

**INTRODUCTION TO THE BIBLE I:  
TORAH AND PROSE**

**\* \* \* DRAFT SYLLABUS \* \* \***

**FALL 2021**

Miller Hall, room 115

Tues / Thurs, 1:00 – 2:20

Department of Religion (01:840:201)

Department of Jewish Studies (01:563:220)

Prof. Gary A Rendsburg

Department of Jewish Studies

12 College Avenue, room 203

848-932-1628 | [grends@rutgers.edu](mailto:grends@rutgers.edu)

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

This is the first course of a two-semester sequence. The main goal is to introduce students to the literature of the Bible – by which is meant the Bible as defined by the Jewish canon, what Christians refer to as the Old Testament. This course focuses on the early biblical books, that is, the Torah or Pentateuch, plus Joshua-Judges-Samuel, covering the period of Israel's origins through the reign of King David. Emphasis is placed on literary, historical, and theological matters. 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.

**TEXTBOOKS:** (see images at the bottom of p. 7)

Adele Berlin and Marc Brettler, eds. *The Jewish Study Bible*, 2nd edition

- Oxford University Press / ISBN: 9780199978465
- hardcover – B&N price: \$40.50

John Merrill and Hershel Shanks, eds., *Ancient Israel*, 4th edition

- to be released in May 2021 / not yet listed at Barnes & Noble
- see here for information:  
<https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/ancient-israel-fourth-ed/>
- paperback – \$19.95 (discounted)
- pdf – \$11.95
- epub – \$11.95

**COURSE PACKET:**

The extensive Course Packet is available for download via the Canvas course website.

**LEARNING GOALS:**

**HST-1.** Explain the development of some aspect of a society or culture over time.

**AHp.** Analyze arts and/or literatures in themselves and in relation to specific histories, values, languages, cultures, and technologies.

## **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:**

Please note the University's academic integrity policy:

<http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-at-rutgers>

I personally endorse the policy and enforce its guidelines. In short, no cheating of any sort will be tolerated in my course; and such actions are grounds for probation and potential dismissal from the University.

## **ASSESSMENTS AND GRADING:**

There are three exams in the course, each covering one-third of the course and each worth 30% of the final grade, for a total of 90% of your grade.

The exact dates for the exams will be announced early in the semester.

The final exam is not cumulative.

The remaining 10% of your grade is based on class participation, attendance, progress, engagement with the material, etc.

## **ATTENDANCE:**

A major portion of the educational experience in this course takes place in the classroom. Note well: you will be at a great disadvantage if you are not present in class on a regular basis.

If you expect to miss a class session, kindly use the University self-reporting system for absences: <https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/> An email is automatically sent to me to apprise me of your absence.

In addition, please make every effort to arrive in time for the start of class. Late arrival is disruptive to the class discussion and in general disrespectful to me and your classmates.

**SCHEDULING NOTE:**

Class will not be held on the following dates, due to the Jewish holidays:

- Tuesday, Sept 7 – Rosh HaShana
- Thursday, Sept 16 – Yom Kippur
- Tuesday, Sept 21 – Sukkot
- Tuesday, Sept 28 – Shemini ‘Atzeret

In lieu of these missed sessions, the course material will be presented via recorded video lectures.

We also will use this array of Jewish holidays, coming in quick succession near the beginning of the semester, as a teachable moment – which is to say, we will devote an entire unit to the calendar of ancient Israel (continued until the present day within Judaism), the festivals outlined in the Torah, and more.

**COURSE SCHEDULE:**

See next three pages for a list of topics, readings, etc.

---

## **COURSE SCHEDULE:**

Specific dates or weeks are not provided here, but regular announcements will be made to apprise you when to read which sections below.

### Introduction:

- M. Z. Brettler, "Torah: Introduction," *JSB*, pp. 1-6
- Jack Sasson, "On the Bible and the Ancient Near East," *JSB*, pp. 2137-2144

### Genesis 1-11: The Primeval History

- Jon D. Levenson, "Genesis," *JSB*, pp. 7-10
- 01 Gary Rendsburg, "Reading Creation" (Canvas)

### The Religion of Ancient Israel

- 02 Moshe Weinfeld, "Israelite Religion" (Canvas)
- 03 Gary Rendsburg, "An Essay on Israelite Religion" (Canvas)
- 04 James Allen, "The [Egyptian] Gods" (Canvas)
- Stephen Geller, "The Religions of the Bible," *JSB*, pp. 1978-1997

### Genesis 12-50: The Patriarchs

- Gary A. Rendsburg, "The Ancestral Narratives," *Ancient Israel*, pp. 1-15
- Yair Zakovitch, "Reading Biblical Narrative," *JSB*, pp. 2191-2201
- 05 Dane Gordon, "Composition of the Pentateuch" (Canvas)
- 06 Gary Rendsburg, "JEDP Theory" (Canvas)
- 07 Gary Rendsburg, "A Challenge to the Documentary Hypothesis" (Canvas)
- 08 Robert Alter, "A Literary Approach to the Bible" (Canvas)
- 09 Robert Kawashima, "Why I Read the Bible" (Canvas)

### Exodus 1-15: The Exodus Narrative

- Manfred Bietak and Gary A. Rendsburg, "Egypt and the Exodus," *Ancient Israel*, pp. 17-58
- Jeffrey H. Tigay, "Exodus," *JSB*, pp. 95-99

- 10 Gary Rendsburg, "Israelite Origins" (Canvas)
- 11 Gary Rendsburg, "The Twelve Tribes" (Canvas)
- 12 Gary Rendsburg, "Moses as Equal to Pharoah" (Canvas)
- 13 Gary Rendsburg, "Moses the Magician" (Canvas)

#### Exodus 20 – Numbers 10: Revelation at Sinai

- Baruch Schwartz, "Leviticus," *JSB*, pp. 193-195
- Jonathan Klawans, "Concepts of Purity in the Bible," *JSB*, pp. 1998-2004
- Sacha Stern, "Biblical Calendars," *JSB*, pp. 2021-2025
- Baruch Levine, "Biblical Festival and Fast Days," *JSB*, pp. 2025-2034
- Shalom Holtz, "Reading Biblical Law," *JSB*, pp. 2201-2207
- Holiday Essays – four essays (Canvas)
- 14 Gary Rendsburg, "The Two Screens" (Canvas)
- 15 Gary Rendsburg, "The Vegetarian Ideal in the Bible" (Canvas)

#### Numbers 11-36: Wandering in Sinai

- 16 Jacob Milgrom, "Tzitzit" (Canvas)

#### Deuteronomy

- Bernard Levenson, "Deuteronomy," *JSB*, pp. 339-345

#### Joshua and Judges

- Gary A. Rendsburg, "The Emergence of Israel in Land of Canaan," *Ancient Israel*, pp. 59-91
- Aren Maeir, "Archaeology and the Hebrew Bible," *JSB*, pp. 2124-2137

#### Samuel – Saul – David – Solomon

- André Lemaire, "The Early Monarchy," *Ancient Israel*, pp. 93-132
- 17 Eilat Mazar, "Did I Find King David's Palace" (Canvas)
- 18 Gary Rendsburg, "The Genesis of the Bible" (Canvas)

## Canonization of the Bible

- Marc Brettler, "Canonization of the Bible," *JSB*, pp. 2153-2158
- 19 William Schniedewind, "Origins of the Written Bible" (Canvas)

## Transmission of the Biblical Text

- Jordan Penkower, "The Development of the Masoretic Bible," *JSB*, pp. 2159-2165

