

HEBREW BIBLE (OLD TESTAMENT)

Jewish Studies 01:563:220

Religion 01:840:201

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Course Description: The main goal of this course is to introduce students to the literature of the Hebrew Bible (known to Jews as simply the ‘Bible’ and to Christians as the ‘Old Testament’). This is accomplished by concentrating on the books of the Torah, the historical material in Joshua through Kings, and selected Prophets. Emphasis is placed on literary, historical, and theological matters. In addition, special use is made of the numerous archaeological discoveries that have advanced our knowledge of ancient Israel. As such, the Bible is studied against the backdrop of ancient Near Eastern literature, history, religion, mythology, and law.

Learning Goal: This course meets the following SAS Learning Goal:

Area of Inquiry / Arts and Humanities / goal (p):

(p) Analyze arts and/or literatures in themselves and in relation to specific histories, values, languages, cultures, and technologies.

Assessment Method:

(forthcoming)

Readings: Students are expected to read the assigned material, both from the textbooks and from the Sakai website, and to bring the Course Packet (available at Sakai) to class every day. I also encourage class participation as much as possible. I do not take attendance, but please note the following. The class lectures frequently present material not covered in the readings, and (one hardly needs to add) this material will be included on the exams.

Grading:

- Reflection paper, 3-5 pages (15%)
- Midterm exam (35%)
- Final exam (40%)
- Two quizzes (5% each, or 10% total)

In addition to the above, the course grade can be adjusted slightly based on class participation, progress, and other subjective factors.

Textbooks:

Adele Berlin and Marc Z. Brettler, eds, *The Jewish Study Bible* (Oxford University Press) – ISBN 9780195297546 / \$28.68

Cyrus H. Gordon and Gary A. Rendsburg, *The Bible and the Ancient Near East* (W. W. Norton) – ISBN 0393316890 / \$11.61

Elliott Rabin, *Understanding the Hebrew Bible* (Ktav) – ISBN 0881258717 / \$17.55

Course Packet (available at Sakai – please print and bind)

(Note: The books are available at the Rutgers University Bookstore. Prices listed are from www.bn.com).

Additional Comments: Lateness is disruptive to the instructor, to the students, and to the overall rhythm of the class. Please come to class on time.

If you miss class, please make sure to get the notes from someone. If there is something in the notes that you do not understand, feel free to come see me during office hours for further clarification.

While I do not take attendance (as noted above), you may want to inform me ahead of time if you know that you will miss class, especially if there will be some (good) reason for missing two or more classes in a row. Overall responsibility for the course material, however, remains yours at all times.

Supplemental Online Course: In addition to the above requirements, you also are required to complete my online mini-course “The Bible and History,” offered via the Bildner Center for the Study of Jewish Life, available online at <http://jewishstudies.rutgers.edu> – and then click on the Online Study tab. The program is free, but you must register.

Academic Integrity: Cheating of any kind—including plagiarism on your papers, copying on the exams, etc.—will not be tolerated. Pure and simple.

CLASS SCHEDULE

My teaching style is very much a freestyle approach. Which is to say, I do not like to be pegged down to a specific topic to be covered on a specific date or during a specific week. At the same time, however, I recognize the need to progress systematically through the material, especially as this course covers about 1000 years of history and literary productivity.

What follows, accordingly, is a presentation of the topics to be covered and the requisite readings, though I do not indicate the specific dates or weeks during which we will cover each topic. I promise to give you ample warning when we are moving on to the next topic. I certainly do not want you to fall behind in your readings.

Conveniently, however, there are 14 topics listed below, thus approximating the number of weeks in the semester.

Note that G-R = Gordon and Rendsburg, *The Bible and the Ancient Near East*; and that *JSB* = Berlin and Brettler, eds., *The Jewish Study Bible*, with particular reference to the very informative essays collected at the back of the volume.

I. Introductory Material

G-R 17-108

Rabin, ch. 1

Moshe Weinfeld, “Israelite Religion” (Sakai)

Gary Rendsburg, “An Essay on Israelite Religion” (Sakai)

Stephen Geller, “The Religion of the Bible,” *JSB*, 2021-40.

II. Patriarchs

G-R 109-130

Rabin, ch. 2

Robert Kawashima, "Why I Read the Bible" (Sakai)

Adele Berlin and Marc Brettler, "Historical and Geographical Background to the Bible," *JSB*, 2048-62.

III. Joseph

G-R, pp. 131-141

Rabin, ch. 5

Dane Gordon, "The Composition of the Pentateuch" (Sakai)

Gary Rendsburg, "The JEDP Theory" (Sakai)

IV. Exodus

G-R, pp. 141-152

Rabin, ch. 4

Gary Rendsburg, "The Early History of Israel" (Sakai)

Gary Rendsburg, "The Date of the Exodus and the Conquest/Settlement: The Case for the 1100's" (Sakai)

Gary Rendsburg, "The Internal Consistency and Historical Reliability of the Biblical Genealogies" (Sakai)

V. Israelite Law

G-R, pp. 153-164

Rabin, ch. 3

VI. Israelite Cult

G-R, pp. 164-167

Jonathan Klawans, "Concepts of Purity in the Bible," *JSB*, 2041-47.

Arthur Quinn, "The Miracle Harvest" (Sakai)

Kevin Phillips, "An Anxious Fourth" (Sakai)

New York Times, "A Christmas Reversal" (Sakai)

VII. Conquest/Settlement

G-R, pp. 168-182

Abraham Malamat, "Israelite Conduct of War in the Conquest of Canaan According to the Biblical Tradition" (Sakai)

Israel Finkelstein, "The Israelite Settlement" (Sakai)

Israel Finkelstein, "Summary" (Sakai)

B. S. J. Isserlin, "The Israelite Conquest of Canaan" (Sakai)

Anson Rainey, "BAR Article" (= "The 'Consensus Theory' Is Dead"
(Sakai)
Gary Rendsburg, "The Twelve Tribes" (Sakai)

VIII. Move to Monarchy

G-R, pp. 183-192

IX. United Kingdom

G-R, pp. 193-217

Moment Magazine, "Uncovering King David's Palace" (Sakai)

Eilat Mazar, "Did I Find King David's Palace" (Sakai)

Gary Rendsburg, "Reading David in Genesis" (Sakai)

X. Divided Kingdom I

G-R, pp. 218-236

XI. Divided Kingdom II (includes Amos, Hosea)

G-R, pp. 237-256

Rabin, ch. 6

Adele Berlin, "Reading Biblical Poetry," *JSB*, 2097-2104

Y. Kaufman, "Prophecy" (= "The Literature and the Age") (Sakai)

XII. Judah Alone (includes Isaiah, Micah, Jeremiah)

G-R, pp. 257-284

XIII. Exile and Return (includes Ezekiel, Second Isaiah)

G-R, pp. 285-297

XIV. End of the Biblical Period

G-R, pp. 298-314

Marc Brettler, "The Canonization of the Bible," *JSB*, 2072-77.