



St. Andrew's College

Winter 2011

**BA 110 Introduction to the Jewish Bible**

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An online course taken through the Blackboard system of the University of Saskatchewan.

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 you will 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.  
(Please order from your favourite bookseller)

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.

- Accessing the course website on Blackboard and participating in the discussion threads. Course modules will present material and demonstrate skills; discussion threads will allow you to further your understanding and practice the skills. You will commit to missing no more than two modules.
- 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. Each module you will be asked to submit via the Blackboard Dropbox a file with: a) the answer to the question I will pose, and b) one question that you are still struggling with.
- Readings from the Bible. Since the textbook readings and module 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. The first module will include working with the STU libraries website. At the end of that module, you will be given a library assignment (details below) that will give you a chance to practice using the STU libraries and other online resources.
- Reading the Text assignment. After a few modules of practicing the skills of exegesis in the exercises and discussion threads 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: **All assignments must be submitted through the Blackboard Dropbox. Do not email them to me.** You should also keep an electronic and hard copy for yourself in case of problems.

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 contact 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 me **and** register with the Disability Services for Students Office at the University of Saskatchewan 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 TBA (after Module 4)**.

*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 the modules. 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 TBA (after Module 7)**.

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 TBA (after Module 10)**.

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 the modules. 3200-3500 words plus bibliography, **due TBA (after Module 12)**. 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

I am interested in students learning about the Bible and about interpretation of the Bible. I assume that students are enrolled because they want to learn the content and skills of the course. **The course grade will be the grade on the Exegesis Assignment; all other assignments must be completed at a Satisfactory level** (see below on the definition of Satisfactory). Students who choose Pass/Fail grading must complete all assignments at a Satisfactory level, including participating in the Blackboard discussion threads. If you wish Pass/Fail grading, you must let me know by **date at the end of Module 2**.

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	%
Exceptional	<p>A superior performance with consistent strong evidence of</p> <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:

- Module 1      Introduction to the course  
Library and online resources
- Module 2      An introduction to the geographical and historical contexts of the Bible  
Learning about ways of reading the Hebrew Bible  
Readings: Gravett et al., Intro., chs. 1-2; Gen 28, Isa 7-8, Song; Guide to Exegesis
- Module 3      Exegesis: delineating the text for exegesis – Genesis 12  
Identity: Family  
Readings: Gravett et al., chs. 3-4; Gen 12, 16, 20-21, 23-31, 35, 37-50, Exod 1-4, Deut 34

- Module 4 Exegesis: learning about keywords, motifs, themes – Judges 13-16  
Identity: Gender  
Readings: Gravett et al., ch. 5; Gen 2-3, Judg 4-5, 13-16, Ruth, Esth
- Module 5 Exegesis: learning about poetic features – Psalm 38  
Identity: The Body  
Readings: Gravett et al., ch 6; Pss 16, 38, 88, Eccl/Qoh 12, Lev 11, 13, 15, 18, 20-21, Exod 33, Gen 1
- Module 6 Exegesis: characters and characterization – 1 Samuel 15  
Identity: Ethnicity  
Readings: Gravett et al., ch. 7; Gen 9-11, 15, 17-19, 34, Deut 4-7, 23-24, Judg 1-3, 1 Sam 15, 2 Kgs 3, Ezr 9, Neh 9, 13, Isa 19, 56, Obad
- Module 7 Exegesis: learning about genre – Isaiah 5  
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, Is. 1-5, Am 1-6, Prov 31, Eccl/Qoh 5:10-6:9, Neh 5
- Module 8 Exegesis: themes, and how to recognize them – 2 Samuel 7  
Power: The State  
Readings: Gravett et al., chs. 9-10; 1 Sam. 8-2 Sam. 24, 1 Kgs 1, 11-14, 1 Kgs 17-2 Kgs 9, Jer 21-22, 26-29
- Module 9 Exegesis: voice, or, Who Speaks? – Ecclesiastes/Qohelet 1  
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, Eccl./Qoh. 1-4, Isa 8-9, 37, 45, Jer 7, Dan 1-7, 12, Hag, Zech 4, 6
- Module 10 Exegesis: codes (e.g., purity) – Leviticus 11  
Power: Media  
Readings: Gravett et al., ch. 12; Exod 28-29, Lev. 1-16, 21-23, Num 15, 18-19, 1 Kgs 6-7, 2 Kgs 22-23, Ezr 7, Neh 8, Jer 36, Ezek 40-43, Dan 9
- Module 11 Exegesis: who is this Other? – Nahum 1  
Power: Deity  
Readings: Gravett et al., ch. 13; Ezek 1-3, 16, Hos 1-3, Nah 1
- Module 12 Exegesis: Synthesis demonstration  
Course wrap-up: Job  
Readings: Gravett et al., ch. 14; Job 1-14, 19, 29-31, 38-42; 1-2 Chr