Group work on websites

• For Wednesday
  – **Read:** “Deuteronomistic History” notes on course website
  – **Read:** JSB 451-455 and 462-464

• For Friday
  – **Read:** Joshua 1-3, 6-12, 22-24
  – **Read:** RANE 122-127 “Ritual of the Substitute King” / “Instructions for Cultic Officials”

**Week 7 / March 1 – March 5**

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

**Assignments:**

• **Exam on Monday**
  – Midterm exam on Monday, March 1

• 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 / March 8 – March 12

NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK

Week 9 / March 15 – March 19

**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
  - *Read:* RANE 144-149 (#40 – #44)

Week 10 / March 22 – March 26

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

**Assignments:**
- **Special lecture on Monday**
  - Attend lecture in President’s Lounge by Dr. Laurie Pearce, University of California at Berkeley
- For Wednesday
  - *Read:* JSB 668-671; 1 Kings 9-12, 15-18
  - **Preparation Assignment:** Type up two paragraphs describing at least one strength of the minimalist argument and at least one weakness of the minimalist argument.
- For Friday
  - *Read:* RANE 160-165 (#50 – #54)

Week 11 / March 29 – April 1 (Easter break on Friday, April 2)

**Topic:** Nevi’im, part V – The Demise of Israel and Judah / The “Latter” Prophets

**Assignments:**
- For Monday
  - *Read:* 2 Kings 3, 5-6, 9-10, 14-15, 18-21, 24-25
- For Wednesday
  - *Read:* Class handout from S. Harris, *Understanding the Bible*, pp. 155-161
  - *Read:* JSB 455-461, 1139-1144; Hosea 1-3, 9-11

Week 12 / April 6 – April 9 (Easter break on Monday, April 5)

**Topic:** Nevi’im, part VI – Pre-Exilic and Exilic Writings in the Latter Prophets

**Assignments:**
- For Wednesday
  - *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 Friday
  - *Read:* JSB 1042-1045; Ezekiel 1-4, 8-10, 16, 37; Isaiah 40, 45, 53
  - *Read:* RANE 207-212 (#79 – #82); 218-221 “Divination and Incantation Texts”
Week 13 / April 12 – April 16
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
  - Read: RANE 182-191 (#66 – #70)
- For Friday
  - Group work on websites

Week 14 / April 19 – April 23
Topic: Kethuvim, part II – The Questioning of Orthodoxy
Assignments:
- For Monday
  - Group work on websites
- For Wednesday
  - Read: JSB 1499-1505; Job 1-2, 8-9, 15-16, 31, 38-42
  - Read: 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: R. Murphy, Responses to 101 Questions on the Psalms and Other Writings, pp. 69-86

Week 15 / April 26 – April 30
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