



St. Andrew's College

**BA 110 Introduction to the Jewish Bible**

Day & Time: Tuesday & Thursday, 1:30-2:50

Instructor: Christine Mitchell Office hours: by appointment

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Room: 322

### Course Description:

A study of the whole Jewish Bible from the perspective of its formation as a canon of scripture in postexilic Judaism. Identical to RELST 350.3.

### Course Goals:

At the end of this course students should be able to:

1. Recognize and describe different literary features, styles, and genres of biblical texts.
2. Describe the historical, social, and cultural background of the formation of the biblical texts and the biblical canon.
3. Describe and evaluate the contributions of some major figures in biblical scholarship.
4. Perform basic exegesis.

### Textbooks:

A complete Hebrew Bible/Old Testament. I prefer the NRSV, but the RSV, the New JPS Tanakh, the NASB, and the NIV are all acceptable. Please check with me if you have another version you want to use.

Gravett, Sandra, Karla Bombach, F.V. Greifenhagen, and Donald Polaski. An Introduction to the Hebrew Bible: A Thematic Approach. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008. (Available from Life Lines Book Room)

### Activities:

You will be invited to participate in the following activities. These activities are designed to further your progress towards the course goals. Thus you will need to satisfactorily complete all activities in order for me to evaluate the final assignment.

- Attendance and participation in class. Class time will be spent in lectures, demonstrations, and discussions that will further your understanding of the course material and your skills in exegesis. **You will commit to missing no more than four classes during the semester.**
- Readings from the textbook and other sources that may occasionally be distributed. You will be invited to think about questions that will be discussed in the readings. **Periodically throughout the course you will be asked to submit an answer sheet** with: a) the answer to the question I will pose, and b) one question or issue that you are still struggling with.
- Readings from the Bible. Since the textbook readings and class discussions will be focused around readings from the Bible, you will need to carefully read the biblical texts that are assigned.

- Library demonstration and assignment. Early in the semester we will be visiting the library and given a demonstration by the STU Librarian. After that class, you will be given a library assignment (details below) that will give you a chance to practice using the STU libraries.
- Reading the Text assignment. After a few weeks of practicing the skills of exegesis in class you will be given an assignment (details below) that will give you an opportunity to work with a portion of text on your own.
- Artifact assignment. In order to give you further practice in using the libraries and to deepen your understanding of the cultural background to the Bible, you will be given an assignment (details below) that will allow you to work on researching some of the archaeological material that has been found in the eastern Mediterranean area.
- Final Exegesis assignment. At the end of the course you will be given the opportunity to demonstrate what you have learned in the course about the Bible's background, and what you have learned about exegesis. This assignment (details below) is the culmination of the course.

Note: **I only accept assignments submitted in hard copy.** You should also keep a hard copy for yourself in case of problems. You can hand in assignments in person, drop in my mailbox in the General Office, or mail to me at the College.

I am open to any of the final three assignments being presented in a format other than a traditional written paper, although at least one of the three will need to be submitted in written form. If you wish to submit one or two of these assignments in a non-traditional form (art, music, website, etc.), please see me to make arrangements. You will be asked to submit a bibliography along with the assignment, and the assignment will need to demonstrate understanding and/or use of the ideas found in those works.

Students requiring accommodation for special needs should contact the instructor **and** register with the Disability Services for Students Office at the University of Saskatchewan (Room 60, Place Riel) as soon as possible. I will not grant accommodation without the appropriate form from the DSS.

*The "Library Assignment":*

This assignment is designed to familiarize you with the resources of the STU libraries, and to help you learn how to find and evaluate books and articles relating to biblical studies. First, pick a book of the Hebrew Bible from the lists under "Reading the Text" and "Exegesis" assignments – I suggest one you're thinking of studying for one of those assignments. Find six books and six journal articles/essays that discuss the biblical book. In the assignment, list the twelve items in proper bibliographic form, and for each item describe how you found it and why you included it on your list. I will comment on your choices of material and on your use of bibliographic form. 800-1000 words, **due February 16th.**

*The "Reading the Text Assignment":*

This assignment is designed to give you practice in performing a close reading of the text, that is, the first step of exegesis: the observation of the text. We will discuss the methods further in class. I will comment on your close reading; showing you what you did well, and what you need to pay more attention to. 1600-1800 words plus any necessary bibliography, **due March 16th.**

Pick one of the following passages: Exod 12:1-14, Exod 16:1-30, Num 6:22-27, Josh 24:1-28, Judg 4:1-16, 1 Kgs 19:9-18, Jer 31:1-9, Ezek 36:16-38, Zeph 3:14-20 Prov 8:1-21.

*The “Artifact Assignment”:*

This assignment is designed to give you further practice in using the libraries, and to help you learn more about the social, historical, and cultural background of the Bible. Pick three of the artifacts from the list below, and do some research about them. Describe each one, giving location, date, and significance for understanding the religion of ancient Israel. I will comment on your use of library resources and your understanding of the artifacts. 1000-1200 words plus bibliography (at least three sources for each artifact), **due April 6th**.

Taanach cult stand, Pillar figurines, Ketef Hinnom plaque, Kuntillet Ajrud paintings, Megiddo horned altar, Beer-sheba horned altar, Arad incense altars, Tel Dan altar, Mesha inscription, Khirbet el-Qom inscriptions

*The “Exegesis Assignment”:*

This assignment is designed to assess your learning in this course. You will perform an exegesis, both observation and interpretation, according to the methods we will discuss in class. 3200-3500 words plus bibliography, **due April 29th**. Your grade for the course will be based on your work in this assignment.

Pick one of the following passages: Exod 14:10-31, Num 11:24-30, Josh 3:7-17, 1 Kgs 3:3-15, Jer 20:7-18, Ezek 34:11-31, Amos 5:18-27, Jon 3:10-4:11, Eccl/Qoh 3:1-13, Song 2:8-15.

Grading

The course grade will be the grade on the Exegesis Assignment; all other assignments, including attendance and questions on the readings, must be completed at a Satisfactory level in order to pass the course. Any student who does not achieve a Satisfactory level on any assignment other than the Exegesis must re-do the assignment until a Satisfactory level is achieved. Any student who does not achieve a Satisfactory level on the Exegesis assignment may choose whether to re-do the assignment or take the final grade that was achieved. Students who choose Pass/Fail grading will receive a Pass if all assignments are completed at a Satisfactory level.

I am interested in students learning about the Bible and about interpretation of the Bible. I assume that students are here because they want to learn; even though this is a required course for most programs within the STU, I expect that students want to learn about the Bible as part of their theological education. I use as my basis for grading the University of Saskatchewan grading definitions, which have been adopted as the definitions within the STU. For those students who choose percentage grading, I have determined a numerical grade to correspond with each descriptor:

Descriptor	Criteria	% grade
Exceptional	A superior performance with consistent strong evidence of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a comprehensive, incisive grasp of the subject matter;</li> <li>• an ability to make insightful critical evaluation of the material given;</li> <li>• an exceptional capacity for original, creative and/or logical thinking;</li> <li>• an excellent ability to organize, to analyze, to synthesize, to integrate ideas, and to express thoughts fluently.</li> </ul>	95
Excellent	An excellent performance with strong evidence of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a comprehensive grasp of the subject matter;</li> <li>• an ability to make sound critical evaluation of the material given;</li> <li>• a very good capacity for original, creative and/or logical thinking;</li> <li>• an excellent ability to organize, to analyze, to synthesize, to integrate ideas, and to express thoughts fluently.</li> </ul>	85
Good	A good performance with evidence of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a substantial knowledge of the subject matter;</li> <li>• a good understanding of the relevant issues and a good familiarity with the relevant literature and techniques;</li> <li>• some capacity for original, creative and/or logical thinking;</li> <li>• a good ability to organize, to analyze and to examine the subject material in a critical and constructive manner.</li> </ul>	75
Satisfactory	A generally satisfactory and intellectually adequate performance with evidence of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• an acceptable basic grasp of the subject material;</li> <li>• a fair understanding of the relevant issues;</li> <li>• a general familiarity with the relevant literature and techniques;</li> <li>• an ability to develop solutions to moderately difficult problems related to the subject material;</li> <li>• a moderate ability to examine the material in a critical and analytical manner.</li> </ul>	65
Minimal Pass	A barely acceptable performance with evidence of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a familiarity with the subject material;</li> <li>• some evidence that analytical skills have been developed;</li> <li>• some understanding of relevant issues;</li> <li>• some familiarity with the relevant literature and techniques;</li> <li>• attempts to solve moderately difficult problems related to the subject material and to examine the material in a critical and analytical manner which are only partially successful.</li> </ul>	55
Failure	An unacceptable performance.	40

Course Schedule:

- Jan. 24 Introduction to the course
- Jan. 26 Learning about ways of reading the Hebrew Bible  
Readings: Gravett et al., Introduction, ch. 2; Gen 28, Isa 7-8, Song; Guide to Exegesis
- Jan. 31 A demonstration of the libraries' resources (meet in the St. Andrew's Library)
- Feb. 2 An introduction to the geographical and historical contexts of the Bible  
Readings: Gravett et al., ch. 1
- Feb. 7 Delineating the text for exegesis – Genesis 12  
Reading: Gen 12, 16, 20-21, 23-31, 35, 37-50
- Feb. 9 Identity: Family  
Readings: Gravett et al., chs. 3-4; Exod 1-4, Deut 34
- Feb. 14 Learning about keywords, motifs, themes – Judges 13-16  
Reading: Judg 4-5, 13-16
- Feb. 16 Identity: Gender  
Readings: Gravett et al., ch. 5; Gen 2-3, Ruth, Esth  
**Library Assignment due**
- Feb. 21 No class, Family Day
- Feb. 23 Learning about poetic features – Psalm 38  
Readings: Pss 16, 38, 88
- Feb. 28 St. Andrew's Winter Refresher, no class. Class will be made up with a 3 hour class on March 14
- Mar. 2 Identity: The Body  
Readings: Gravett et al., ch 6; Eccl/Qoh 12, Lev 11, 13, 15, 18, 20-21, Exod 33, Gen 1
- Mar. 7 & 9 Mid-term break, no classes
- Mar. 14 Characters and characterization – 1 Samuel 15  
(1:30-4:20) Reading: 1 Sam 15  
Identity: Ethnicity  
Readings: Gravett et al., ch. 7; Gen 9-11, 15, 17-19, 34, Deut 4-7, 23-24, Judg 1-3, 2 Kgs 3, Ezr 9, Neh 9, 13, Isa 19, 56, Obad

- Mar. 16 Learning about genre – Isaiah 5  
Reading: Is. 1-5  
**“Reading the Text” assignment due**
- Mar. 21 Identity: Class  
Readings: Gravett et al., ch. 8; Exod 21-23, Lev 25, Deut 15-16, 25, 1 Sam 8, 1 Kgs 4-5, 9-10, 17, 2 Kgs 4, Am 1-6, Prov 31, Eccl/Qoh 5:10-6:9, Neh 5
- Mar. 23 Themes, and how to recognize them – 2 Samuel 7  
Reading: 1 Sam. 8-2 Sam. 24, 1 Kgs 1
- Mar. 28 Power: The State  
Readings: Gravett et al., chs. 9-10; 1 Kgs 11-14, 1 Kgs 17-2 Kgs 9, Jer 21-22, 26-29
- Mar. 30 Voice, or, Who Speaks? – Ecclesiastes/Qohelet 1  
Reading: Eccl./Qoh. 1-4
- Apr. 4 Power: Ideology  
Readings: Gravett et al., ch. 11; Exod 19-20, 32-34, Deut 12, 16-17, 28, 30, 1 Kgs 8, Pss. 2, 15, 24, 46, 48, 89, Prov 1, 8-9, Isa 8-9, 37, 45, Jer 7, Dan 1-7, 12, Hag, Zech 4, 6
- Apr. 6 Codes (e.g., purity) – Leviticus 11  
Reading: Lev. 1-16, 21-23  
**Artifact assignment due**
- Apr. 11 Power: Media (meet at the Museum of Antiquities in the College Building)  
Readings: Gravett et al., ch. 12; Exod 28-29, Num 15, 18-19, 1 Kgs 6-7, 2 Kgs 22-23, Ezr 7, Neh 8, Jer 36, Ezek 40-43, Dan 9
- Apr. 13 Who is this Other? – Nahum 1  
Reading: Nah. 1
- Apr. 18 Power: Deity  
Readings: Gravett et al., ch. 13; Ezek 1-3, 16, Hos 1-3
- Apr. 20 Last class  
Exegesis: Synthesis demonstration  
Wrap-up: Job  
Readings: Gravett et al., ch. 14; Job 1-14, 19, 29-31, 38-42
- Apr. 29 No class, but **Exegesis due**