

Religious Studies 2013: Hebrew Scriptures

Instructor: Dr. Ryan M. Armstrong

OSU Fall 2022



The Psalms Scroll (11QP5) from Cave 11 of the Dead Sea Scrolls

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Class time: Tues/Thurs 4:30–5:45pm

Office Hour: Tues Noon–1:00pm

Course Description: This course is designed as an introduction for students who want to begin studying the Hebrew Bible at an academic level. The method employed by this course will be largely direct—entailing interaction with the texts of the Bible itself in English translation. Secondary reading and lectures will provide further linguistic and historic context for understanding these texts. The approach is intentionally neutral; that is, we will attempt to examine the texts and their history on their own terms, rather than promote a particular religious or non-religious viewpoint.

Note: The syllabus is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor.

Goals: The goal of this course is to build an academic foundation for the study of the Hebrew Bible. At the end of the semester, students should have a basic understanding of the content of the biblical texts, the historical and linguistic context in which the Bible was written, and the history of the transmission and reception of the biblical text itself. In addition, students should have an awareness of archaeological methods and scholarly approaches to the Bible, including historical-critical, literary, theological, postcolonial, and feminist readings. The student should be equipped with basic tools for exegesis.

Required Texts:

IHB: John Collins, *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible* (3rd Edition, Fortress Press, 2018)

ISBN: 9781506445984, 1506445985

The NRSV (New Revised Standard Version) Translation of the Bible (Other translations may be approved upon request)

Recommended Text:

HarperCollins Study Bible: Fully Revised & Updated (HarperCollins, 2017)

ISBN: 9780061228407, 978-0061228407

Course Requirements:

Weekly Reading Quizzes 30%: Students are required to complete assigned readings before class and participate in discussion. There will be a short **reading quiz each Tuesday**. It is the student's responsibility to check the syllabus and be prepared for the quiz whether or not it is announced in class. Quizzes are not detailed; it should be easy to ace the quiz if the student has done the reading. Students may drop their lowest quiz grade.

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Research Paper, 25%: Due Nov. 17. Each student will select a passage of the Bible (no more than three chapters) and write a 2000–2500 word (12pt Calibri font, double spaced, 1" margins) analysis of it. The student must consult no less than five scholarly sources, consisting of at least three journal articles (AAR, ASOR, CBQ, JBL, JSOT, TC, Vetus Testamentum, etc.) and at least two commentaries or monographs. Selected passages must be submitted on Canvas for approval **before Sep 1**. The anticipated scholarly sources must be submitted on Canvas for approval **before Sep 20**. This paper will be graded according to the rubric found on p. 3 of this syllabus, and it must address:

1. Literary context of the passage. What book is it in? What is the book about? Is it written in poetry? Narrative? Is it part of a speech? Does it contain references or similarities to other parts of the book? What importance does it have for understanding the book? How does the book shed light on this passage?
2. Historical context of the passage. When was the passage written? Does it address concerns for a certain time period? Is it written in a distinct language or dialect? Why? Does it correspond with important archaeological discoveries? Is it influenced by other ancient texts?
3. Impact of the passage. Do other biblical authors refer to this passage? What significance has it had on interpreters throughout history? What does this passage say about God, history, humanity, the world? What significance does it have for marginalized groups? What impact does this passage have on you?

The first paragraph should contain a thesis that states your main opinion of the passage (e.g. "This passage indicates ___ about Israel's history, and later interpreters find that it teaches ___ about God."), and each following argument should draw from the three categories above to argue your thesis statement (e.g. "First, the passage is a poem in the book of ___, found just after ___ occurs..." "The passage was likely written during ___, when such a message was needed..." "Other interpreters have read it as a statement about ___, which corresponds/conflicts with the historical meaning...")

Write Theological Literature, 15%: Due Dec. 1. The Bible is not written in a list of propositions or theological arguments. It is made up of stories and poems that talk about God and people and the way they interact. Think about what you learned from your research paper, and think about how your passage communicates its message. Then ask yourself what you think about God. Is God kind and loving? Is God vengeful and petty? Is God just or selfish? Do you believe there is a God at all? Tell me your thoughts about God in 4-6 pages (2000-2500 words), in the form of stories or poems, or both. You may set it to music or write it as a play. It can be fiction or nonfiction.

Final Exam, 30%: A final exam will cover all the readings and lectures. We will review this material in class on Oct. 4 and Dec. 1.



William Blake, Job Rebuked by His Friends, 1821.

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Grading Rubric for Research Paper

Name:	Research Paper for Rel 2013: Hebrew Scriptures Dr. Ryan M. Armstrong	OSU Fall 2022	Text:	Overall Grade: Average score from each category: A, B, C, D, F	
CRITERIA	C or below	B	A	GRADE FOR EACH CATEGORY	COMMENTS
a) Writing Style: Presented in an organized fashion, progression of thought, concepts are fully explained	Difficult to follow. Little to no preparation was put into method of communicating. Either exceeds or falls far under the page requirements (4–5 pages). Passage or sources were submitted late for approval.	Clear presentation and easy to follow. Very few concepts remain unclear. Falls within the page requirements (4–5 pages). Passage and sources were submitted on time for approval.	Clear progression of thought with good explanations of difficult or unique concepts. Easy to understand. Falls within the page requirements (4–5 pages). Passage and sources were submitted on time for approval.		
b) Clear thesis statement (e.g. “This passage indicates ____ about Israel’s history, and later interpreters find that it teaches ____ about God.”) Organized, persuasive argumentation and demonstration of thesis.	No clear thesis statement, lacks organization, arguments; evidence does not clearly support the thesis.	A fairly clear thesis and organization; arguments are generally persuasive with a few exceptions.	Crystal clear thesis, arguments are persuasive, conclusions are significant and insightful.		
c) Use of primary texts to support thesis. Cite specific passages from the Bible and other ancient texts to support your argument. Explain the passages before and after yours. Explain which texts influenced yours.	The paper does not exhibit a deep knowledge of the primary texts. Little content from within the primary texts is offered as support of the thesis.	The paper is dependent upon a deep understanding of the primary texts. It points to several passages as evidence for your thesis.	The paper is steeped in a thorough understanding of primary texts. A close reading of the primary texts is evident in the way the presentation engages with them.		
d) Examples from scholarly sources to support your thesis.	Little or no effort was made to interact with secondary material. There is little thought behind citations.	Care is taken to find evidence for thesis among scholarly sources. If scholarly sources work against thesis, a thoughtful explanation is offered. At least four modern scholars have been consulted and cited in the paper.	Excellent use of scholarly sources to argue thesis. At least two ancient sources are cited, if they exist, and two modern interpretations. At least three sources are from a scholarly journal (ASOR, AAR, CBQ, JBL, JSOT, TC, Vetus Testamentum, etc.), and at least two are from commentaries or monographs. Citations are specific passages from these sources. They either support thesis or are thoughtfully addressed with counterarguments.		

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Grading Rubric for Theological Writing

Name:	Theological Writing for Rel 2013: Hebrew Scriptures Dr. Ryan M. Armstrong	OSU Fall 2022	Title:	Overall Grade: Average score from each category: A, B, C, D, F	
CRITERIA	C or below	B	A	GRADE FOR EACH CATEGORY	COMMENTS
a) Genre Characteristics	Little effort was made to give stories a basic plot with conflict and resolution. Little effort was made to give poetry wordplay, rhyme schemes, meter, assonance, consonance, or other poetic devices.	Effort was made to follow genre conventions, even if innovation is used.	The genres of narrative and poetry are clearly recognizable, whether in layout or plot structure. Innovations and deviations from genre conventions make sense within the larger writing.		
b) Coherence	Little effort was made to give stories or poetry coherence or a progression of events or concepts.	Effort was made to give stories or poetry literary coherence.	There is a clear order to each element of the story or poem. Each paragraph or section feels like it belongs.		
c) Style	The student's own voice is not present in the writing. The story or poem is derivative without innovation.	Much of the writing demonstrates a clear style and reflects the student's personality or flare.	The writing is innovative and reflects the student's own voice.		
d) Mechanics	The paper contains numerous careless mistakes in spelling, sentence structure, and punctuation, that are not easily explained by rhetorical intention.	Care was taken to avoid careless mistakes.	The paper contains little or no errors in spelling, sentence structure, punctuation. If there are deviations from convention, they are clearly rhetorical devices.		



Priest-like Job, 8th Century, CE. BAV ms Vat. gr. 749, fol. 8.

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Reading Schedule

Aug 23, 26. Introduction, How We Got the Bible

Aug 30, Sep 1. Terminology, Israelite History, Archaeological Methods

Reading assignment: *IHB* 1–68; Gen 1–11

Research Paper Update: Passage selection for your research paper must be submitted today for approval before Sep 1.

Sep 6, 8. The Pentateuch (Torah), Overview, Genesis

Reading assignment: Genesis 12–22; Exodus 1–12

Sep 13, 15. The Pentateuch, Exodus–Deuteronomy

Reading assignment: *IHB* 85–121, 163–181; Exodus 19–20

Sep 20, 22. Former Prophets (Deuteronomistic History), Overview, Joshua–Judges

Reading assignment: *IHB* 187–229; Joshua 1–6; 24; Judges 1–2; 4–5

Research Paper Update: Scholarly Sources (3 journal articles and 2 commentaries) for your research paper must be submitted for approval before Sep 20.

Sep 27, 29. Former Prophets, Samuel–Kings

Reading assignment: *IHB* 231–233; 245–276; 291–303; 1 Samuel 1–3; 15–17; 2 Samuel 5–9; 1 King 17–18

Oct 4. Midterm Review

Reading assignment: *IHB* 307–310; 335–351; 405–424

Oct 6. Latter Prophets: Overview, Isaiah

Oct 11, 13. Latter Prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel

Reading assignment: *IHB* 83–391; 396–401; Isaiah 1–9; 38–40; 53; Jeremiah 1; 11–12; 20–23; 31

Oct 18, 20. Latter Prophets: Book of the Twelve

Reading assignment: Habakkuk; Jonah

Oct 25, 27. Writings: Overview, Psalms

Reading assignment: *IHB* 457; 495–514; Psalms 1–2; 52–54; 131–134

Nov 1, 3. Writings: Wisdom Literature (Job, Proverbs; Ecclesiastes)

Reading assignment: *IHB* 521–536; Job 1–4; 8–9; 31–33; 38–42; Proverbs 1; 31

Nov 8, 10. Writings: Five Scrolls

Reading assignments: *IHB* 561; 568–571; Book of Ruth; Book of Esther

Nov 15, 17. Writings: Post-exilic (Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah, Chronicles)

Reading Assignment: *IHB* 459–474

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Research Paper Final Deadline Nov. 17.

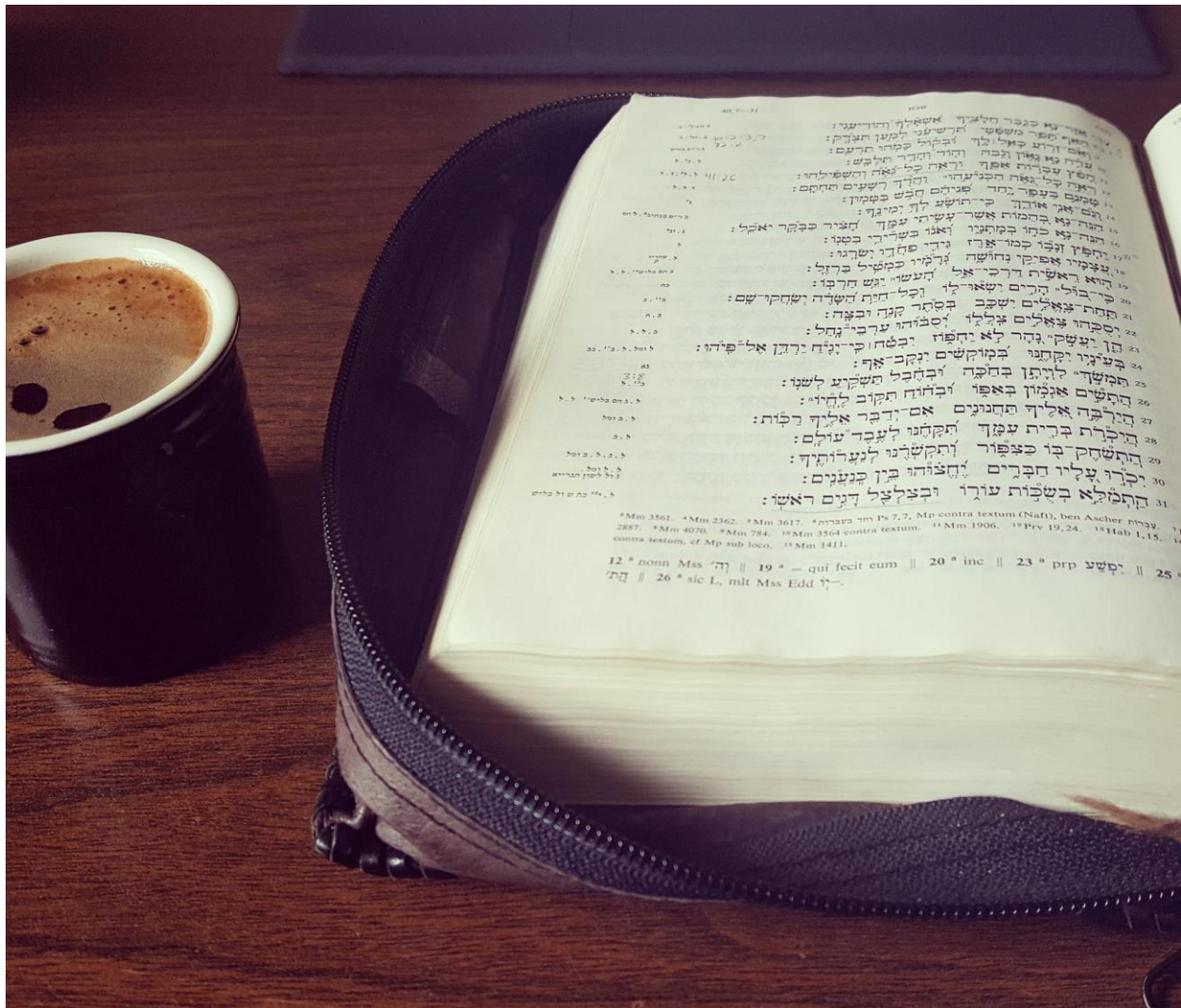
Nov 19–27. Fall Break

Nov 29, Dec 1. Writings: Post-exilic

**Reading assignment: Book of Daniel
Theological Story/Poem Due Dec. 1.**

Dec 6, 8. Reflections and Final Review

Thursday, Dec 15 6:00-7:50pm. Final Exam



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Additional Policies

Late Submissions: 20% will be deducted for each day that an assignment is turned in after the deadline. Papers more than 5 days late will receive a 0. Don't let this happen to you!

Electronic Devices: Please place all phones away and out of site once class has begun. If you absolutely must use your phone, please step out of the classroom to do so. You are welcome to use laptops for taking notes, but not for social media. Violation of this policy will result in point deductions from the discussion board.

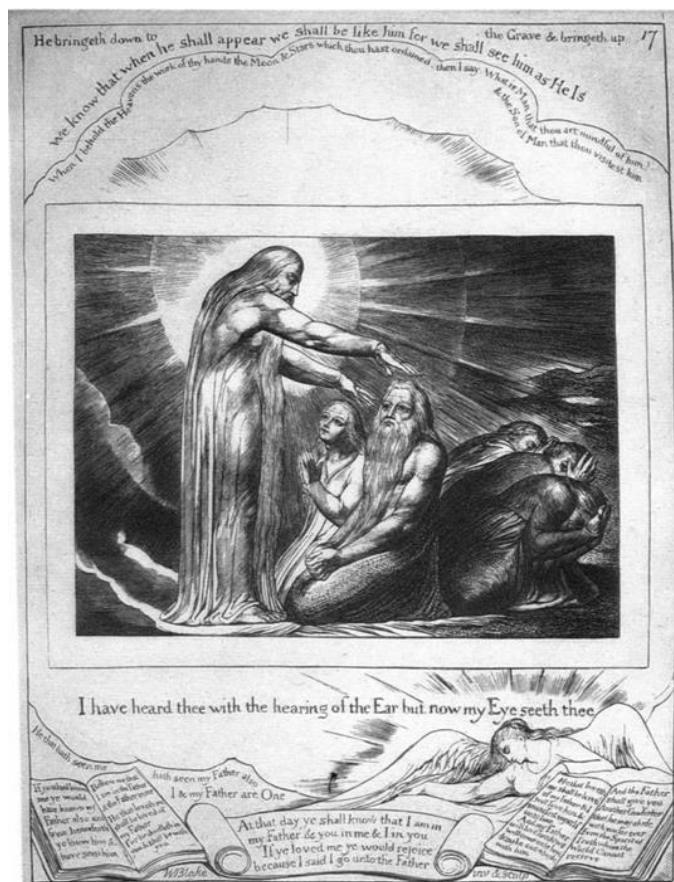
Academic Integrity: OSU is committed to maintaining the highest standards of integrity and ethical conduct. This level of ethical behavior and integrity will be maintained in this course. Participating in a behavior that violates academic integrity (e.g., unauthorized collaboration, plagiarism, multiple submissions, cheating on examinations, helping another person cheat, unauthorized advance access to examinations, altering or destroying the work of others, and altering academic records) will result in an official academic sanction. Violations may subject you to disciplinary action including the following: receiving a failing grade on an assignment, examination or course, receiving a notation of a violation of academic integrity on your transcript, and being suspended from the University. To appeal any charge: 101 Whitehurst | (405) 744-5627 | <http://academicintegrity.okstate.edu>

Students with Physical or Learning Disabilities: If you need special accommodations the University will try to make appropriate arrangements. These arrangements will need to be made ahead of time through the Student Disability Services Office: 315 Student Union | (405) 744-7116 | <https://sds.okstate.edu/>

Equal Opportunity: 409 General Academic Building/405-744-7607

<https://1is2many.okstate.edu/>

OSU is committed to maintaining a learning environment that is free from discriminatory conduct based on race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, disability, age or protected veteran status. OSU does not discriminate on the basis of sex in its educational programs and activities. Examples of sexual misconduct and/or sex discrimination include: sexual violence, sexual harassment, sexual assault, domestic and intimate partner violence, stalking, or gender-based discrimination. Please conduct yourselves in a way that is welcoming to each other. We want each of you to be respected and listened to.



William Blake, The Vision of Christ in Job 42:5