REL/THE 211 – The Hebrew Bible
Saint Joseph’s University
Department of Theology and Religious Studies
Spring 2012 / M, W, F 9:00 – 9:50 a.m. and 10:00–10:50 a.m.
Course website on Blackboard

Professor
- Dr. Bruce Wells / Bellarmine 208 / office phone: 610-660-1399 / bwells@sju.edu
- Office hours: Monday and Wednesday 11:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Textbooks

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
1. To obtain a critical understanding of the content of the Hebrew Bible and what it reveals about the religion of ancient Israel and Judah
2. To engage the major viewpoints of current scholarship on biblical texts and on the historical, political, and cultural contexts in which those texts were written and compiled
3. To understand the broad contours of the writing, editing, and copying processes that produced and preserved the texts of the Hebrew Bible
4. To gain exposure to the cultures, history, and literature of the ancient Near East and the role they play in providing insight into the world of the biblical authors
5. To express ideas about the Hebrew Bible in a coherent, interesting, and persuasive manner

Assessment: Students’ degree of attainment of these objectives will be evaluated through a variety of assignments (discussed in more detail in the section below). First, all of the objectives will be assessed throughout the semester based on students’ performance in class, which will include the answers they give to direct questions, the comments and questions that they offer, and the contributions they make to small-group and whole-class discussions. Second, specific criteria that relate to the course objectives will be used to grade the essays (see “Grading Criteria for Papers” on the course’s website). The criteria “Critical Comprehension” and “Originality and Perceptiveness” relate directly the first four objectives. The criteria “Focus and Organization” and “Style and Conventions” relate directly to the fifth. Third, all questions on the midterm and final examinations will be categorized according to which course objective they address and will be ranked according to level of difficulty (levels will be based on those in the scale of expertise associated with the “Grading Rubric” below). Thus, students will receive grades according to how thoroughly they have achieved each objective and to what degree of difficulty they have achieved each objective.

Requirements, Assignments, and Grading
Preparation Papers. These are short papers that will be graded on a pass/fail basis. They must be typed and printed. 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.
Class Participation (10% of course grade). Students are expected to do all reading, to contribute regularly to discussions in class, and to participate cooperatively in small-group discussions and/or projects. Students should be prepared to answer questions in class about assigned readings and to offer questions and comments of their own.

Online Reading Quizzes (10% of course grade). For most reading assignments, students will complete a quiz (more in the nature of a reading report) posted to the course’s Blackboard site. These quizzes must be completed prior to the class session when they are due.

Essays (35% of course grade). Students will submit two 3-5 page essays (900-1500 words) during the semester. The first is worth 15% of a student’s overall course grade, the second 20%. In lieu of the second essay, students may do one 8-10 minute in-class presentation. All late essays will be discounted by 2 points per calendar day. The essays (as well as any presentations) will be graded according to the following criteria (for further details, see “Grading Criteria for Papers” on the course website): (1) Critical Comprehension: Does the essay/presentation demonstrate clear understanding of the given topic and critical analysis of key aspects of that topic? (2) Focus and Organization: Does the essay/presentation have a clear thesis with logical arguments to support it? (3) Originality and Perceptiveness: Does the essay/presentation 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) Style and Conventions: Does the essay/presentation use correct grammar and syntax, paragraph and sentence structure, strong and varied use of vocabulary, and a tone and voice appropriate to academic work? The topics for each essay will be announced later.

Midterm and Final Examinations (45% of course grade). The midterm examination will be worth 20% of a student’s final course grade, and the final examination 25%. The questions on both examinations may consist entirely of objective questions, entirely of essay questions, or of a mixture of both. The professor will announce which type will be given in advance of each examination.

Grading Scale
A student’s final course grade will be assigned based on the scale below, which shows percentage points and corresponding letter grades. 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.

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<th>Percentage</th>
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<td>93.33 – 99.99</td>
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<td>90.00 – 93.33</td>
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Grading Rubric. Within the field of academic Hebrew Bible (HB) studies, one can identify different levels of competence and expertise. The scale of expertise below is just one way of doing this. Below the scale, I have listed some of the qualities and actions that describe each level.
beginner/novice (rudimentary knowledge) – has vague notions of the HB’s content; relies on what others have said
high school student (general knowledge) – recalls some HB stories; recognizes names of biblical figures; matches some HB content with correct section of HB
college student (comprehension) – distinguishes between different viewpoints found in HB; explains the cultural and historical context of some HB texts; summarizes basic points of important texts
master’s student (application) – demonstrates the impact of cultural and historical context on HB texts; relates ideas from separate texts and separate societies; applies various critical methodologies to the interpretation of HB texts
Ph.D. student (analysis) – questions scholarly interpretations; contrasts different critical methodologies as they relate to the same or different texts; categorizes HB texts based on the viewpoint expressed in each text
new scholar (synthesis) – combines ideas from different texts or methods to create new understandings; formulates new explanations of textual or historical phenomena; reconstructs possible historical situations behind various texts
established scholar (evaluation) – argues in favor of original ideas; discriminates among new scholarly theories and methods; predicts coming changes and new directions in the field

Students whose performance is judged to rise to the level of “college student (comprehension)”—in terms of achieving course objectives—will typically receive a final course grade in the C range. As for work that attains this level but also goes beyond it, if it displays some characteristics of higher levels, it will receive a grade in the B range; if it contains a number of characteristics of higher-level performance, it will receive a grade in the A range. Work that is largely below that of “college student (comprehension)” will receive D-range grades. More general descriptions of the grades ranges are as follows.

A excellent comprehension of material, insightful analysis, creative synthesis, 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, 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, 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

Services for Students with Disabilities
For those who have or think that they may have a learning, physical, or psychological disability and who would like to request reasonable academic adjustments, you are encouraged to contact Services for Students with Disabilities (Bellarmine Hall, Room G10; 610-660-1774 or 610-660-1620) early in the session/semester. Reasonable accommodations can only be offered to students with current (within 3 years) documentation of the disability and to the extent that such accommodation does not interfere with the essential requirements of a particular course or program.

The Office of Services for Students with Disabilities will do all it can to accommodate qualified students with disabilities. However, there may be times when a disagreement will occur between the student and the university. The student has a right to file a grievance for complaints regarding a requested service or accommodation on the basis of a disability under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and University policies. Questions may be directed to Jim Scott, Director, Services for Students with Disabilities (jscott@sju.edu).

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.

- 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.

- Some comments on classroom comportment. Please do not use phones or other hand-held electronic devices during class. If you wish to use a notebook/laptop/tablet computer during class, you must request permission in writing from the professor and explain how such usage will enhance your learning. You will also be required to sit in the front row of the classroom when using a computer. In general, please do not be disruptive. Please do not leave the classroom on a regular basis while class is in session. Be cooperative. Pay attention. Take copious notes.

Course Schedule

The main course textbook is identified as Carr. The other textbooks are identified as JSB (Jewish Study Bible) and OTP (Old Testament Parallels), respectively. Readings of biblical texts should be done from the JSB and are identified by chapter number(s) and the biblical book in which they occur. **Two important notes:** (1) whenever you are first required to read from a biblical book (e.g., Genesis), you are expected to read the essay in JSB that introduces that book; and (2) whenever a biblical text is assigned, you are expected to read the study notes in the JSB that accompany that text. All other readings are on the course website.

Week 1 / Jan 17 – Jan 20

**Topic:** Introduction to the Course

**Assignments:**

- Friday
  - Read Carr 1-32
  - Preparation Paper #1: Write out two questions that you have about the Hebrew Bible: questions that the Carr reading didn’t answer or questions that the reading raised for you. Also, write one paragraph in which you guess at a possible answer for each question. Do not consult any sources. Use your imagination (but no references to UFOs, please).

Week 2 / Jan 23 – Jan 27

**Topic:** Critical Methodology / Textual and Historical Issues / The Emergence of Israel

**Assignments:**

- Monday
  - Read JSB 2084-2096 “The Modern Study of the Bible”
  - Preparation Paper #2: Using what Carr says on methods as well as the reading for today, write out your own definitions of textual criticism, historical criticism, source criticism, form criticism, redaction criticism, and narrative criticism (literary criticism).

  - Wednesday
    - Read JSB 2048-2062 “Historical and Geographical Background to the Bible”
    - Read JSB 2067-2072 “Textual Criticism of the Bible”
Week 3 / Jan 30 – Feb 3

Topic: The Emergence of the Monarchy / “Empire” in Wisdom and Poetic Texts
Assignments:

- **Monday**
  - *Read* Carr 33-52; Genesis 25, 27-30; Exodus 2, 5-10; Joshua 11; Judges 1, 5
  - *Read* OTP 89-90 “Story of Sargon of Agade”
- **Wednesday**
  - *Read* Carr 53-70; 1 Samuel 8-12, 16; 2 Samuel 7; 1 Kings 1-3; Psalms 2, 21, 110
  - *Preparation Paper #3*: Do exercise on p. 57 of Carr; write out list described there, and write at least one paragraph to answer last question in exercise.
- **Friday**
  - *Read* Carr 71-78
  - *Read* Proverbs 6:20–8:36, 10, 22:17-29; Ecclesiastes 1-3, 12; Song of Songs 1, 4-5, 7

Week 4 / Feb 6 – Feb 10

Topic: “Empire” in Narrative Texts
Assignments:

- **Wednesday**
  - *Read* Carr 79-89; Genesis 1-4, 6-9
  - *Preparation Paper #4*: Many scholars find two different creation stories at the beginning of Genesis. Make a written list of clues/differences to support this idea.
- **Friday**
  - *Read* Carr 91-101 (stop at heading “Ancient Near Eastern Prophecy”)
  - *Read* 1 Kings 12; 2 Kings 14:23-29, 15:17-31, 17:1-6
  - *Read*: OTP 165-184 “Annals” of various kings

Week 5 / Feb 13 – Feb 17

Topic: Narrative and Prophecy in the Northern Kingdom
Assignments:

- **Wednesday**
  - *Read* Genesis 37-40
  - *Read* OTP 65-69 “Stories of Anubis and Bata”
- **Friday**
  - *Read* Carr 101-114; Amos 1-2, 7-9; Hosea 1-2, 11-12
  - *Read*: OTP 341-346 “Mari Letters”

Week 6 / Feb 20 – Feb 24

Topic: Southern Prophecy and the Empire of Assyria
Assignments:

- **Monday**
  - *Read* Isaiah 1-9
  - *Read* OTP 347-354 “Story of Wen-Amun”
  - *Read* Harris reading on the Nevi’im (on course website)
- **Wednesday** – Work on essays
- **Friday** – *First essays due on 2/24; submit through Blackboard*
Week 7 / Feb 27 – Mar 2
Topic: More on Southern Prophecy / Midterm Examination
Assignments:
- Monday
  - Read Carr 115-130
  - Read 2 Kings 18-20; Micah 1-3, 5-6
- Midterm Examination on either Wednesday (2/29) or Friday (3/2)

Week 8 / NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK

Week 9 / Mar 12 – Mar 16
Topic: Torah and the Assyrian and Babylonian Empires
Assignments:
- Wednesday
  - Read 1 Samuel 17; Tov reading on David and Goliath (on course website)
  - Preparation Paper #5: Read Genesis 37:18-36. Scholars believe that this story comes from two sources that were blended together. Write at least two paragraphs explaining why this could be the case, and then make a chart showing which verses or parts of verses likely come from one source and which ones likely come from the other.
- Friday
  - Read Carr 131-152; “Deuteronomistic History” notes on website
  - Read Deuteronomy 6-7, 12; Joshua 23-24; 1 Kings 8; 2 Kings 17, 22-23
  - Read OTP 91-96 “Treaty between Ramesses II and Hattusilis III”

Week 10 / Mar 19 – Mar 23
Topic: Torah and the Assyrian and Babylonian Empires (continued)
Assignments:
- Wednesday
  - Read Exodus 21-22; Deuteronomy 19-25
  - Read OTP 101-130 “Codes” (various law codes/collections)
  - Preparation Paper #6: Identify 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 are similar and why you think such similarities between biblical and ANE texts came to be.
- Friday
  - Read Carr 153-164
  - Read Nahum 3; Zephaniah 1; Jeremiah 1:1–3:5, 7:1-15, 20:7-18, 28, 31:31-34, 36

Week 11 / Mar 26 – Mar 30
Topic: Torah, Prophecy, History, and the Destruction of Jerusalem
Assignments:
- Monday
  - Read Carr 165-173
  - Read 2 Kings 23:26–25:30; Lamentations 1; Isaiah 63:7–64:12
  - Read Deuteronomy 30:1-20; 2 Kings 21:2-16
  - Read OTP 247-255 “Laments for Ur”
- Wednesday
  - Read Carr 174-183; Ezekiel 1-4, 8-10, 16; Isaiah 40, 43-45
- Friday
  - Read Carr 187-195 (stop at heading “The Priestly Source”)
  - Read Genesis 12, 15; Exodus 19-20, 23-24, 32-34

We will review for the midterm exam on Wednesday, and the exam will take place on Friday, March 2nd.
Week 12 / Apr 2 – Apr 6 (No class on Friday, April 6, due to Easter Holiday)

**Topic:** Pentateuch and Exile / Return from Exile

**Assignments:**
- Monday
  - Read Carr 195-206
  - Read Leviticus 1-4, 17-19
- Wednesday
  - Read Carr 207-228
  - Read Nehemiah 1-5, 13
  - Read OTP 210-215 “Elephantine Letters”

Week 13 / Apr 9 – Apr 13 (No class on Monday, April 9, due to Easter Holiday)

**Topic:** Torah, Psalms, and the Rebuilding of Jerusalem

**Assignments:**
- Wednesday
  - Read Numbers 13-14, 22-24; Psalms 1, 8, 13
  - Read OTP 131-133 “Stories of Balaam”
- Friday
  - Read Murphy reading on Psalms

Week 14 / Apr 16 – Apr 20

**Topic:** Other Post-Exilic Literature

**Assignments:**
- Monday – *Second essays due on 4/16; submit through Blackboard*
- Wednesday
  - Read Carr 229-239 (stop at heading “Isa 56:1-8”)
  - Read Haggai 1-2; Zechariah 1, 4; Jonah 1-4
- Friday
  - Read Job 1-5, 38-42
  - Read Murphy reading on Job
  - Read OTP 239-244 “A Sufferer and a Friend in Babylon”

Week 15 / Apr 23 – Apr 27

**Topic:** The Second Temple Period

**Assignments:**
- Wednesday
  - Read Carr 245-263
  - Read Daniel 1, 3, 6
  - Read JSB 2021-2040 “The Religion of the Bible”

Final Exam
- section D01 (the 9 a.m. section): Tuesday, May 1st, 9:00 a.m. (usual classroom)
- section D02 (the 10 a.m. section): Wednesday, May 2nd, 9:00 a.m. (usual classroom)